

BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIA SUMMER TERM 2021



Social change and textile technology: a comparative perspective on the Aegean, Italy, and central Europe during the first millennium BC

Monday, 26 April 2021 / 16.15 - 17.45 / virtual meeting

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This paper will explore the roles which textiles and textile technology played in periods of social change among different societies in the Aegean, the Italic peninsula, and central Europe. We will focus on two main themes: social stratification and the changing organisation of production. During the 8th–5th century BC, societies in different parts of Europe underwent parallel developments, including the increase in visible hierarchies and the growth of settlements, sometimes categorised as urban. The conspicuous consumption of textiles, played an important role in this process. Elites used textiles in different ways in key arenas of social competition – burials, weddings, religious activities. The archaeological record for this includes remains of cloth in burials, iconography of dress and furnishings, in addition to literary sources. We will explore the parallels and different regional traditions in the ways elites used textiles to assert and materialise local identities or wider connections, to show off wealth or demureness. The organisation of textile production offers another perspective on social change, by considering the issues of standardi-

sation, specialisation, and the growing importance of exchange. While some aspects of textile manufacture changed (e.g., yarn manufacture), others did not. Despite the limited evidence for textile workshops, households remained important sites of production, which tells us something both about the nature of the craft and the socio-economic context in which it was practiced.

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