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Textiles & Gender:

Production to wardrobe from the Orient to the Mediterranean in Antiquity

Maison Archéologie et Ethnologie, Nanterre,

Octobre 4-6, 2018

Abstracts

Philippe Abrahami, Université de Lille, and **Brigitte Lion**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

The gender of clothes in the Late Bronze Age

Numerous names of fabrics and clothing are listed in the texts of the Late Bronze Age, but the nature of the documentation, often consisting of inventories, makes it difficult to know whether they were worn by women, men, or both. The study will therefore focus on the Middle-Babylonian texts of southern Mesopotamia, Nuzi and Emar to try to find clarifications on this subject: when elements of costume are attributed to people, are some assigned primarily to men or women? Are certain garments explicitly designated as "women's" clothing?

Damien Agut, CNRS, ArScAn-HAROC, Nanterre

A man's business? Washing the clothes in Ancient Egypt (2nd and 1st millennium BC)

In Western cultures, laundry was for a long time an activity exclusively devoted to women. Significantly, in French, the term 'lavandière', which refers to a person washing clothes, is almost always used in feminine gender except when it refers to an officer who was responsible for supervising laundry within the Royal Palace during the Ancien Régime. The situation differs in ancient Egyptian languages where the word *rḥty* 'washerman' is almost exclusively masculine. How to interpret this lexicographical reality? Does this mean that laundry was a male activity in Egypt? To answer this question, it is first necessary to collect the occurrences of this term as well as the iconographic attestations of the laundry activity (part 1). We will then be able to distinguish two different social levels. The laundry men who were in charge of supervising laundry operations within large institutions, may also be private entrepreneurs (part 2). In this very masculine universe, one nevertheless finds some rare washerwomen. All indications are that they worked under male supervision.

Eva Andersson Strand, Copenhagen University, Textile for Textile Research, Copenhagen

Concluding remarks

Maria Giovanna Biga, Università La Sapienza, Roma

Textiles and Gender in the Syrian society of the 3rd millennium BC according to the Ebla texts

More than 600 tablets of the Ebla main archive (L.2769) are monthly accounts of deliveries of textiles. They cover a period of around 40-45 years of the city's life.

The deliveries of textiles to men and women of the Eblaite court on some important occasions (such as marriages, funerary rituals, purifications rituals after a death) will be studied. The



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different textiles destined to gods and goddesses will be analyzed too. The textiles destined to the divine couple Kura and Barama and to the king and the queen during the long ritual of renewal of the royalty will be studied in detail.

Catherine Breniquet, Université Clermont-Auvergne, **Marie Bèche-Wittmann**, **Christine Bouilloc**, **Camille Gaumat**, Musée Bargoin, Clermont Métropole, Clermont-Ferrand
Garments for potters? Textiles, gender and funerary practices at Les Martres-de-Veyre, France (Roman period)

During the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century, several Gallo-Roman graves were excavated in Les Martres-de-Veyre (Puy-de-Dôme, France). Despite the very approximate field methods of the first discovery, the graves brought to light an amazing set of perishable artifacts, usually not found in archaeological contexts. Among them, woollen tunics, socks, bands, shoes, all of different shape and size, combined together in the graves, suggest that we are facing contemporary costumes. Long hair, preserved too, suggest in most cases, female graves. However, detailed observation of the association of clothes and artifacts are far from giving a clear gendered picture.

A new project, called ArchéoMartres, involved several institutions among which the musée Bargoin of Clermont-Ferrand in charge of the collections, the University Clermont-Auvergne and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, sheds a new light on the collections and opened new research perspectives. It offers the opportunity to discuss here the gender aspect of the clothes and more widely, the role of garments in funerary practice.

