

JOHANNA BANCK-BURGESS, ELENA MARINOVA & DORIS MISCHKA (ed.). 2024. *The significance of archaeological textiles: papers of the international online conference 24th–25th February 2021. THEFBO, Volume II* (Forschungen und Berichte zur Archäologie in Baden-Württemberg 28). Wiesbaden: Reichert; 978-3-7520-0784-8 hardback €39.



THEFBO is the acronym of a three-year project (2019–2021) called ‘Textile craftsmanship in the prehistoric wetland settlements on Lake Constance and Upper Swabia – requirements for textiles and their perception’ (translated from: *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung des Textilhandwerks der prähistorischen Feuchtbodensiedlungen am Bodensee und Oberschwaben im Kontext von Anforderungen an textile Objekte und ihre Wahrnehmung*) (website available at: <https://www.thefbo.de/project-description>). The aim of this scientific interdisciplinary project is to establish a new diachronic perspective between Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, based on textiles finds in the wetlands of lakeside settlements in south-west Germany and to

highlight the major role played by this category of perishable artefacts in the cultural context of the first villages in this particular geographical area. The publication *THEFBO volume II* (volume I is still in production) contains 13 contributions in English, all well illustrated with high-quality black/white and colour figures, which were presented at the international conference organised by the members of the THEFBO project in February 2021. Due to health restrictions linked to Covid-19, this event was held online. The subjects of the chapters reflect the main idea of the THEFBO project, namely the importance of textiles in the context of the first agricultural settlements in prehistoric Central Europe.

After an introduction by the editors Johanna Banck-Burgess, Elena Miranova and Doris Mischka, the publication opens with the results of one of the THEFBO projects by Sebastian Böhm, Anja Probst-Böhm, Doris Mischka, Sebastian Million, Mila Andonova-Katsarski, Ingrid Stelzner and Johanna Banck-Burgess. Nearly 2200 textiles discovered at 22 wetland sites around Lake Constance, its tributaries and near Lake Feder (in southern Germany), dating from the Early Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age, were studied. More than half of these organic elements were found at the Hornstaad-Hörnle IA site. These textiles are all made from plant fibres and have been preserved both in a calcined form and—thanks to the favourable environments in which they were found—in an unaltered form. In total, these artefacts can be divided due to their manufacturing techniques into 12 categories, including baskets, bark containers, ropes and cords, threads and nets. It is worth mentioning here that what are termed ‘textiles’ for prehistoric periods (in this case, the Neolithic and Bronze Age) are not necessarily regarded as such in more recent chronological periods. Banck-Burgess advocates this point of view in the following chapter. The research defines and explains the typological classifications and terminology applied to the study of prehistoric textiles, in particular the terms ‘textile, basketry, fabric, weave and cloth’. Next, Bernhard Gramsch and Ilona Kernchen present the textile elements (yarns, ropes, cords and nets) unearthed in the

sandy sediment of the North German site of Friesack 4 from the Early Mesolithic, with willow bast dating from the Middle Pre-Boreal and Early Boreal periods (9200–7800 cal BC). Maria Herrero-Otal, Susagna Romero-Brugués and Raquel Piqué Huerta highlight their research results regarding textiles (cordage and basketry) made from plant fibres (nettle, flax and tree bast) discovered at La Draga (Early Neolithic) and Coves del Fem (Mesolithic/Early Neolithic), two sites in north-east Spain. In the fifth contribution, Harald Sträube and Gabriele Wagner look at the use of bast and bark through several discoveries relating to the Early Neolithic Linearbandkeramik Culture made in Saxony (Germany), including cords still tied around ceramics, birch-bark boxes and bast bags. The authors also compare the Neolithic bark containers with recent ethnographic examples from Africa and Russia.

Regula Gubler then invites the reader to discover Swiss glacial archaeology, with objects made of organic materials (wood, bast, bark and wool), dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, found when ice patches melted at two high-alpine passes, the Schnidejoch and the Lötschenpass. This theme is a reminder of the damaging effects of global warming on the conservation of perishable objects and it highlights the importance of glacial archaeology in protecting this fragile heritage through the vigilance of archaeologists. Oliver Nelle and Elena Marinova demonstrate in the subsequent chapter through a palynological approach the significant presence of lime trees in prehistoric European landscapes, their distribution across the continent over time and the important role played by this species in textile production.

