



Iris Tzachili

# Obituary, Youli Spantidaki 1946-2010

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Youli Spantidaki, a well-known specialist in textile research, who passed away in March 2010 causing great sorrow to her friends and collaborators. Her death is a big loss for textile research.

Youli's scholarship encompassed a wide field. She worked on archaeological textiles, medieval and Byzantine textiles, and especially European lace from the 17th and 18th centuries. She was a person of exceptional culture as demonstrated by her research into textiles of various periods and regions. Her own special trait was an intuitive insight into textile structure and a capacity to understand the techniques and aesthetics in the broad context of a society.

She specialized in lace, primarily from the 16th century onwards, and she collaborated with museums and collections (Retournac, Saint Gallen, Benaki) helping with their conservation, study and display. When she published her work it was always in a holistic way, for example, in the publication of an exceptional tablecloth from the Louvre Museum, she combined technical details with the analysis of well-known Renaissance themes ("Une nappe du Louvre en depot au Musee de la Mode et du Textile", *Actes du colloque Dentelles* 2001, Le Puy en Velay 2004).

In the field of medieval and Byzantine textiles her special interest was the embroideries. In collaboration with the Musee des Tissus et Arts decoratifs de Lyon and the Byzantine Museum in Athens she helped to elucidate the complicated techniques and design, the colours, and the impact of these techniques on the composition of religious themes.

In the field of archaeological textiles her innovative work had a profound impact. Along with her close collaborator Christophe Moulherat, she analyzed tex-

tile remains from Attica, Corfu and Salamis. Using innovating techniques both with the electron scanning microscopy and light microscopy, they identified the micromorphological characteristics of mineralized textiles, of which most Aegean examples constitute. Thus they were able to show the fine qualities of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman textiles, the raw materials, the extensive use of wool, and the purple dyes. Moreover, Youli, through her work in museums, lectures, conference presentations and articles, contributed to make the world aware that archaeological textiles *do* exist in Greece, and that they are of exceptional quality.

In a massive undertaking, Youli and Christophe studied the many remains of textiles, strings, ropes and nets in the Late Bronze Age town at Akrotiri, Thera. Their work must be considered in the context of already published tool remains and Linear A inscriptions dealing with textiles, thus offering a general view of the textile production in this Late Bronze Age town in the Aegean. This is the first glimpse into the "real thing", *i.e.* how the real garments, those we see depicted in the wall-paintings must have looked. A very important study is currently in progress for the identification of the vegetal and animal fibres in these textiles.

Youli abandoned us in the middle of important activities leaving much work in progress. The Centre of Textile Research and Restauration in Athens (ARTEX) of which she was an important member will publish her work in the review *Arachne* and elsewhere. We believe that this is the best tribute to her memory.