Cecilie Brøns, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
Gender, Dress and Colour: Female Garments in Ancient Greco-Roman Art

In the ancient world, dress was used to signal aspects of identity such as gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation and social status. Colours played an important part in this “silent” communication. However, textiles have usually disappeared from the archaeological record, which means that when studying aspects of their original appearance, especially the colours, one must look for secondary sources, such as iconographical representations. This presents a challenge since the original colours of ancient sculptures and reliefs have usually – like the textiles – disappeared, while neither metal vessels, figurines, sculpture nor the black- and red-figure vases give any hints as to the colours of garments. This can create the impression that ancient garments were mainly white, which, nonetheless, was far from the case. The present contribution investigates how female dress was rendered in ancient Greco-Roman art by examining the polychromy of marble sculptures, reliefs, and terracotta figurines. This is then compared with our knowledge of the colours of female dress provided by the written sources.

Barbara Couturaud, Institut Français du Proche-Orient, Erbil
Looking for Women. A Visual Investigation on Feminine Garments in Ancient Mesopotamia During the Early Bronze Age

Artefacts belonging to ancient Mesopotamia during the third millennium BC have delivered an important amount of images depicting women. However, too often, these images have been examined as depictions of daily life. The question of clothing is particularly significant: aside



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from the garments worn by the king, naturally conceived as the symbolic representation of his power, or the clothing of soldiers, directly linked to their function, the garments worn by other individuals have almost never been considered as potential testimony of a social or ethnic status, even more for women, less often depicted. Nevertheless, it is usually their clothes and accessories that immediately reveal their identity. This is especially true for women who often wear different garments and are depicted in different postures, depending on the artefact on which they are represented (statues, cylinder seals, inlays, votive plaque, etc.). The study of clothing requires the decipherment of the codes used in order to understand how women's images are symbolically revised and possibly enhanced by the representation of specific garments or accessories, participating in a visual recognition of their identity. It is then important not only to define the nature of the garment from observation, but also to understand why a particular type of clothing is depicted on specific artefacts. These forms of exclusive representations tend to highlight the exceptionality of women's images, but leave many unanswered questions: who are these women? What determines the specificity of their depiction? Are women shown with different clothes on various artefacts the same ones? Or does the nature of the object imply another garment? By trying to answer these questions, an overview of women depictions and visual status in the third millennium BC will be provided.

Sophie Desrosiers, EHESS, Centre de Recherche Historiques, Paris

The sense of weaving: cloth, garments and gender in the Central Andes

In the Andes, an important standard in weaving is the rectangular or square shape of the four-selvages cloth with which most garments are made and sewn without being cut. As a result, garments shapes are limited and distinction reveals itself in the number of woven elements, their proportion, size and orientation, their weave and design, and the way they are sewn. I will show that on a large space and in the 'longue durée', gender is made visible thanks to the two complementary directions - horizontal and vertical - that rule the construction of the main garments worn by women and men.

Hedvig Landenius Enegren, University of Uppsala

Women, Men, Girls and Boys- gendered textile work at Late Bronze Age Knossos

The Linear B texts of Late Bronze Age Knossos (ca. 1450-1325 BCE), in an early form of Greek, but written in a syllabic script, give us invaluable information on the manufacture of textiles in the context of a major Mycenaean centre. Logograms bear witness to diverse textile types and occupational designations point to a highly developed and specialized textile production. Textile workers recorded in the Knossian Linear B texts reveal gendered aspects of production as both men, women, boys and girls were engaged in the work. The administrative aspects of this production have been considered in a number of publications. The present paper, however, will explore a prosopographical perspective, in which a select number of individuals and their involvement in different stages of textile manufacture at Knossos will be considered.



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Lin Foxhall, University of Liverpool

Women's work: the gendered practice, behaviors and identities of textile manufacture in ancient Greek and Italic communities

Although it has sometimes been suggested that men were regularly involved in textile manufacture in the ancient Greek world, in fact, the evidence strongly suggests that references to male weavers in literary texts cannot be read at face value and in reality almost all textile manufacture, and almost all aspects of it, was done by women. More critically, the practice of textile manufacture was conceptualized as part of the construction of femininity; a key element of women's identities. In the Italic societies of southern Italy, textile manufacture was also strongly associated with women, and similarly, appears to have been almost entirely a female activity. However, although there are some genuine similarities, there are also significant differences between Greek and Italic societies in terms of how textile working shaped gendered behaviours and identities and the construction of femininities. This paper explores these differences and impact of cultural contact on the conceptualization of femininities in these societies.

