Periferias: desde los márgenes de la arqueología

Sonia Carbonell Pastor, María Fructuoso Cárcel, Arturo García López, Paula Martín de la Sierra Pareja, José Luis Martínez Boix, Ester Moya Soriano, Nicolás Pastor Alameda, Pedro Ramón Baraza, Israel Serna Martínez (Eds.)

PUBLICACIONES INAPH
Universidad de Alicante
INAPH
COLECCIÓN PETRACOS 12
Periferias: desde los márgenes de la arqueología
Periferias:
desde los márgenes
de la arqueología
PETRACOS es una publicación de difusión y divulgación científica en el ámbito de la Arqueología y el Patrimonio Histórico, cuyo objetivo central es la promoción de los estudios efectuados desde el Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Arqueología y Patrimonio Histórico de la Universidad de Alicante –INAPH–. Petracos también pretende ser una herramienta para favorecer la transparencia y eficacia de la investigación arqueológica desarrollada, transfiriendo a la sociedad el conocimiento generado con la mayor rigurosidad posible. Esta serie asegura la calidad de los estudios publicados mediante un riguroso proceso de revisión de los manuscritos remitidos y el aval de informes externos de especialistas relacionados con la materia, aunque no se identifica necesariamente con el contenido de los trabajos publicados.

Dirección:
Lorenzo Abad Casal
Mauro S. Hernández Pérez

Consejo de redacción:
Lorenzo Abad Casal
Mauro S. Hernández Pérez
Sonia Gutiérrez Lloret
Francisco Javier Jover Maestre, secretario
Jaime Molina Vidal
Alberto J. Lorrio Alvarado

© del texto e imágenes: los autores

Edita: Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Arqueología, Patrimonio Histórico (INAPH) y Publicacions Universitat d’Alacant

Imagen de cubierta:
José Luis Martínez Boix

Depósito legal: A 246-2023
Diseño y maquetación: Marten Kwinkelenberg
Imprime: Byprint Percom S.L
Impreso en España
The study of *instrumenta textilia* in *Hispania*: towards a systematization

Leyre Morgado-Roncal

**Abstract**

In this paper we present an analysis of Roman Textile Production in the Iberian Peninsula with a special focus on textile tools. We will be briefly showcasing the state of question of this area of research. However, our focus will be the study of *instrumenta textilia* as a new research path to study textile production and handcrafts in *Hispania*. In fact, it is a line of investigation that has been barely explored for this chronological and geographical context. We will be examining previous research and the methodologies applied. Moreover, we will be proposing a multi-proxy perspective and examining some case studies from other regions of the Roman Empire. Consequently, we hope to reopen the debate around the ways of approximating handcrafts and Roman Textile Archaeology with special attention to textile tools as the main subject of archaeological study.

**Keywords:** *instrumenta textilia*, Iberian Peninsula, *Hispania*, Textile Production, handcrafts.

**Resumen**

En esta comunicación planteamos un análisis sobre la Arqueología Textil romana en la península ibérica con especial énfasis en el instrumental textil. En primera instancia mostraremos el estado de la cuestión. No obstante, nos centraremos en los *instrumenta textilia* como una vía para investigar la producción textil y el artesanado hispanorromano. De hecho, se trata de una línea de investigación poco explorada para esta horquilla crono-cultural. Revisaremos los estudios que se han hecho en la península ibérica y las metodologías aplicadas. En esa misma línea, propondremos un enfoque multi-proxy y ejemplos de otras zonas del Imperio donde se han aplicado estas perspectivas. Con ello, esperamos reabrir el debate en torno a las formas de aproximar la Arqueología Textil y el artesanado.

---

1. Predoctoral researcher, FPU, Department of Prehistory and Archaeology. University of Granada. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0839-3510 // leyre@ugr.es
Palabras clave: instrumenta textília, península ibérica, Hispania, producción textil, artesanado.

1. Introduction
The archaeological study of Textile Production, handcrafts or textile vestiges is nothing new. In fact, this line of research counts with a long tradition of studies that goes back to the 19th and 20th century. However, the reliance on archaeological textiles to study textile production not only did limit this area of research but made it unconceivable for geographical contexts where their climatological conditions did not favour textile preservation.

Particularly, in the Iberian Peninsula, the studies of Textile Archaeology during Roman times were a bit left behind (Morgado-Roncal, 2021b: 71-72). Paradoxically, Textile Production was socially and economically of first importance during Antiquity (Alfaro Giner, 1997: 10). One of the main challenges was to merge the archaeological data from vestiges of different nature (written classical sources, epigraphy, artisanal spaces, some archaeological textiles, textile tools, etc.). During the 20th century, there were not as many methodological resources as we have now (Alfaro Giner, 2020: 12). Therefore, we find that a relevant material culture such as textile tools -instrumenta textilia- were not always thoroughly examined in Hispania. Consequently, we hope to showcase the importance of textiles tools and how they can contribute to textiles’ chaîne opératoire.

2. The studies of Roman Textile Production in Hispania
The archaeological investigation of Roman Textile production deals with material vestiges of different nature. Initially, in Spain the absence of a big corpus of archaeological textiles (Morgado-Roncal, 2021a: fig. 2) limited the investigations. Consequently, indirect aspects of textile production -iconography, textile tools, artisanal spaces, etc.- were not as profoundly and systematically examined. Nonetheless, we have the fundamental work of Professor Alfaro Giner. Specially, the publication of Tejido y Cestería en la Península Ibérica. Historia de su técnica e industrias desde la Prehistoria hasta la Romanización (Alfaro Giner, 1984). It is still the main reference book to comprehend Textile Archaeology in Spain, a timeless publication. In fact, it helped massively to stablish the methodological basis, and, in a sense, it can be considered as the starting point of the archaeological study of Textile Production in the Iberian Peninsula.

Thanks to Alfar...
3. The *instrumenta textilia*: crafting textile production

Textile tools represent a material testimony of the different stages of Textile Production (Ulanowska, 2020: 213-215). From the extraction of raw materials (linen, wool, etc.), the processing of the fibers, the confection of the textiles and their mending when they were damaged or broken. Therefore, we count with a wide variety of specific tools that responded to the needs of the different stages of crafting a textile (fig. 1). The problem is that in Roman Iberia they were not always identified. It requires a level of academic specialization that only few scholars have (Alfaro Giner, 2020) and that might be why there are instruments that archaeologists do not connect with a textile function. For example: carders, rigid-heddles, or bone tablets for band weaving.

Figura 1. Different types of textile tools from Augusta Emerita: A) pondus (Ave. Lusitania, Mérida); B) spindle whorl (Solar Ampliación MNAR); C) needle (Calle Almedralejo, nº 41); D) carder (inv.14146, MNAR)
The study of *instrumenta textilia* in *Hispania* it is still at an early stage. There have been previous efforts to categorized textile tools, but they were a bit preliminary (such Tabar Sarrias y Unzu Urmenta, 1984).

Textile tools were also polyvalent elements and easily replaced. The raw materials used were diverse: wood -that tends to not be preserved-; pottery, mainly for spindle whorls and *pondera*; bone for needles, spindles, spindle whorls, tablets; and metals -bronze and iron- for needles, shears, and carders. Plus, other luxury materials like gold, silver or amber. This reinforces the need of interdisciplinary approaches.

The presence of textile tools in the archaeological record can be traced in many contexts: domestic spaces, tombs, artisanal spaces (*officinae lanificariae*, *fullonicae*, etc.), urban spaces, and even in levels of abandonment or garbage. This should not be that surprising because textile production had a domestic sphere, an economic function and it also transcended to daily life (Alfaro Giner, 1997).

The systematic study of textile tools is essential because they are the most abundant archaeological evidence of textile production. Secondly, understanding the tools provide an indirect way of accessing the textiles that are generally not preserved. Thirdly, they are a sign of the presence of textile production in the archaeological record. Fourthly, through them we can distinguish technological patterns and in funerary context, they could have a symbolic and artisanal meaning. In other words, a lonely spindle whorl might not be of much help, but the systematic study of their presence can literally help us to re-craft Roman textile production.

At the same time, we count with the example of projects and investigations on textile tools in other parts of the Empire like Italy. For example, the study of Roman Shears in Northern Italy or the investigation of textile tools in Pompeii (Busana et al. 2020; Ricci and Forte, 2020). Those references show us the potential that we also have in Roman Iberia to study Textile Production.

**4. Conclusion**

The study of textile production offers a significant historical-archaeological information about Roman society, economy, identity, and technology. However, textile production cannot be understood without the tools that made it possible to craft. In Roman Iberia textile tools have still a lot to offer, and we predict that in the future it will become an element of first importance. We hope to continue to contribute to this area of research and that this paper can help to the valorisation of textile tools as archaeological vestiges.
5. Bibliography


