



Clothing as a spectacle of identities A theoretical toolbox

WG2 Training School, April 7th-8th

Call for applications

Date of the event: 7-8 April 2022

Venue: Online

Trainers: Zofia Kaczmarek and Elsa Yvanez

Deadline for application: 1 March 2022



General concept of the Training School

Clothing throughout the ages became not only a second skin – an extra layer to protect humankind from unfavourable weather, cold or hurt – it also became a means of non-verbal communication. As such, it is closely related to identity, portraying information about the wearer’s age, gender, social status, belief, or geographical origin. Clothing affects the way we behave and the roles we embrace in society. The choice of garments (voluntary or imposed) claims one’s place in the society and demonstrates the commitment to the traditions of the group. In that way, clothing is a very powerful type of artefact, maintaining a high level of human agency. In history and archaeology, it has often been used as an identity marker to identify different population groups, using iconography as the main source. However, this approach carries many inherent biases that modern research needs to question. Merging textile research and archaeological theory opens new perspectives and can bring clothing to its full documentary potential.

This Training School aims at providing a first “tool kit” to approach past dress practices in our study of past identities. This event will combine theoretical readings and lectures with the development of solid case-studies, giving examples of workflows from artefacts to interpretation. The trainees will be provided with a package of introductory bibliography and prepare their own case-study based on their material of choice and concepts they find relevant. Group discussions and feedback sessions will conclude the 2 days. After the Training School, we hope that each trainee will feel more confident in handling and applying theoretical concepts, and that everyone would have worked in producing their own case-study and be well on their way to a future talk or article.

How to apply?

Following the rules of COST Training Schools, interested trainees are kindly asked to apply before the 1st of March 2022, sending a short motivation letter (max. 500 words) and a CV to: zfkaczmarek@gmail.com and elsa.yvanez@gmail.com.

We offer a maximum of 10 positions – the selection of the candidates will be processed by the Core Group. We especially encourage application of ECI and PhD students.

Preliminary programme

07/04/2022. Morning session

Introduction by trainers Zofia Kaczmarek and Elsa Yvanez

Presentations by trainers:

- Theme 1. Pushing the borders (ZK)
- Theme 2. Dressing rank and power (EY)

07/04/2022. Afternoon session

Trainees independent work:

Prepare a short presentation (c. 5 minutes) about a case-study of your choice. Please include a figure modelling the concepts and material and start elaborating a plan for a potential article or talk about this case-study.

Consider answering questions such as: Which concepts do you find relevant to your case-study? Why? Who is the garment belonging to? What element of the garment can be considered diagnostic of a specific individual or group of people? What are the links between the garment (and its wearer) under study and the surrounding society? How could you visualise them? Please remember to also consider the limitations of your documentation.

08/04/2022. Morning session

Presentations by the trainees and feedback session.

Group discussion.

Detailed information & bibliographical references

1. General introduction (Pdfs of the works will be made available to the trainees ahead of time)

Main readings:

Hodder I. 2011. "Human-thing entanglement: towards an integrated archaeological perspective". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17: 154-177.

Meskell L. and Preucel R.W. 2007. "Identities". In L. Meskell and R.W Preucel (eds.), *A companion to social Archaeology*. Blackwell Publishing: 121-141.

Roach-Higgins M.E. and Eicher J.B. 1992. "Dress & Identity". *Clothing and Textile Research Journal* 10: 1-8.

Schneider J. 1987. "The Anthropology of Cloth". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16: 409-448.

Sørensen M.L.S. 1997. "Reading Dress: The Construction of Social Categories and Identities in Bronze Age Europe". *Journal of European Archaeology* 5.1: 93-114.

Additional readings (with many case-studies):

Cifarelli M. and Gawlinkski L. (eds.) 2017. *What Shall I Say of Clothes? Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Dress in Antiquity*. Boston: Archaeological Institute of America.

