

New aspects on the dress in the past

The session aims to seek new views on the research of dresses. The dress has many important aspects in human life. Dress may for example reveal the social role of an individual and how this role is acted out in life. Many aspects of identity or personhood may be approached through the clothes. Focus can be set to the one who wears the dress, but it is only one aspect. The dress has both individual and communal meaning both in everyday life and in feast. It is necessity through the life but it is also present in burials. Who wears what and why is depended on various pieces, which we would like to bring out to discussion. One element of clothing are the concrete artefacts, but beyond their physical appearance there are several phenomena like norms, manners, politics and fashion, which all are connected to the context.

The dress may be studied from many kinds of archaeological materials. When textiles have preserved, their manufacture techniques and colours inform of, for example, economical, social and technical points of views. In addition, we seek for theorisation of the dress also through other find materials than textiles. These include for example fasteners, like buttons and fibulae, and ornaments of the dress. The dress may also be researched through iconographic and written sources.

The organisers warmly welcome presentations from textile researchers, archaeologists, historians and other researchers that work with textiles or dressing artefacts. Papers are not geographically tight and also time periods can vary.

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The aims of the session

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A collected people

Between 1916 and 1928 the Medical Officer of South West Africa, Dr. Louis Fourie, collected what was to become one of the largest ethnographic collections of San, or Bushman material. The collection

comprise more than 3000 artefacts, almost 300 photographs, and files upon files of notes, correspondence, literature and other archival material. The majority of the collection is now housed at the MuseumAfrica in Johannesburg and is unique not only in its sheer volume but also for its well provenanced origin – within just over a decade, from named groups and territories within what is today Namibia.

In this paper I will present the traditional dress of the San of colonial South West Africa as it is preserved in the different medias of the Fourie collection. Problems of representativity will be discussed as it becomes clear that the different types of source material tell different and potentially conflicting stories about the intended objects (and subjects) of study. Research historical aspects will be emphasised as part of the discussion. Lastly I will try to outline the future potential of this historically biased research material.

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The belt in prehistoric central Tyrrhenian Italy

The belts were used to fasten the tunic, but were also used in work, for example while weaving ribbons with tablets. The belts also had a symbolic meaning as a part of the dress. When valuable materials have been used, the belts are prestige items. Different kind of belts and their fastening types also indicate fashion, which has differed according to gender. Furthermore, ethnic groups have used varying kinds of belts. In the Iron Age archaeological material from the central Tyrrhenian Italy, the prestige belts or buckles made of bronze are the most usual items, whereas belts made of textile ribbons or leather have not preserved. For this reason, the belts found from the burials do not indicate common fashion. Prestige belts, however, reflect the social status and role of the deceased in the family or community. However, it is possible that in some manner the bronze belts represent those used in daily life. The aim of the presentation is to explore, how the belt was used in prehistoric central Tyrrhenian Italy and how its wearing presents the roles and values of the communities.

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Ancient textiles were expensive. How do you know that?

According to an old saying “Time is money”. A distinguished textile expert has commented the question why in the Homeric *Odyssey* Penelope succeeded to fool her suitors by weaving a burial cloth for three

years that it could have taken that time. Such a statement means that the author has good knowledge of materials, techniques and human working efficiency needed in making textiles. Such a knowledge in each of these categories can be consisted of several type of data: archaeological textile finds, historical sources, ethnographic information, experimental archaeology and to some extent even present day practices. In some attempts to define costs of ancient products the “time money” has been taken as working days, which in some contexts can be expressed as currency of the time in question or even as present day money. This paper is going to discuss different aspects how the question of value of ancient textiles can be approached. Although there are problematic aspects in each types of approaches, the overall picture emerging is that even the cheapest ancient textiles were relatively expensive for the common people compared with those at hand after the industrial revolution.

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Iron Age mittens and socks made with *nålbinding* –technique

Several textile fragments made with *nålbinding* technique have been found in the Finnish Late Iron Age inhumation burials. Most of these fragments have been interpreted as remains of mittens, but there are also some possible socks. The mittens were practical in every day's life but also an important part of the funeral dressing. What was the meaning of the mittens in the graves is still an open question since they were not dressed, only placed near the hands. Secondly, the mittens do not indicate a winter burial.

