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# Textile Terminologies in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean Area from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BCE

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A European Science Foundation exploratory workshop, Textile Terminologies in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean Area from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC, was held at Copenhagen University, 4-8 May 2009. The extant texts from the Ancient Near East and Eastern Mediterranean contain numerous terms describing textiles and textile techniques, as well as references to specialised textile occupational titles; however, the meaning of much of this extensive vocabulary is unclear. The aim of the workshop, which was co-convened by Marie-Louise Nosch (Danish National Research Centre for Textile Research, Copenhagen) and Cécile Michel (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Maison de l'archéologie et de l'ethnologie, Nanterre, France), was to provide a forum for the comparison of these rich textile terminologies. Twenty papers were presented by speakers from a wide range of international institutions. The workshop opened with an introduction and presentation of the work of ESF, by Cécile Michel and Marie-Louise Nosch. This was followed by a general session on terminologies; Susanne Lervad (Templum Aps, Danterm, Denmark) and Pascaline Dury (Centre de Recherche en Terminologie et Traduction, Université Lyon 2, France) examined the terminology of textiles from a linguistic point of view, while Sophie Desrosiers (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France) investigated what criteria - used to tell apart categories of textiles - might help to connect terms to textiles. The discussion of terminology was complemented by a presentation by Eva Andersson Strand (Centre for Textile Research, Copenhagen, Denmark), who gave an introduction to the basics of textile technology and additionally presented some of the results of the experimental spinning and weaving tests that had been carried out at the Centre for

Textile Research.

Catherine Breniquet (Université Blaise-Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand II, France) opened the following session by considering how texts, iconography and archaeology could be combined to give a more complete picture of weaving in Mesopotamia during the Bronze Age. The next set of papers focused on the 3rd millennium BC. Ole Herslund (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) discussed the classification of textiles in the ancient Egyptian writing system, demonstrating that the 'textiles' category included not only other artefact groups, but also a number of verbs and adjectives denoting actions and states of being. Jana Jones (Macquarie University, Australia) re-examined the Egyptian Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom 'linen lists' in the light of both recently excavated relief slabs and the technical realities of textile production. Benjamin Foster (Yale University, USA) reviewed the textual and the iconographic evidence for different types of garments during the Sargonic period, and offered identifications in the texts for certain items of clothing. Maria Giovanna Biga (Università di Roma 'La Sapienza', Italy) then gave an overview of the coloured textiles recorded in the archives of Ebla, observing that the differences in colour appear to have had a symbolic, ritual value in some instances. Franco Pomponio (Università de Messina, Italy) discussed a small group of unpublished Neo-Sumerian tablets belonging to the British Museum, examining the evidence they provide for the production and typology of textiles. Also considering Neo-Sumerian records, Hartmut Waetzoldt (Ruprecht-Karls Universität, Heidelberg, Germany) sought to identify some of the different types of fabric mentioned in the texts, on the basis of the relation of the listed weights of the warp and the weft threads respectively.

With the focus shifting to the 2nd millennium BC, Cécile Michel and Klaas Veenhof (Leiden University, the Netherlands) addressed the question of what types of textiles the Assyrians traded in Anatolia. Agnès Degrevè and René Lebrun (Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium) then reviewed the terms for wool and linen in the Hittite, Luvian and Lycian texts, and Juan-Pablo Vita (CSIC, Instituto des Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo, Zaragoza, Spain) reported on the current state of knowledge with regard to Ugaritic and Akkadian textile terminology in the Late Bronze Age archives from Ugarit. Agnete Wisti Lassen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) then examined Akkadian textile terms relating to tools, work procedures and occupational titles, in the light of archaeological and experimental data. The 2nd millennium BC session closed with a discussion of the textile terminology attested in the Mycenaean Linear B tablets. Maurizio del Freo (Università di Roma 'La Sapienza' Italy), Françoise Rougemont (CNRS, Maison de l'archéologie et de l'éthnologie, Nanterre, France) and Marie-Louise Nosch outlined the vocabulary associated with textiles in the Mycenaean records, further considering the possible Minoan origins for some of these terms through a comparison with the surviving Linear A corpus. Eugenio Luján (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain) followed this with a consideration of Mycenaean textile terminology and the evidence for the organization of textile production in relation to a series of tablets written by a particular scribe (scribe 103). Moving into the 1st millennium BC, Francis Joannès

(Université de Paris I Panthéon, Sorbonne, Maison d'archéologie et de l'éthnologie, Nanterre, France) reviewed the textile vocabulary found in the written documents of the Neo-Babylonian period, considering differences in the terminology used by the great religious institutions and the non-religious sector in order to ascertain whether these implied different modes of production and use; Stefan Zawadzki (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland) then spoke about Neo-Babylonian garment terminology in non-cultic contexts. Next, Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo (University of Salamanca, Spain) examined Old Indian and Old Iranian textile terminology, demonstrating that some of the words in these textile vocabularies belong to Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European formulas. Finally, Agnès Garcia Ventura (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain) discussed the remains of textiles found on a group of Neo-Sumerian, Ur III foundation figures, which had been used as wrappings.

The workshop closed with a visit to the recently reopened Danish Prehistory exhibit at the National Museum, and this was followed by a dinner hosted by the Centre for Textile Research. The four day event served to bring together scholars working on textile terminology in the written records of diverse areas and periods, and several suggestions for follow up research activities and other potential joint collaborative ventures were proposed. The papers will be published as an edited volume in 2010.