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2025

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Recommended Citation

Fawzy, Noha Ph.D; Zein, Marwa Ph.D; Elseragy, Ahmed Ph.D; and Harper, Catherine Ph.D, "Decency and responsibility: preserving Egyptian Tally cloth cultural heritage and protecting the intellectual property of Egyptian artisans." (2025). *Arts and Design*. 9.

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Decency and responsibility: preserving Egyptian Tally cloth cultural heritage and protecting the intellectual property of Egyptian artisans.

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Tally is an exquisite Egyptian netting fabric, cotton or linen with nickel silver, copper or brass strip embroidery, a powerful symbol of Egypt's opulent textile and artisanal culture.

Traditionally handmade, it originated in Upper Egypt's Asyut region where ancient Egyptian makers pioneered embellishment of translucent cloth with metallic threads. Its iconography - geometric flora, fauna, humans and camels – in black, white or ecru. With beautiful drape and fluidity, it is a highly valued part of Egypt's rich cultural heritage.

Preserving Tally and protecting the intellectual property rights of its artisans is urgent to ensure sustainable livelihoods, safeguard this unique cultural heritage and generate economic growth. Through trademarking and copyrighting, legal protection can prevent its unauthorised use and imitation, benefitting the local craft communities who sustained it through generations. These initiatives align with the SDG 8 - *Decent Work and Economic Growth* and SDG 12 – *Responsible Consumption and Production*.

The British University in Egypt's fashion students used Tally cloth to create innovative contemporary apparel designs, exploring the complex powerlines and paradox of change and constancy in the designer-craftsperson relationship. As young Egyptian creatives they were aware of the interdependency and collaboration necessary to contextualise this distinctive cloth,

acknowledge its history, identity and symbolic impact, and conceptualise and create a meaningful and effective contribution to Egypt's contemporary visual and design culture.

In her Design History Society blog, *Craft as Power*, Chaturvedi describes designers as “authoritative figures...[equipped] to use their skills to improve lives, create opportunities, make cultural changes”¹, while identifying artisans as “assimilators of centuries of traditions, [their work] highly prized”. Students drew on their implicit and developed knowledge of Egypt's craft traditions to develop designs connected to Tally's history and identity while carefully curating a socially-sensitive project that combined social advocacy, cultural alignment, innovation and impact, and – importantly – with decency and responsibility.

¹ <https://www.designhistorysociety.org/blog/category/crafting-a-national-identity-in-an-international-market>