

LEXICOLOGY

Ariadne's thread: aspects of the Mycenaean textile terminology

From the 3rd to the 1st millennium BC, the Near Eastern and Mediterranean written sources attest complex textile terminologies. During this period, on the basis of a division of labour, textile manufacturing developed from a household production to a State organized industry. The study of the various textile terminologies can provide valuable information, not only on the modes of production and the technical innovations, but also on contacts and trade routes. This article, which is a contribution to the proceedings of an international conference dedicated to the comparative and diachronic study of

ancient textile vocabularies, provides an overview of the Mycenaean Greek terminology. The terms, attested in the Linear B tablets (14th-13th century BC) and directly or indirectly related to the textile production (fibres, cloths, garments, decorations, occupational designations), are studied following the "chaîne opératoire", from fibre to finished fabric. Some of them are obscure and probably of Minoan (pre-Greek) origin, others are Semitic loanwords, whereas many of them have an Indoeuropean etymology and are partly preserved in later Greek. Special attention is paid

to synonyms and antonyms, as these can provide interesting clues about the technical characteristics of textiles. In order to record textile fibres and products, Mycenaean scribes also used logographic notations, sometimes with acrophonic abbreviations. These logograms are also examined and compared to those attested in the Minoan Linear A documents (datable for the most part to the 15th century BC). The comparison shows the continuity between the two administrative systems and suggests, among other things, that the Linear B logograms for "wool" and "cloth" had their origin in Linear A.

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M. Del Frio, F. Rougemont, M.L. Nosch, "The Terminology of Textiles in the Linear B Tablets, including Some Considerations on Linear A Logograms and Abbreviations", *Textile Terminologies in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean from the 3rd to the 1st millennia BC*, Oxford, (2010), pp. 338-373.



Linear B tablet from Mycenae recording quantities of wool.



Detail of fresco from Akrotiri, Thera (Santorini).