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# Textile Economies in Ancient Iberia (8th c. BCE - 5th c. CE): weaving the strands of a 'longue durée' history

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## Résumé

2024 marks the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Carmen Alfaro's seminal work on textiles and textile production in the Iberian Peninsula from Prehistory to the Roman Period. In those four decades, the panorama has changed significantly. The available database of evidence for discussions of textiles and especially textile production in the Peninsula has increased exponentially, and the available image is now more consistent in many aspects. However, these developments are still far from being homogeneous, and there are still important asymmetries which need to be addressed.

On the one hand, there is a clear imbalance between research in Spain, where the subject of textile production and textile economies in the Iron Age and Roman periods has been explored to a much greater extent, and in Portugal, where these topics remain poorly studied. Other asymmetries can equally be noted, both within specific chronological periods and between different phases of the time span considered here.

For the Iron Age, studies on textile production in the Iberian cultural area of the Eastern and Southeastern Peninsula have developed at a faster rate due, among other factors, to the visibility of textile related evidence. For other phases and areas, and save for some rare exceptions, studies dealing with textile production remain comparatively rare. There are also significant differences in the approaches so far deployed to the study of the Iron Age and the Roman Period.

In fact, the former has shown a much stronger focus on the typology of textile tools, and only secondarily on the spaces, contexts, and organization of production. This is perhaps due to the strong preponderance of domestic production in the textile economies of this period, but, as recent studies have shown, such a research dynamic may be overlooking more complex productive arrangements and economic structures.

For the Roman Period, on the other hand, one of the most significant developments in recent years has been the identification and study of textile related crafts facilities. This has put the Hispanic provinces in a map still dominated, to a large extent, by the data from the Italic Peninsula, and especially the Vesuvian cities. Typological and technological studies of textile tools,

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on the other hand, remain scarce, despite some significant advancements in recent years.

However, and beyond these different period-specific issues, it can be noted more generally that research on textile economies in both periods is still hindered by a lack of integrated approaches, both in a synchronic and diachronic sense. On the one hand, up-to-date studies considering textile economies as a whole – from resource exploitation to production, treatment, and consumption – are still lacking for both periods. On the other, diachronic narratives are still missing, which hinders our understanding of the different stages of technological development and the major points of change which mark the history of ancient textile economies at the Iberian level.

Fortunately, in the Iberian Peninsula as elsewhere, the study of textile economies in the ancient world is gaining traction and momentum. New data is constantly coming to the fore, and there is a noticeable uptick in studies dealing with textile related topics. The dynamic nature of this subject can be gauged by the development of new research projects, such as the "TEXLUS The Economy of Textile Crafts in Roman Lusitania" project or the pan-European COST Action "EuroWeb Europe through Textiles", in which Portuguese and Spanish teams have been actively developing new research.

This panel aims to showcase work conducted in the framework of both these and other ongoing research projects, while offering a state of the art and overview of current research on textile production in Iron Age and Roman Iberia. The goal is to foster a more active exchange of data and perspectives among researchers dealing with these topics to promote the construction of more integrated narratives and to address the development of regional textile economies from the beginning of the Iron Age to the end of the Roman Period.

**Mots-Clés:** Iron Age, Roman Period, Textile Production, Textile Technology, Archaeology of Crafts, Ancient Economy