Mary Harlow, University of Leicester

White men and rainbow women: gendered colour coding in Roman dress

Romano-Egyptian mummy portraits are remarkable snapshots of an ancient population. Dating from the c. second to late third centuries CE they present images of deceased men and women from a range of status groups. They, almost invariably, show men dressed in white tunics and women dressed in coloured clothing. This contrast between male and female dress is slowly slipping into scholarship as accepted versions of everyday wear. My paper will examine the evidence for colour in male and female dress in the Roman empire in images and texts, to analyse how far we might accept this gendered dichotomy.

Francis Joannès, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

The goddess Nanaia's new clothes

The text YOS 6 71, and its duplicate YOS 6 72, from the archives of the Eanna of Uruk were written during the reign of Nabonides and they evoke the problems linked to the transfer from Borsippa to Uruk of the *kusītu* of the goddess Nanaia of Borsippa. These two documents have been discussed several times and interpretations differ on the meaning to be given to them. We will therefore examine the problematic passage here, to relate it to what is known about the appearance and function of the *kusītu* as a goddess' garment during the Neo-Babylonian period and also to put it in relation it to the transfer operated by the 'boat of the *kusītu*' between the Babylon-Borsippa region and Uruk. One can thus propose some elements of interpretation about the symbolic role of this typical goddess' garment in the religious conceptions during the Neo-Babylonian period.

Lena Larsson Lovén, Universiyt of Gothenburg

Textiles, femininity and masculinity in Roman society

This paper will focus on the production and use of textiles in Roman society and the relation between textile production and products, and constructions of gender. In ancient Rome a variety



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of textiles were used on a daily basis which in turn implies an extensive textile production. According to tradition, textiles were to be produced in a domestic setting by the women of a household. However, in order to meet new economic and social changes, the production of textiles developed to be made, at least to some extent, by workers of various professional levels and skills. The labour forces included both men and women and some of them have identified themselves by a job title, especially in funerary epigraphy. From this kind of evidence we know the names of a range of textile occupations reflecting various aspects of Roman textile production such as views of male and female work.

Roman society was a clothed culture, and clothes were used by everyone in daily life. In any socially stratified society, like the Roman, clothing is an efficient means of visually demonstrating various aspects of the identity of an individual, or sometimes rather an aspired identity. Some Roman garments in their basic form could be more or less gender neutral but the division between male and female (dress) were fundamental in the social order and put in context of the total appearance of an individual, it would not be mistaken if the wearer of such a “gender neutral” garment was a man or a woman.

This paper will discuss Roman ideals of masculinity and femininity in general and the effect such ideals have had on the evidence of how textiles were produced and on views of dress and engendered appearances in Roman society. The time frame will be from c. 200 BCE to c. 100 CE.

Valérie Matoïan, CNRS, Proclac, Paris, and **Juan Pablo Vita**, CSIC, Madrid

Textiles and Gender in Ugarit

This conference provides the ideal setting for posing questions about possible links between textiles and issue of gender in Ugaritic society. Here, for the first time, such an enquiry is based on the combined use of textual, archaeological and iconographic sources, to focus on human beings and on deities. The lecture will present the first results of this research, adopting an interdisciplinary and critical approach to the evidence in order to answer the question: Is it possible to move towards a sufficiently sustained general discussion of this topic, from the perspective of society, or only towards isolated explanations?

Cécile Michel, CNRS, ArScAn-HAROC, Nanterre

Belts and Pins as gendered elements of clothing in 3rd and 2nd millennia Mesopotamia

Cuneiform texts include many words linked to textile terminology which highlight varieties of materials, weaving techniques and regional peculiarities. During the 3rd millennium and the first half of the 2nd millennia BC, the forms of clothing were rather simple in the Near East, including tunics and wrap around garments for both men and women. Texts from this period do not make clear gender distinctions, presumably because tailored garments are still rare and reserved for the elite. The iconography, often subject to conventions in representations, gives an idea of the shape of clothing at different times. But the two corpus, texts and images, do not necessarily match. Using both textual and visual evidence for the 3rd and first half of the 2nd millennium BC, we will show that if men and women used to wear the same types of clothes, they however arranged their garments around their body differently, using distinctive elements to fix them: belts for men and pins for women.