Further contributions focus on the relationship between textiles and ceramics. Irenäus Matuschik investigates how organic material, whether textile or other (such as pig bladders), influenced the forms of ceramic vessels around Lake Constance during the fourth millennium BC. This connection between textiles and ceramics is also highlighted by Karina Grömer, in studying how cords and wires were used in imprinting decorations on ceramics in Central Europe during the same period. Małgorzata Siennicka's contribution presents the interconnection between the materials that are textile fibres (linen and wool) and clay, and how tools (spindle whorls and loom weights) and fabrics have a mutual influence in the Aegean culture of the Early Bronze Age. Agata Ulanowska demonstrates how textile impressions (ropes, threads, textiles and other organic materials such as leather) on the Heidelberg collection of Aegean clay seals can provide information about the raw materials used and the different sealing practices in Bronze Age Greece. The penultimate chapter, by Marco Baioni, Margarita Gleba, Claudia Mangani and Roberto Micheli, shares the results of the study of textiles (such as linen tabbies and basketry) and textile tools from the pile-dwelling sites of Palù di Livenza (Neolithic) and Lucone di Polpenazze del Garda (Early Bronze Age), and how these artefacts provide new information on the skills—such as splicing and spinning—of prehistoric populations in northern Italy. Spinning and splicing are also discussed in the final contribution, in which Hildegard Igel and Johanna Banck-Burgess use experimental archaeology to provide a better understanding of the various transformations of bast fibres and their use in prehistoric textiles.

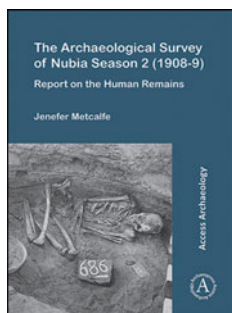
This volume sheds new light on prehistoric textiles and extends the field of textile research by incorporating techniques not necessarily recognised as belonging to this discipline field for historical periods. Based on the THEFBO project, located in southern Germany with connections in the Alpine border region of Switzerland, Austria and Italy, the publication extends the geographical scope across Central Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) and

the Mediterranean basin (Spain, Italy, Greece). The case studies demonstrate through a multidisciplinary approach how prehistoric populations gathered and transformed natural resources, plant fibres (flax, nettle, bast, bark) and wool, for their daily needs—such as fishing, hunting, transport, cooking and clothing—from the Palaeolithic period onwards. Finally, these symposium proceedings restore organic elements to their rightful place as artefacts that help provide a better understanding of the daily lives and skills of prehistoric societies in Europe. These contributions offer a different view of the Stone Age: that of a world where plant and wood fibres were omnipresent alongside stone and clay.

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JENEFER METCALFE. 2023. *The archaeological survey of Nubia Season 2 (1908–9): report on the human remains*. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-80327-636-6 paperback £55 ebook OpenAccess <http://doi.org/10.32028/9781803276366>.



Perhaps one of the most well-known archaeological survey projects ever undertaken, the Archaeological Survey of Nubia (ASN) directed by George Andrew Reisner and later Cecil Firth, conducted over four seasons between 1907–1911, has left an indelible mark on archaeological research in Egypt and Sudan. Of the human skeletal remains recorded and variously recovered from 151 cemeteries—from which the author Jenefer Metcalfe estimates that approximately 7500 individuals were excavated from about 20 000 graves—it is only truly the results of the first season of 1907–1908 that, to date, have been comprehensively published. The results of skeletal analyses from subsequent seasons have thus far been presented in a much more piecemeal and topic-specific fashion through various field reports and research papers.

Anatomical analyses of the human skeletal remains excavated by the ASN during the first season (1907–1908) were conducted by Sir Grafton Elliot Smith and Frederick Wood Jones with subsequent publication in 1910 as *The archaeological survey of Nubia 1907–08 Vol II. Report on the human remains*. Douglas Erith Derry, working in collaboration with Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, was the anatomist on site for the final three seasons (1908–1911). The skeletal remains recovered during the ASN range from the early A-group period to the Christian period, a timeframe spanning from *c.* the fourth millennium BC through to *c.* the first millennium AD. Analyses of archaeologically identified skeletal remains during the early 1900s were less common than today, with rationales for investigation typically focusing on assessments of mummification processes, elite social echelons or identification with notable