

International Workshop

**Textiles in Ritual and Cultic Practices in the Ancient Near East from the Third
to the First Millennium BC**

University of Copenhagen, 6th-7th October 2015

ABSTRACTS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

Ritual and Cultic Uses of Textiles and Wool in Emar

PHILIPPE ABRAHAMI, *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique – UMR 5133 Laboratoire Archéorient, Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon*

Emar (present-day Meskene) is located in the great bend of the middle Euphrates in northwest Syria. Among the cuneiform tablets originating from the site and its vicinity (around 1200 documents dating to the 13th and beginning of 12th centuries BC), the ritual texts gives detailed prescriptions related to various cultic services and festivals. This group of texts sometimes depicts the use of textile and wool by name and colour and through various actions to be performed in the course of the ceremony (covering / uncovering the cult image, tying a thread of red wool on it, dressing the priestess, etc.). The present paper aims to collect and analyse this set of data.

Clothing, Body, and Identity in 1st Millennium Rituals

LORENZO VERDERAME, *Università degli studi di Roma “La Sapienza”, Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali*

In this paper I deal with the role dress and clothing play in the constitution and shaping of individual identity. Through the close analysis of a number of case studies, namely the Substitute king (“King of substitution” *šar pūhi*) and “A man’s substitute for Ereškigal” (*Ana pūhi amēli Ereškigal*) rituals, as well as the practice of exposing royal robes as representation of the king in his absence, I explore the mechanisms that make possible for clothing to both represent and substitute the individual.

Textiles in Ritual and Cultic Practices in Ugarit (Second Millennium BC, Late Bronze Age)

VALERIE MATOÏAN, *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - UMR 5133 Laboratoire Archéorient, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon*

and JUAN PABLO VITA, *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Instituto de Lenguas y Culturas del Mediterráneo y Oriente Próximo, Madrid*

The texts in the Ugaritic language and alphabetic script found in Ugarit (modern Syrian Arab Republic) contain mentions of textiles in connection with deities, both within the framework of rituals and in clerical texts. In some cases they clearly seem to refer to garments for divine statues. Our communication shall focus mainly on the study of ritual texts RS 1.005 (KTU 1.43) and RS 24.261 (KTU 1.116, Ugaritic-Hurrian bilingual text) and clerical texts RS 15.082 (KTU 4.168) and RS 15.115 (KTU 4.182); the latter two also provide interesting information regarding administrative procedures. The communication shall be complemented with archaeological data (objects, iconography) likely to throw light onto the information provided by the texts.

The Changing Garment of Hittite Ritual Performers

ZSOLT SIMON, *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Institut für Assyriologie und Hethitologie*

The depiction of non-royal, male Hittite ritual performers are known from various artefacts (*e.g.*, the reliefs of Alaca Höyük, the relief vases from İnandıktepe and Hüseyindede, the Schimmel-rhyton, and the so-called Boston Fist). They wear two types of garments, simplistically speaking a shorter one and a longer one. The reason behind this is unclear. The choice between the two possible theoretical answers (chronological distribution, functional difference) is hindered by the unknown precise chronology of these artefacts. Thus, in this talk, first I discuss their chronology arguing that there is a possible relative chronology, which shows, for the first glance, a chronological distribution. While inquiring into the reasons behind, I will show that there is a functional difference, too and the chronological distribution may in fact be only illusory.

Textiles and Cult in the Art of Hittite Anatolia

BENEDETTA BELLUCCI, *Guest Researcher, The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen*

Is iconography revealing about the use of textiles in the Ancient Near East, and in particular of Hittite Anatolia? This paper provides an overview of the evidence about the use of garments and other textiles in representation of rituals and cults, and in the iconography of deities. The sample presented can be important to infer the actual significance of textiles in rituals. This matter will be tackled during the talk.

Textiles in First-Millennium BC Ritual Practices: The Ritual Construction of Performers, Victims, Objects and Spaces in the Assyrian and Babylonian Cult

SALVATORE GASPA, *The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen*

Beyond being instrumental to cover and protect bodies and spaces in everyday life, textiles also played an important role in constructing the syntax of god-human communication and in shaping roles of ritual actors, victims, objects and spaces in the Ancient Near Eastern cultic practices. By focusing on the written evidence about rituals in cultic contexts of Assyria and Babylonia, the paper will present an overview on the use of textiles in construction of the identity and roles of the constituent elements of the cultic action in the framework of some of the most significant cultic rituals of first-millennium BC Mesopotamia.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Textile Display in Middle Kingdom Egypt: Symbolism, Social Status and Long-distance Trade

JUAN CARLOS MORENO GARCIA, *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, UMR 8167 – Orient et Méditerranée, Laboratoire Mondes Pharaoniques, Paris*