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Magdalena Ohrman, University of Wales and CTR

Work Gendering Space? Roman Gender, Textile Work, and Time in Shared Domestic Spaces

This paper investigates literary, iconographical, and archaeological evidence for the spatial and temporal settings of domestic Roman textile work. It explores the intersection of female-gendered activities and shared, multi-functional domestic space, and its impact on male understanding of textile work.

While literary and iconographic sources often emphasise an all-female context for textile work (e.g. Col. 12 *praef.* Suet. *Aug.* 64 and 73; Hier. *Epist.* 130.15), it is often assumed to have taken place in the *atrium* (Ascon. *Milon.* p. 43, cf. also Liv. 57 *in medio aedium*). In this space, domestic textile work in elite households is connected to the display of female virtuous domesticity (Wilkinson 2015; Larsson Lovén 2013) to visitors to the home as well as to family members. Archaeological finds confirm the presence of textile working equipment in shared spaces of Roman homes both in and beyond the *atrium* (Allison 2009; Flohr 2013). The weaving scene in the Ipogeo degli Aureli in Rome likewise points to the importance of display of virtue through textile work to a male audience.

Yet both work and space is also readily eroticised in literary sources, where a male presence in a textile making context is described in terms of intrusion, aggression or cross-dressing (e.g. Prop. 1.3; Ov. *Fast.* 2.738-836). Other texts characterize domestic space used for textile production as spaces of female seclusion (Ov. *Epist.* 1.7-10; *Met.* 6.571-580; Claud. 20.403), generating implicit tension between male and female spaces and activities.

Amy Place, University of Leicester

Female 'Fashion' in the early North African Church

This paper highlights a number of key issues involved in the study of early Christian rhetoric and dressing behaviours. Numerous treatises dedicated to delineating acceptable forms of Christian female dress attest to the social, cultural, and religious importance of appropriate clothing practices. Correct dress was an extension of moral virtue. Often, however, the interpretation of early Patristic writings on female dress are clouded by accusations of misogynist behaviour, focusing attention on discussions of patriarchal power dynamics rather than actual dressing practices. Such scholarship imposes a modern 21st century view on third century discourse and fails to separate the elements of rhetorical exercise from that of true theological and ecclesiastical concern. This raises questions of the tension between cultural discourse and actual practice: how should we 'read' these instances of female dress and to what extent were Christian women bound by such sartorial treatises? What was 'fashion' for Late Antique women?

Louise Quillien, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

The gender of garments in 1st millennium BC Babylonia, an inquiry through texts and iconography.

The aim of this presentation is to understand what makes a garment gendered or un-gendered in 1st millennium BC Babylonia. The study will be based on the cuneiform texts from the Babylonian temples and from the private archive. It will also take into consideration the iconographic depictions on cylinder seals and reliefs panels. The inquiry will focus on garments worn by all social categories from the male and female slaves to the kings and queens.



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According to what criteria was a garment considered feminine, masculine or neutral in Babylonian society? At what stage of the manufacturing process did a garment become male or female? Whereas the terminology of garments worn by the people shows little gender differences, there are situations where specific garments were exclusively given to men or to women. Despite the rarity of depictions of women, the iconography allows to see differences in the shape and adornments of male and female garments.

Anne-Caroline Rendu Loisel, Université de Strasbourg

"I made you put on garments, I made you dress in linen." Goddesses, Gods and Garments in Sumerian Literature

In the Sumerian mythological text entitled *Enki and the World Order* (Old Babylonian Period, beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE), the Sumerian goddess Inana accuses the great god Enki for being disparaged by him. He retorts that, on the contrary, she has been granted many gifts. Among them, he claims that he made her put on clothes, he made her dress in linen. Wearing pieces of textile that cover the divine body, is then one of the attributes for a goddess that is used traditionally to associate to love. In another Sumerian mythological text (*Inana and the me*), Inana is associated with the colourful garment and the black garment. But, in her *descent to the Netherworld*, Inana designates her beloved Dumuzi to take her place in the underworld: she became full of anger when she saw him clothed in a magnificent garment and seated magnificently on a throne, instead of wearing mourning garments.

