

# TEXTILE ARCHAEOLOGY - A HANDS ON APPROACH

## VALGFAG/ELECTIVE COURSE AUTUMN 2019

Textiles are an integral part of our everyday and have been so since prehistory. Textile is used for sails, tents, clothing and in households in a variety of contexts such as rituals and trade, and throughout prehistory textiles were considered worth their weight in gold. Over time, production, organization and distribution of textiles changed and transformed as a result of new technologies. The knowledge and development of these technologies is seen in the finished product and is testament to the transference of knowledge in families or areas but also show new influences from the outside world. The manufacture of textile includes a long and sometimes complex and physical demanding chaîne opératoire: Harvesting and preparation of fibres, setting up heavy looms, spinning and weaving as well as the finishing processes such as sowing the textiles together and e.g. treating sailcloth with sheep's fat. The manufacturing of textiles was a result of complex interactions between resources and technology within society, and depended on resources, state of technology, and needs.

### Course content

The course will take you through the history of textile in Europe and the Near East covering both tangible and intangible aspects. Geographically you will be introduced to European textiles as well as textiles from the Near East in the prehistory, however, other time periods and geographic areas can be included, too.

After an introduction to archaeological textiles and textile production, you will experiment with basic textile technologies such as fibre identification, weaving, and dye analysis. We will look at preservation and conservation both for textiles and for skins and leather.

You will also work with new scientific methods as well as the theoretical approaches to understanding textile production in the context of wider societal questions.



'Havhingsten from Glendaghlough' built at Viking Ship Museum Roskilde



Top: Clay tablet from Kültepe, Turkey, an important trading post for textiles from the Neoassyrian Empire  
Right: Relief from the great audience hall, Apadana, in Persepolis, 6th cent. BC.



During the course, you will have lectures by visiting experts; participate in practical exercises as well as experimentation, and visit the National Museum, Brede and other relevant sites.

### Learning outcome

You will gain an understanding of the importance of production processes as well as methods of analysis of textile and textile production in prehistory. This includes an understanding of the role of textiles and textile production in society. You will be able to address and discuss textile and textile production based on analysis of archaeological textiles, textile tools and contexts. You will also be able to integrate results from the research into a more general archaeological discussion and interpretation. You will of course gain insight in pertinent theoretical and methodological approaches in textile research.

### Practicalities

This course is offered as an elective in the autumn semester 2019 as F.ARK Archaeological Topic A. For exchange students (and others), it can be combined with Advanced Archaeological Methods or Scandinavian Archaeology - Past and Present.

Contact Sara Holm-Meier at [nxp344@hum.ku.dk](mailto:nxp344@hum.ku.dk) for more information.



Textile tools:

Left: Loom weight, Karanis, Egypt

Right: Coast Salish spindle whorl from the Pacific Northwest Coast

Below: Weft beater from Afghanistan.

