

# Textiles & Gender: Production to wardrobe from the Orient to the Mediterranean in Antiquity

4-6 October 2018

Salle des Conférences, Bâtiment Pierre Grappin, Université  
Paris Nanterre

An International conference organised by [Mary Harlow](#) and  
[Cécile Michel](#); secretary: [Louise Quillien](#)

GDRI [Ancient Textiles from the Orient to the Mediterranean](#)  
(ATOM)



Textiles and gender intertwine on many levels, from the transformation of raw materials into fabric at one end, to dress and garments, and the construction of identity at the other.

Textile production in antiquity has often been considered to follow a linear trajectory from a domestic (female) activity to more 'commercial' or 'industrial' male-centred mode of production. In reality, many modes of production probably co-existed and the making of textiles is not so easily grafted onto the labour of one sex or the other. Some elements of the *chaîne opératoire* have been assigned to either men or women. It is rare, for instance, to find a culture where men did the spinning –there is however an attestation of this in the South of Iraq – and at the other end of the process, equally rare to

find female fullers. At times and in some places, weaving was women's work, but in other times and places it was the prerogative of men. Labour organization depends on who learns what, where, and how. Children of both sexes could be involved in some parts of the textile *chaîne opératoire* at home with their mother or father (fibre preparation, spinning or weaving), or adults could learn with someone who is already qualified. Learning involves also cognitive aspects. We would like to understand these process across Antiquity in the different cultures that are encompassed by our period. The production of textiles can indeed inform us of the relationships between gender, labour, economics and, in some cases, the potential for the prosperity of a family.

In other areas of life textiles transformed into garments express the gender of the wearer. Dress and gender are intimately linked in the visual and textual records of antiquity; it is common practice in both art and literature to use particular garments to characterise one sex or the other, and to undermine literary characterisations by suggesting that they display features usually associated with the opposite gender. Despite the fact that clothing shapes were simple (tunics and rectangular or curved-edge mantles) for both women and men, each sex looked very different. This difference was socially and culturally important and expressed in the type of textile used, the length of the tunic, the manner in which it was decorated or undecorated, belted or unbelted, use of colour and most fundamentally in the manner of draping or fastening. Body language was also defined by clothing and socially prescribed gendered roles. A person should have no doubt as to the sex of another person he or she might meet and cross-dressing or dressing in a manner perceived to be 'manly' (if a woman) or 'effeminately' (if a man) implied an insult and an inability to act in the proper culturally defined gendered way. As, despite their shared shaping, male and female clothing had to be demonstrably different, from the outset spinners and weavers were making choices about the type

of wool and weave required – and we might add dyers into the mix. This puts gender at the very basis of textile work from the outset to the end product. Gender divisions were fundamental to ancient society (although they did not work in the same way in every culture) and their expression in textiles and clothing equally fundamental. The human race is hard wired for adornment thus even among the poorest classes the opportunity for some personalised and decorative aspect has to be taken into account.

The conference will examine the gender division of work in the production of textiles, as well as attitudes to dress and gender across the Near East and Mediterranean culture in antiquity (c. 3000 BCE-300CE), tracing both cross-cultural and culturally specific associations.

This conference is the concluding meeting of the GDRI ATOM and a follow up event of the international research seminar on Gender and textiles which took place in Nanterre during the first semester of 2015 within the frame of the Séminaire d'Histoire et Archéologie de l'Orient Ancien (SHAMO) and the international workshop organised at the University of Leicester in April 2017 on "Textiles, Dress and Gender in the Ancient World."

Download the programme [here](#)

Download the abstracts [here](#)

Download the poster [here](#)

### **Thursday, October 4**

#### *Morning*

9h30-9h45

Registration

9h45-10h00

Welcome and introduction

## ***Gender and Textile Production***

10h00-10h30 **Agata Ulanowska**, University of Warsaw: *Towards engendering textile production in Middle Bronze Age Crete*

10h30-11h00 **Hedvig Landenius Enegren**, University of Uppsala: *Women, men, girls and boys- gendered textile work at Late Bronze Age Knossos*

11h00-11h30 *Coffee break*

11h30-12h00 **Damien Agut**, CNRS, ArScAn-HAROC, Nanterre: *A man's business? Washing the clothes in Ancient Egypt (2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC)*

12h00-12h30 **Beate Wagner-Hasel**, Universität Hannover: *Female dues and the production of textiles in ancient Greece*

12h30-14h00 *Lunch break*

*Afternoon*

14h00-14h30 **Lin Foxhall**, University of Liverpool: *Women's work: the gendered practice, behaviors and identities of textile manufacture in ancient Greek and Italic communities*

14h30-15h00 **Magdalena Ohrman**, University of Wales and CTR: *Work gendering space? Roman gender, Textile work, and Time in shared domestic spaces*

15h00-15h30 **Lena Larsson Lovén**, University of Gothenburg: *Textiles, femininity and masculinity in Roman society*

15h30-16h00 *Coffee break*

16h00-16h30 **Sophie Desrosiers**, EHESS, Centre de Recherche Historiques, Paris: *The sense of weaving: cloth,*

*garments and gender in the Central Andes*

***Gendered garments and accessories in the Ancient Near East***

16h30-17h00 **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*

19h30 *Conference dinner*

**Friday, October 5**

*Morning*

10h00-10h30 **Louise Quillien**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris: *The gender of garments in 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC Babylonia, an inquiry through texts and iconography*

10h30-11h00 **Philippe Abrahamsi**, Université de Lille, and **Brigitte Lion**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne: *The gender of clothes in the Late Bronze Age*

11h00-11h30 *Coffee break*

11h30-12h00 **Valérie Matoïan**, CNRS, Proclac, Paris, and **Juan Pablo Vita**, CSIC, Madrid: *Textiles and gender in Ugarit*

12h00-12h30 **Cécile Michel**, CNRS, ArScAn-HAROC, Nanterre: *Belts and pins as gendered elements of clothing in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia Mesopotamia*

12h30-14h00 *Lunch break*

## ***Garments for gods and goddesses, garments of the dead and of statues***

### *Afternoon*

14h00-14h30                      **Maria Giovanna Biga**, Università La Sapienza, Roma: *Textiles and gender in the Syrian society of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC according to the Ebla texts*

14h30-15h00                      **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*

15h00-15h30                      **Francis Joannès**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris: *The goddess Nanaia's new clothes*

15h30-16h00                      *Coffee break*

16h00-16h30                      **Cecilie Brøns**, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen: *Gender, dress and colour: female garments in ancient Greco-Roman art*

16h30-17h00                      **Mary Harlow**, University of Leicester: *White men and rainbow women: gendered colour coding in Roman dress*

20h00                                      *Conference dinner*

## **Saturday, October 6**

### *Morning*

## ***Gendered garments in the Greco-Roman world***

10h00-10h30                      **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)*

10h30-11h00 **Nikki K. Rollason**, University of Leicester: *Climate change and male clothing in the Later Roman Empire*

11h00-11h30 *Coffee break*

11h30-12h00 **Amy Place**, University of Leicester: *Female 'Fashion' in the early North African Church*

12h00-12h30 **Eva Andersson Strand**, Copenhagen University, Textile for Textile Research, Copenhagen: *Concluding remarks*

12h30-14h00 *Lunch*