The present paper will investigate the gendered dimension of dress and garments by focusing on the divine community, as it is described in Sumerian literature. Are there specific garments or ways to wear them that would be specific for a goddess or a god? How textiles worn by gods or goddesses may participate (or not) in the interaction between them? Why should the divine body be covered?

Nikki K. Rollason, University of Leicester

Climate Change and Male Clothing in the Later Roman Empire

When discussing the clothing of the Later Roman Empire, modern historians often follow the lead of ancient authors and make comparisons with earlier Roman periods. The dress of much of the Late Antique world is highlighted as 'different' from previous periods, in particular, that it is strongly influenced by contact with 'barbarian' nations and shows the increasing militarisation of the imperial centre and the empire as a whole. Leg-coverings and long-sleeved tunics worn by men are part of a visual articulation of these trends, and while they indicate economic and cultural exchange and the greater role of the periphery in the empire, such items can also be considered as signs of decline and degradation by both modern and ancient scholars alike. This is because they were considered to be an integral part of the dress of women and 'barbarians', and men who wore such items in earlier Roman periods were censured and ridiculed in the ancient texts.

Starting from the point at which such clothing had become common for many in the ancient world, this paper aims to move beyond asking where such items came from, towards a consideration of why they stayed part of the Roman wardrobe in light of this attitude. In particular, it will consider why items of dress which were seen as effeminate and the sign of 'otherness' by ancient authors, came to be the garments of that most masculine of figures – the elite Roman man. It will suggest that, while the origins for items such as leggings and cloaks in



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imperial and aristocratic self-representation can be attributed to the influence of the military on the imperial court, the presence of ‘womanly’ sleeves and long tunics requires further explanation. This paper will propose, therefore, that a solution could be sought in environmental factors: specifically that climate change during the third-sixth centuries CE necessitated a change in attitudes to dress items for Roman men previously considered as ‘other’.

Agata Ulanowska, University of Warsaw

Towards engendering textile production in Middle Bronze Age Crete

While the Late Bronze Age archives with Linear B tablets provide detailed information about gender and social status of textile workers controlled by the Mycenaean palaces, much less is known about gendered division of labour in earlier periods and in other modes of production. Middle Bronze Age Crete (c. 2100–1700 BCE) witnessed the formation and development of centralised polities, described by Aegean archaeologists as palaces. It was also the age of an intensive, large scale textile production and several technical developments, such as an introduction of new types of loom weights and new techniques of dyeing. Those Cretan weaving technique(s) that were followed by the introduction of discoid weights in the Early Bronze Age, in the Middle and early Late Bronze Age spread over the Aegean islands and western shores of Asia Minor.

In my paper, archaeological evidence of textile workplaces, tools and methods by which the technical developments may have been transmitted will be examined in relation to potential engendering of textile labour in this period. A special focus, however, will be placed on the iconography and function of Middle Minoan soft stone prismatic seals from central and eastern Crete, and possible representations of weavers on their seal faces. I will argue that human figures shown with a ‘loom weight’ motif must have been weavers and I will examine whether other sequences in the *chaîne opératoire* of textile production, and other textile workers, can also be recognised on these seals. I will also discuss how seals and sealings may have been used in administration of textile production in this period, as well as who the seal bearers may have been, in terms of their social status and gender.

Beate Wagner-Hasel, Universität Hannover

Female dues and the production of textiles in ancient Greece

In the discussion of dues or tithes in Ancient Greece normally only agrarian products are considered, wine, oil or grain. But there must have given also many textile dues. In Mycenaean times textiles form the mass of the dues. What happened in later times? The suggestion is that in Laconia, Crete and even in Archaic Athens textiles must have formed an essential part of the dues, although they are seldom mentioned in the sources. The paper will discuss the hints at these hidden dues and ask for the receiver of female products.