Describing the *nålbinding* on the level of stitching is problematic and has not been fully discussed at the scientific forum. How should we describe the structures in certain Finnish stitches, like Kaukola and Parikkala stitch or the method of two needles?

The yarn can be interpreted as a parallel of a thread of life. Could there be something symbolic in the *nålbinding* technique itself that explains the *nålbound* textiles in the Iron Age Finnish graves?

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Dress in medieval Finnish wills

Medieval dress has been a neglected subject for a long time in Finland, and written material has not been used in research. When scholars from different fields communicate it is however important to

have a shared terminology that everyone understands and the best way to do that is to go to the written sources.

This paper presents the results of my BA thesis, which discussed dress in Finnish medieval wills and dress terminology found in them. The clothing and dress terminology was investigated by analyzing the Finnish material found from Diplomatarium Fennicum database and by comparing it to other Nordic research. In addition to studying how the wills can be used in dress studies, special interest was put on the terminology and typology of the dress, as well as to how researchers could create a common terminology, when most of the sources are written in Swedish or Latin.

By piecing together different sources from archaeology, art and written material it is possible to gain new knowledge about Finnish medieval dress, and this research is for its own part shedding light to the "dark age" of Finnish dress history as well as to the research field concerning the subject.

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Medieval dress and dress-accessories as a religious interface

Terence S. Turner argues in his seminal essay that dress, by virtue of its physical proximity to the body, is the social skin that models the social boundary between the individual and other actors, as well as the border between bodily, pre-social forces and social meanings. In a similar vein, it will be argued that in the medieval world, dress was also a matrix which brought forth religious sentiments and thoughts. It participated in the construction of the believing subject. In the Nordic sources related to medieval religious practices, including mural paintings, wooden sculptures and liturgical paraphernalia, dress gives form and meaning to religious figures. Through their minute iconographic details, various forms of dress and dress-accessories enabled nuanced, Christian reactions and affects. The use of precious textiles and jewellery made religious ideas, images and artefacts approachable and this-worldly, but simultaneously, the focus of veneration. Moreover, the parishioners themselves wore artefacts on their clothes, which signalled their religious convictions. Textiles, dress and dress-accessories, by their participation with both secular and sacred worlds, created a material matrix or interface which channelled religious desires.

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Metal buttons in the Finnish folk costume as means of social control in the 18th and 19th centuries

Buttons have been used as fasteners and as decoration since pre-historical times. Their use increased significantly around 1300 AD when the new fashion of more tightly tailored clothing required better fastening methods than before. Eventually, buttons became a fashionable item worn in all kinds of fashionable clothes, hats and even in handkerchiefs. Mostly they were used in clothing of men from high social classes and only rarely in women's until late 18th and 19th centuries. In Finnish folk costume, however, metal buttons don't seem to be used until 18th and 19th centuries although it can be possible that the richer part of the folk used some already in the 17th centuries. Some metal buttons used specifically in folk costume have been identified. They were a relatively expensive and very special decoration in folk costume and thus used mainly in festive clothing. Metal buttons were adapted from the fashion of the upper classes, which was not necessarily seen acceptable, but the increased wealth and social power amongst the common people established the willingness to show it in dress and in decorative elements.

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Fashion or funktion? Possible dress-codes in the Great fresco of Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii?

The Great Fresco of the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii has been given numerous interpretations. The interpretations have been mainly connected to the behaviour of the figures in the Fresco, the total composition, and the Fresco's visual references to Dionysiac mythology and rites. However, the Fresco seems to contain data-sources that still are poorly explored, such as the dresses worn by the figures. Certain colours and colour-combinations can be found in the figures' clothes and other textiles in the fresco. I suggest that it is possible that particular symbolic colours and dress-codes may be hinted at, or even spelled out. As fixed dress-codes and colour-symbolism have characteristic functions in religious societies and rites, these findings may have relevance for the interpretation of the Fresco. In this paper I relate the dress-codes in the Fresco to other information about Dionysiac congregations (*thiasoi*).

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