

PREFACE

In spite of their perishable nature and fragile state of preservation, textile finds had sporadically been recovered from the prehistoric wetland settlements among the foothills of the Alps as early as the 19th century. Although the finds caused quite a sensation at the time, dedicated research regarding this material category would only emerge at a later date. Systematic excavations in the Lake Constance area and Upper Swabia were sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG) in the framework of their programmatic focus “*Siedlungsarchäologische Untersuchungen im Alpenvorland*” in the years between 1983 and 1993. This endeavour provided the opportunity to recover a unique trove of prehistoric wetland textiles, which encompasses more than 2200 textile fragments from 22 sites in the state of Baden-Württemberg today. Among the most important of these sites are Hornstaad-Hörnle IA, Allensbach-Strandbad, Ludwigshafen-Seehalde, and Sipplingen-Osthafen in the Lake Constance area. In Upper Swabia, the site of Seekirch-Achwiesen in the Federseeried marsh is of exceptional significance.

It is mainly due to Annemarie Feldtkeller of the Landesmuseum Württemberg (State Museum of Württemberg, LMW) in Stuttgart and her use of new and innovative conservation methods that the bulk of these vulnerable wetland finds has been preserved to this day. These methods were further refined in the restoration workshops of the Landesamt für Denkmalpflege (State Office for Cultural Heritage Preservation, LAD) of Baden-Württemberg. In a close collaboration with Helmut Schlichtherle, head of the wetland archaeology department of the LAD in Hemmenhofen at the time, it became possible to compile a truly unique complex of archaeological material and preserve it for future research.

This ephemeral legacy from the south of Baden-Württemberg includes some of the oldest textile finds from the early agricultural cultures of Europe. The settlement of Hornstaad-Hörnle IA in particular, which was destroyed by a major conflagration after only a brief existence (from 3917 to 3909 BC), provides a unique opportunity to study the technology of the Neolithic Era. Here, a broad spectrum of technical textiles was employed in all sectors of everyday life. They allow us to understand the amazing diversity of a craft which had previously been associated, in the main, with only a single application, namely weaving.

The wetland archaeology department of the LAD in Hemmenhofen, which employs a wide array of applied natural sciences, offers the best framework available for the interdisciplinary research of these finds. Our joint project THEFBO provided, for the first time, the opportunity to view the material category of technical textiles in a holistic approach, i. e., to examine overarching questions in an interdisciplinary team. This approach is clearly expressed by the full title of the project: “*Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung des Textilhandwerks der prähistorischen Feuchtbodensiedlungen am Bodensee und Oberschwaben im Kontext von Anforderungen an textile Objekte und ihre Wahrnehmung* (Textile craftsmanship in the prehistoric wetland settlements on Lake Constance and Upper Swabia – requirements for textiles and their perception)”.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, BMBF), which included the project in their funding line “*Die Sprache der Objekte – Materielle Kultur im Kontext gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung*” between October 2018 and September 2021 and kindly supported it throughout. Coordinated by the textile archaeology of the LAD, we were able to realise our research project in concert with four partner institutions: the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), the Julius-Maximilians University of Würzburg (JMU), the Archäologisches Landesmuseum (Archaeological State Museum, ALM) of Baden-Württemberg, and the Curt Engelhorn Centre for Archaeometry (CEZA). We are greatly indebted to all of these institutions and their staff, particularly to Prof. Dr. Doris Mischka, Dr. Barbara Theune-Großkopf, Prof. Dr. Ernst Pernicka, Prof. Dr. Guido Fackler, as well as Dr. Johanna Banck-Burgess of the LAD, who was the driving force behind the conceptualisation and realisation of the project.

In addition to the research results as such, the THEFBO project also encouraged the establishment of essential competences in the LAD, skills for which fundamental research had previously

been scarce. This particularly benefited the fields of dendrological and palaeobotanical material analysis, as well as the scientific conservation of organic wetland finds.

A conference titled “The Significance of Archaeological Textiles from the prehistoric period” was also conceived within the framework of the joint THEFBO project. Scheduled to be held at the height of the Covid pandemic, from February 24 to 26, 2021, this was necessarily converted into an exclusively online event.

The volume before you presents the contributions to this conference. Although it is actually conceived as Volume II of the THEFBO publication, this work now appears in print first due to organisational reasons. Volume I, which will contain the substantial results of the joint project, is set to follow soon. Dr. Johanna Banck-Burgess was in charge of the organisation of the conference. The compilation and editorship of the contributions was undertaken by Dr. Ulrike Lorenz-Link, and the proofreading and translations were provided by Shane Čavlović B. A. and Dr. Martin Baumeister. The production of the publication was coordinated by Dr. Thomas Link, and typesetting and production were carried out by the publishing house Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden.

We would like to thank everyone involved in this endeavour, particularly the authors, for contributing to the success of this volume!

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Prof. Dr. Claus Wolf