During the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BC textiles acquired a new symbolic and economic status in Egyptian society. Several wall paintings in provincial tombs depict for the first time weaving and spinning, while small funerary models represent textile workshops and show how the work was done: the initial sorting of the flax fibers to make the rove, the spinning of it into thread, the setting up of the warp from the thread thus spun, and the actual weaving of the cloth on a horizontal loom. In both cases textile production appears to be a pronouncedly gendered activity, carried out by women. Another innovation from this period consists in the inclusion of motifs inspired in foreign textiles in the decoration of some provincial tombs. Finally a curious artifact (“paddle doll”) epitomizes the close association between women, textile production and exotic imports; it represents a woman with marked sexual attributes as well as with tattoos and wearing a colourful dress, but the actual interpretation of this object is still debated. However, as flax seemed to be the dominant textile fiber used in Egypt and it was quite difficult to dye, cloths worn by “paddle dolls” might have been made of wool and thus point to the arrival of dyed wool textiles into Egypt. In fact, Asiatic traders and soldiers were usually represented in Egyptian monuments of this period dressed with colorful cloths, in clear contrast with Egyptians. So textiles helped mark ethnic differences but the ideological values they conveyed could be nevertheless ambiguous, as when Egyptian governors from Middle Egypt represented themselves wearing wool cloaks, a garment reserved elsewhere to poor or marginal Egyptians, like herders. Its prestige nevertheless in Middle Egypt might be explained by the presence of Asiatic soldiers and by the involvement of provincial governors from this region in trading activities with the Levant.

The Ritual Use of Textiles in Third Millennium Ebla

MASSIMO MAIOCCHI, *Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

The archives of Ebla, roughly datable to 2400 BC, provide unique insights on the use of textiles in ritual context, within the broader frame of early urban systems. Combined with iconographical motives, the sources fill in an otherwise large documentary gap for this kind of study, spanning from the collapse of the so-called first urbanization in Mesopotamia up to the rise of regional states at the beginning of the second millennium BC. As for the epigraphical evidence, the tablets from Ebla, together with the almost contemporary archives of Lagash/Girsu in Southern Mesopotamia, represent the earliest corpus of texts that can be positively inquired for data concerning ritual and cultic practices, with special reference to textiles.

However, the Ebla evidence remains unparalleled in terms of both richness of information and diversity of sources. Besides administrative documents, ritual texts are in fact known for this site, providing precious details on wedding ceremonies and funerary rituals featuring textiles. The paper explores the typology of garments mentioned in the documents, as well as their functions and symbolic aspects, with special attention to their significance in terms of our understanding of rites of death and renewal.

Changing status by wearing a dress in the myth of Gilgamesh

MARTA RIVAROLI, *Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Dipartimento di Storia, Culture e Religioni*

One of the topics present in the myth of Gilgamesh is the close relationship between “man” and “culture” and the elements that distinguish a “being” as belonging ,or not, to the “cultural world”.

In the text is possible to identify different steps in which passage “culture-not culture” and vice versa is presented in all its wideness. These “changes of state” are carried out performing well-determined ritual actions in which the act of dressing and undressing plays a key role.

The access or the exit from the cultural reality are closely linked to accepting or rejecting a garment.

Colours and Textiles in Ritual Procedures of Ancient Mesopotamia (1st Millennium BC)

ANNE-CAROLINE RENDU-LOISEL, *Université de Toulouse 2 Jean-Jaurès, EA 4601 PLH Erasme & Université de Strasbourg, Faculté des Sciences Historiques*

In a ritual described in the *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incantations (Tablet VIII), the exorcist, clad in a red garment, has to don a red scarf against the evil spirit. The malevolent demon will then be afraid and flee from the body of the patient. In *Šurpu* V-VI, one of the ritual gestures consists of the destruction of a red wool by fire to cancel the actions of sorcery. On the other hand, blue wool is involved in rituals and medical procedures, and is sometimes melted with black, white or red wool. In ritual contexts, a particular attention seems to have been given to the colours of textiles and their raw material. Specific properties and cultural concepts associated with colours may have justify their use, taking part into the efficiency of the procedure. Focusing on various ritual texts of the 1st millennium BC, the present paper will question the possible links between colours and garments, visual or tactile properties and textiles.

Avestan Regulations on the Sacred Girdle

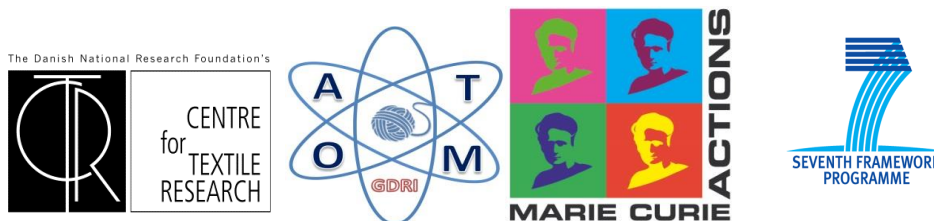
MIGUEL ÁNGEL ANDRÉS-TOLEDO, *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

The investiture of Zoroastrian children with the sacred girdle marked since Avestan times not only their age of majority but also their capability for performing rituals. Our main sources to understand the importance of this sacred textile in the Zoroastrian ritual praxis of the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE and its religious symbolism are the Avestan regulations of the *Vīdēvdād* and the *Nērangestān*. However, the comparison between these and other Avestan texts demonstrates that different, sometimes contradictory, regulations on the sacred girdle existed in ancient Zoroastrianism.

The Symbolic Use of Textiles and Textile Tools in Hittite Texts

MATTEO VIGO, *SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen*

The Hittite administrative texts seem to offer the largest documentation about luxury goods, among which textiles represent the majority. Nonetheless, the palace and cult inventories do not provide us any clear indication about the real nature of textiles, their shape, colours and functions, as most of them are barren lists and memoranda of items. Indeed, textiles and their complementary tools are almost always quoted in deity evocations, rituals and incantations as *Materia Magica*. In this texts' category textiles play a crucial role for the ritual praxis. This paper aims at outlining the symbolic use of textiles and textile tools among the Hittites.



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