Cutler J. 2016. "Fashioning identity: weaving technology, dress and cultural change in the Middle and Late Bronze Age southern Aegean". In E. Gorogianny, P. Pavúk and N. Girella (eds.), *Beyond Thalassocracies. Understanding processes of Minoanisation and Mycenaenisation in the Aegean*. Oxford-Philadelphia: 172-185.

Harlow M. 2012. *Dress and Identity, IAA Interdisciplinary Series*. Oxford: BAR.

1. Theme 1. Pushing the borders

Accepting or refusing a certain type of dress could become a symbol of acceptance of the lifeways of a certain group or rejection of the tradition. But textiles and clothing also have an ability to move or abolish boundaries. Just as humans, they can travel long distances and bring new fashions and styles of wear. They can increase the distance between people, as well as can put them on equal footing. They can underline the geographical origin of the wearer, or they can hide it completely. In ancient societies visual sources helped to set the borders within which identity(ies) could be expressed, but also, they became means of communication and negotiation. Since communication and negotiation presuppose the existence of at least two parties, their effect may be different every time, depending mostly on the viewer. Notably, iconography also provides a rather limited and quite selective view on reality. That is why the researcher needs to turn to the written evidence as well. This theme will be explored with the case study of a tombstone of Blussus and Menimane, which is an example of how text and pictures can tell different stories.

Literature:

Caroll M. 2015. "Projecting self-perception on the Roman frontiers: the evidence of dress and funerary portraits". In D.J. Breeze, R.H. Jones and I.A. Oltean (eds.), *Understanding Roman frontiers. A Celebration for Professor Bill Hanson*, 154-166.

Hope V.M. 1998. "Negotiating identity and status. The gladiators of Roman Nimes". In J. Berry and R. Laurence (eds.), *Cultural identity in the Roman Empire*. London-New York: 179-195.

Rothe U. 2012. "Third way": Treveran Women's Dress and the "Gallic Ensemble", *American Journal of Archaeology* 116/2/: 235-252.

Woolf G. 1996. "Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire", *Journal of Roman Studies* 86, 22-39.

Case study: the Blussus and Menimane gravestone.

1. Theme 2. Dressing rank and power

Clothing is often cited as one of the main tools used by rulers to ascertain their power: by the wealth of the material chosen and the quality of the craftsmanship, their clothing stands out from the rest and embodies for all to see the power of the wearer. Certain costumes are also reserved to restricted categories of the population, encoding in the combination of specific garments the rank and/or occupation of the wearer. This theme will be explored through the lens of archaeological clothing found in Nubia, on the Late Antic site of Gebel Adda, merging data from textile remains, archaeology, and iconography. We will question what "elite" clothing is and test the notion of clothing "uniform" on ancient realities.

Literature:

Bruneau P. 1983. "Le vêtement". *Revue d'Archéologie Moderne et d'Archéologie Générale* 2: 139-171.

Harrison-Buck E. 2012. "Current Theory and Practice in the Archaeology of Power and Identity. An Introduction". In E. Harrison-Buck (ed.), *Power and Identity in Archaeological Theory and Practice: Case Studies from Ancient Mesoamerica*. University of Utah Press: 1-7.

- Yvanez E. 2018a. "Clothing the elite? Patterns of textile production and consumption in ancient Sudan and Nubia". In A. Ulanowska, M. Siennicka and M. Grupa (eds.), *Dynamics and Organisation of Textile Production in Past Societies in Europe and the Mediterranean*, *Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae* 31: 81-92.
- Yvanez E. 2018b. "Se vêtir à Gebel Adda. Nouvelles perspectives de recherche sur l'identité culturelle en Nubie méroïtique". In M. Maillot and G. Choimet (eds), *Actualités archéologiques françaises au Soudan, Routes de l'Orient*, h.s 3: 103-123.

Case study: the archer's grave from Gebel Adda: elite costume and administrative uniform

Image caption: Tombstone of Blussus and Menimane (Archäologisches Museum der WWU Münster / Robert Dylka [CC BY-NC-SA]) and close-up of a Nubian textile from Gebel Adda (photo E. Yvanez, with the courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum).