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Chapter 7

Furniture textiles in Classical and Hellenistic iconography

Dimitra Andrianou

Abstract

Modern practices such as the stuffing of chairs and couches with soft materials and the covering of the stuffed parts with fabric tacked to the wooden frame were probably unknown in the ancient world. People nevertheless sought comfort by using different kinds of furnishings, as is shown from the excavated evidence and, particularly, from the visual representations of furniture on vase and wall-paintings and reliefs of the Classical and Hellenistic periods in Greece and Italy. Pillows, sheets and mattresses on bed-couches (klinai), and pillows on footstools, signify the need of comfort. Textiles were also used instead of architecture to denote the separation of spaces: curtains divided space within a room or visually separated the interior from the exterior space. Decorated wall-paintings on the ceiling of Hellenistic tombs suggest the presence of textiles and, specifically, cloth canopies called baldachins.

Introduction

In his 15th *Idyll* set in Alexandria, Theocritus, who was writing in the 3rd century BCE, presents two women examining embroideries hanging in the sanctuary of Adonis during a festival of the god.¹ Gorgo and Praxinoa, like the chorus of the *Ion*, or the women in Herodas' fourth *Mime*, might be considered naive viewers. For them, the success of the art they see is conceived in terms of its realism. Yet they also demonstrate that they are actively observing the textiles in front of them. They explicitly describe Adonis and the other figures in the embroidery as though they are living beings but, at the same time, are fully conscious that they are looking at a work of art. They vocalise their wonder and amazement to the irritation of the stranger standing next to them.²

Gorgo: Praxinoa, do come here. Before you do anything else I insist upon your looking at the embroideries. How delicate they are! And in such good taste! They're really hardly human, are they?

Praxinoa: Housewife³ Athena! The weavers that made that material and the embroiderers who did that close detailed work are simply marvels. How realistically the things all

stand and move about in it! They're living! It is wonderful what people can do. And then the Holy Boy [Adonis]; how perfectly beautiful he looks lying on his silver couch, with the down of manhood just showing on his cheeks ...

Second Stranger: Oh dear, oh dear, ladies! Do stop that eternal cooing.

(to the bystanders) They'll weary me to death with their ah-ah-ah-ing.

(Theocritus, *Idyll*, XV, 78–88, translation J.M. Edmonds)

Ancient textiles and the art of their production need to be interpreted against a background framed by these viewers' perspective. This is especially true both of the textiles used to cover furniture and of those used instead of furniture as these were also intended to be items of display. Bdellikleon, in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, orders his father Philokleon to admire the woven hangings of the court in an attempt to educate him about how to behave amongst sophisticated society; it seems that a well-bred guest was expected to ingratiate himself with his host by commenting on domestic textiles.⁴ At the same time, a long tradition of the pursuit of comfort has placed textiles at the heart of the material life

of the house and the tomb. With the arrival of upholstery, furniture and textiles became complementary concepts⁵ but this was not the case in antiquity when textiles often served a structural function: carpets, rugs and cushions made up for the absence of wooden or marble furniture. The fact that special furniture pieces, such as large chests, were created for the storage of textiles (apparently both clothing and home furnishings) that were called ‘precious heirlooms’ in Athenaios,⁶ suggests how great was the quantity of textiles used (and possibly produced) inside houses.⁷ In vase painting, clothing is shown as folded on chairs or inside chests rather than hanging on nails on the wall, making large chests significant items of household furniture.⁸ Based on later evidence, such chests worked also as tokens of display. They were often richly decorated and placed in visible positions in the house, signalling to visitors and guests a sense of lineage, taste and wealth by suggesting (rather than displaying) their contents.

Literary sources contain a wealth of nouns and adjectives referring to furnishings (especially bed covers) which survive in the works of Homer, Athenaios, Pollux and the Attic stelai that lists the confiscated property of Alcibiades and his followers.⁹ As with the vocabulary for furniture, the same word can be seen to be used for different kinds of textiles. For instance, the word *περίστρωμα* in its singular form apparently refers to a bed cover, but in the plural refers to carpets or hangings.¹⁰ The polysemy found in ancient Greek words used for furniture and textiles may be due to the fact that ancient Greek, as with many other languages, was slow to adapt to changes in material culture and, instead of creating new words, expanded the meaning of already existing ones. In linguistics this is known as a referential cause of semantic changes. At the same time, versatility also played a major role, as will be discussed below.

Despite the literary ambiguity, iconography (on vases, reliefs, wall-paintings and mosaics) provides ample evidence about the various types and uses of furniture textiles in the eastern Mediterranean world. Images and words complement each other and help fill in the gaps left by the rather limited material evidence. At times, the images can even be used to better understand textiles mentioned in the textual sources, and vice versa. Moreover, as the evolution of furniture textiles is rather slow, evidence from Geometric to Roman times can be used to understand usage in a variety of periods and over a wide geographical area.

When associated with furniture, textiles increase comfort (for example pillows), enhance utility (bed covers) and drape house interiors (curtains).

Bed sheets and pillows

In iconography, social practices, such as dining during a *symposion* (banquet) in an *andron* (the special room for a banquet in a house), required material props both in terms

of furniture and domestic textiles. This is unsurprising, given that the literary evidence about textiles from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE is rather impressive.¹¹ *Symposion* scenes outnumber any other iconographic category on the vase painting and funerary reliefs that depict textiles since *klinai* (bed-couches) are usually shown with mattresses and pillows (*προσκεφάλαια*, *κνέφαλα*) that are oblong in shape (Fig. 7.1) and filled with feathers, wool, dry leaves, straw or hay (called *πλήρωμα* or *κνέφαλλον* in the sources).¹² Pillows are placed on the side of the *kline* to add comfort¹³ and are usually used to support the diners’ elbows (called *ὑπαγκώνια*), an arrangement later enhanced by a straight support at the head of the *kline*¹⁴ that evolves into the later *fulcrum* (S-shaped head rest).¹⁵ Pillows are often decorated with stripes (probably produced by inserting weft threads of different colours when weaving on the loom)¹⁶ or geometric designs that resemble stars covering either the entire surface¹⁷ or lining a woven or embroidered edge.¹⁸ Complex geometric patterns (meanders or chevrons, for instance) on certain pillows may indicate tablet or back-strap loom weaving.¹⁹ Many of these decorative borders may have been produced separately and then attached to the furniture textiles.²⁰ Oblong, cylindrical pillows (banana-shaped) were often quite thick and were occasionally used as mattresses on couches.²¹ In short, up until the late 4th century BCE mattresses are pillows with larger dimensions. Further proof of this is provided by ancient etymology: the word *τόλη* used to denote a mattress originally meant swell, with the connotation of something bulky.²² The word *κνέφαλλον* on the Attic stelai is interpreted as both a cushion and a mattress. By the late 4th century BCE, as will be seen, mattresses have become thicker and look more like modern mattresses than ancient pillows.

In iconography each symposiast is provided with his own pillow,²³ occasionally folded in half,²⁴ and sometimes more than one.²⁵ The *symposion* scene on an Attic red-figure *stamnos* signed by Smikros from 510 BCE is enlightening in terms of pillow design;²⁶ it is decorated by a tassel²⁷ and features pillows quite similar to those depicted on a contemporary red-figure *kalix krater* (large vase for the dilution of wine with water) attributed to Euphronios (c. 520–500 BCE).²⁸ Both are decorated with the saw-tooth weaving pattern. Pillows were occasionally objects of such luxury that the participants in a banquet ‘hesitated to press their elbows against them’.²⁹ In the literary sources leather pillows (*προσκεφάλαια σκύτινα*) were apparently items of display; they are listed among the property of Alcibiades and his followers.³⁰ A special word is reserved for a weaver of cushion covers (*τυλωφάντης*).³¹

Textiles become even more important when furniture is absent: in *symposion* scenes double pillows, elongated pillows³² or mattresses can stand in for couches.³³ Such gatherings were presumably often held in houses with fewer pieces of furniture or none at all, or were impromptu gatherings

held inside or outdoors. Poorer households borrowed utensils and textiles from neighbours: in Menander's *Dyskolos* Getas, the servant, asks his wealthier neighbour Knemon repeatedly if he can borrow certain equipment in order to set up a *symposion* for the men (τοῖς ἀνδράσιν).³⁴ During a festival at Sparta special banquets (κοπίδες) were laid out under tents near the temple of the god and participants reclined on beds of leaves (στιβάδας ἐξ ὕλης) strewn with carpets.³⁵ Here, carpets over leaves make up for the absence of couches and mattresses. On Delos, bedding on its own (*i.e.* not accompanied by furniture) was sufficient during certain religious festivals,³⁶ whereas in Magnesia, by the Maeander River, beds, bedding and tables were offered to foreigners.³⁷ Scenes on painted vases make it clear that wineskins³⁸ or animal skins could also provide comfort.³⁹ Certain deities, such as Dionysos, customarily used a panther's skin on their couch.⁴⁰ A red-figure vase in Laon, France reveals that pillows could also be used to support a person's back when leaning against something rigid (such as a wall) while playing the flute.⁴¹ In this particular example, the sides of the pillow are probably 'open' (*i.e.* not sewn together).

Beyond the *symposion*, pillows and mattresses are depicted in mythical, sacred or funerary scenes. A unique depiction of a thick but pliable mattress paired with a thick, stiff pillow is shown on the *kline* of Danae being seduced by Zeus on a *krater* (mixing vessel for wine) in St Petersburg.⁴² The sagging mattress of Danae's *kline* is elaborately decorated with a pattern of lines and dots arranged in a diamond motif, while the pillow at the head of the bed bears identical bands of stripes down its seam. The side of the pillow and the side of the mattress are iconographically similar. The flexibility of the *kline* has most probably been exaggerated in order to accentuate both Zeus' force as the golden rain impregnating Danae and her inviting, cradling form.⁴³

Pillows suggest comfort in situations where comfort is essential: a fragment of an inscribed *lekythos* (oil-flask) from the Athenian Agora dated to the third quarter of the 4th century BCE shows Sikelia leaning against thick pillows on a couch (Fig. 7.2).⁴⁴ Another female figure stands at the right in a protective gesture, her right arm behind Sikelia. Such depictions on funerary stelai are interpreted as scenes of women who died during childbirth, attended by a midwife.⁴⁵ Apparently Sikelia, a slave, died while giving birth.

Sleeping naturally required pillows: a patient, cured during sleep in Amphiaraos' hands, is shown on a 4th-century relief lying on a bed with a thick pillow.⁴⁶ Eternal sleep in *ekphora* scenes required ὑπανχένια, pillows designed specifically to provide support under the neck.⁴⁷ In the absence of cushions, rolled-up garments might be used⁴⁸ or a bundle of clothes⁴⁹ or, especially when travelling, possibly a sack.⁵⁰

Bed sheets are commonly depicted in *symposion* or love scenes: an embracing couple is shown covered by a single blanket on a couch (or pillow?) on a red-figure cup.⁵¹ Design and colour coordination of sheets and pillows is occasionally



Fig. 7.1. Female stuffing a pillow, lekythos by the Brygos Painter, 5th century BCE. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Schimmel Foundation, inv. no. 1991.28. Photo: © President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Fig. 7.2. *Sikelia leaning against pillows, marble lekythos, third quarter of the 4th century BCE. After Grossman (2013, inv. no. 170, I 6603). Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.*

sought, as on a 4th-century BCE *kalyx krater* by the Kadmos Painter⁵² and in the *symposion* scene in the tomb at Agios Athanasios at Thessaloniki.⁵³ In funerary interiors, the colourful draped *klinai* from the tomb of Amarynthos, Eretria, dated to the second half of the 3rd century BCE stand out (Fig. 7.3 a, b).⁵⁴ Occasionally humour pairs the decoration of the pillow with the decoration of a drunken Skythian's garment, making a visual pun on the verb σκυθίζειν (to drink immoderately).⁵⁵

In the Etruscan 3rd-century BCE Tomb of the Shields (*Tomba degli scudi*) in Tarquinia, the couch of the dining couple appears to be spread with cushions and rugs (possibly made in the tapestry technique) instead of light bed sheets, since the material over the couch has a feeling of heaviness (Fig. 7.4).⁵⁶ It would appear that the ancient word δάπις or τάπις is used in the literary sources to describe both a bed and seat covering and a carpet. Specific references note that expensive garments might double as tapestries hung on the walls, the ceiling or between columns.⁵⁷ Owing to the way Greek textiles were made, versatility was a basic characteristic: a rectangular piece of cloth could be used as a personal garment, a bed cover or a decorative hanging, as described in Homer⁵⁸ and Aristophanes.⁵⁹

Smell plays an important part in the experience of textiles and it is of course something that cannot be captured through the visual evidence: bed clothes are described as 'sweet smelling' (ροδόπνοα στρώματα) and were apparently perfumed with herbal ingredients such as rose leaves.⁶⁰ Citrons placed among garments are known to have protected them from moths and apparently left a distinctive perfume on the textiles.⁶¹

Klinai draped with long bed sheets commonly appear in the 4th century BCE and become quite frequent on the Hellenistic reliefs in the East that depict banquet scenes. In a shallow relief panel on a stele found in the Athenian Agora (north of the Painted Stoa), dated to the third quarter of the 4th century BCE, a figure, presumably male, is reclining on such a *kline*.⁶² The textile here is highlighted at the expense of the *kline* legs, as the bed sheet is wrapped around the leg, hiding it completely. The depiction of a sheet turning around the leg of a couch may be deliberately chosen to reveal an ἀμφιτάπις, a reversible blanket or sheet.⁶³ The same idea appears on a relief from Kyzikos, Anatolia, with a weight hanging from the end of the cloth.⁶⁴ Such weights are a common addition in the Hellenistic period and, apart from ornamentation, may have been used to suggest lighter textiles that required a means to keep them flat and in place.



Fig. 7.3. A. Amarynthos Tomb, Eretria, painted kline, second half of the 3rd century BCE. After Huguenot (2008, col.pl. 82.1). Photo: Courtesy of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece.

Although bed sheets on *klinai* have largely not survived in the archaeological record in Greece, ornaments possibly belonging to a gold-woven bed sheet – gold bells with clappers apparently sewn on to its fringe – were found along with gold strips in Tomb A at Katerini, northern Greece, dated to the second quarter of the 4th century BCE (Fig. 7.5).⁶⁵ They may have acted both as weights and as ornamentation.

Ptolemy's pavilion, described by Athenaios, had Persian carpets (called *ψῆλαι*) that hid the space between the legs of the couch and were decorated with beautiful designs and figures woven with considerable skill.⁶⁶ Eloquent examples of similar pieces of textile include the low draped couch on a red-figure *kalyx krater*⁶⁷ and the *klinai* on the Late Hellenistic Myrina terracottas which possibly depict the Milesian bed covers so celebrated in the texts.⁶⁸ In examples where the *klinai* have sculpted legs (and specifically legs with sphinxes), the valance turns at the edge but does not hide the leg of the *kline*.⁶⁹ All decorative details were carefully and meaningfully planned to serve as a direct reference to the wealth of the household.

Bed coverings are also depicted in another special iconographic schema, the so-called 'Theoxenia of the Dioskouroi,' an institution of a ritual meal offering, known mainly through epigraphical sources, that denotes an ideal or actual *xenismos* for a God or hero.⁷⁰ On the *hydria* (water



Fig. 7.3. B. Amarynthos Tomb, Eretria, painted kline, second half of the 3rd century BCE. After Huguenot (2008, col. pl. 83.1). Photo: Courtesy of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece.



Fig. 7.4. Facsimile of the Tomba degli scudi (Tomb of the Shields), Tarquinia. The tomb dates to the 3rd century BCE. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, HIN 175. Photo: Ole Haupt.



Fig. 7.5. Gold bells from a textile, Tomb A, Katerini, northern Greece, second quarter of the 4th century BCE. After Schmidt-Dounas (2017, col. pl. 26.3). Photo: Courtesy of B. Schmidt-Dounas.

vessel) by the Christie Painter dated to 440–430 BCE, an empty couch and a table provided with food and two *kantharoi* (drinking cups) show that the divine twins are expected among the worshippers.⁷¹ On the *hydria* by the Kadmos painter exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv, a *kline* is covered with embroidered material and has two oblong pillows on either side.⁷²

Mattresses

Although it is difficult as yet to trace a chronological development for furniture textiles, a clearer trajectory can be established for mattresses. As mentioned earlier, mattresses had become thick and more like modern mattresses than pillows by the late 4th century BCE. On a late 4th-century BCE *krater*, Hades and Persephone sit on what look like two mattresses, placed one on top of the other; the lower one is possibly decorated with additional materials that look like pearls.⁷³ Decorative embellishments are known to have been used on garments since the 6th century BCE: the so-called Lady of Aigai was buried with an overgarment adorned with large gold strips sewn on to its edge.⁷⁴



Fig. 7.6. Valance on a kline, marble relief, Late Imperial period. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. no. I 1085. After Pfuhl-Möbius (1977, no. 2020).

In the 2nd century CE, on a series of reliefs from Odessos, mattresses reveal an intriguing detail: the way they have been decorated may suggest an early form of upholstery or a neatly folded textile.⁷⁵ If upholstered, small wooden pegs placed at regular intervals may have secured the fabric to the stuffing of the mattress, thus creating the radial folds visible on the reliefs. If folded, there is other evidence of folded garments worn by statues of the late 3rd century BCE.⁷⁶ Furthermore, evidence of cloth presses has been discovered: metal fittings of a cloth press uncovered in a fullery at Pompeii; a painting of a cloth press also from Pompeii; and what must have been a cloth press reconstructed from carbonised pieces at Herculaneum. These discoveries constitute contemporary evidence and support the idea that textiles were tightly folded.⁷⁷

Valances

Shorter bed sheets with decoration distinctly different from that of the rest of the bedding, and hanging from the edge of the bed frame under the mattress, can be identified as valances (Fig. 7.6).⁷⁸ On the rock-cut *kline* inside the Moustapha Pasha tomb in Alexandria, three pillows are shown on each side along with a richly fringed cloth painted to look as if it is hanging below the lower cross-piece of the *kline*.⁷⁹ Small golden female figures (no longer visible) poised frontally on their toes, with windblown veils encircling their heads, embellish the horizontal and vertical sides of the cloth and are replicated on the vertical band of

the mattress. Paired on the mattress and tapestry bed-cloth, these figures simulate fine weaving or embroidery wrought with golden thread.

Gold ornamentation on textiles also appears in scenes featuring divine figures: on a pottery fragment from Taranto, bearded Dionysos holding his *thyrsus* reclines on a richly decorated *kline*.⁸⁰ His left elbow propped on a pillow, he rests on a lushly patterned sheet with a wonderful *bordure* with sphinxes and a fringe. Although it is impossible to make out the manufacturing technique with any degree of certainty, the dark background with lighter decoration may suggest a purple-dyed woollen textile woven with gold thread (possibly the χρυσοβαφεῖς of Pollux),⁸¹ presumably in the tapestry technique. This is similar to the famous textile found in the small golden *larnax* (funerary urn) inside a marble chest on the south side of the antechamber of the so-called Tomb of Philip at Vergina.⁸² The rectangular and non-trapezoidal pieces, recently reconstructed, can be recognised as the short sides of a funerary textile with a gold background (made of metal strips) and dyed porphyry (purple) wool for the vegetal decoration.⁸³ This remarkable piece of cloth was produced from a warp of woollen thread and a weft of gold metal strips. The fact that figures (even portraits) could be woven into fabrics is recorded in Callixenus of Rhodes; in his description of gold tunics and military cloaks, he notes that ‘some having portraits of kings woven in them’ were exhibited in Ptolemy Philadelphus’ pavilion.⁸⁴ Such textiles would certainly have required specialised workshops where both weavers and goldsmiths could work alongside each other.

Cushions

Long benches or footstools used to climb onto high beds were either equipped with a cushion for extra comfort (for example the Belevi sarcophagus),⁸⁵ known as ὑπηρεσιον in the literary sources,⁸⁶ or simply draped.⁸⁷ Footstools provided not only comfort but protection from crawling insects. On a Lucanian *lekythos* (oil flask) a richly decorated cushion is possibly being used instead of a footstool.⁸⁸

Seats, usually of the backless type, were enhanced by thin or thick cushions.⁸⁹ Folding chairs (the famous δίφοροι ὀκλαδία) were also equipped with cushions from the 6th century BCE onwards.⁹⁰ Cushions in the form of elongated but thin pillows are common in the 5th century BCE and were sometimes decorated with fringes.⁹¹ Thicker cushions seem to have been preferred from the middle of the 4th century BCE, a consequence perhaps of the desire for more comfort as well as developments in stuffing and stitching methods. The material used for stuffing was likely to be a mixture of carded wool, straw and leaves. Vertical stitching may have also added additional loft to the piece. As noted earlier, the same holds true for mattresses, with thicker mattresses introduced around the same period as the thicker cushions.



Fig. 7.7. Elaborate pillow on seat, relief, possibly 3rd century CE. Archaeological Museum of Komotini, Greece. Inv. no. AFK 30. After Andrianou (2017, no. 57). Photo: D. Andrianou/Ch. Simatos.

On a relief from Samos, dated to the 2nd century BCE, an elaborate and particularly thick pillow is shown on a stool,⁹² while on a relief from Asomatoi in Aegean Thrace, the woman Bendi is seated on another highly decorated cushion next to a monopode table (Fig. 7.7).⁹³ The texture of cushions is indicated on certain Imperial reliefs, such as a thick stool cushion on a relief from the Athenian Agora, where a coarser fabric is suggested by short strokes made with a curved chisel, while a thinly carved channel denotes the seam.⁹⁴ Two distinct kinds of cushions are evidenced on a relief now in Erlangen,⁹⁵ while on a relief from Smyrna a cord apparently decorates the side seam.⁹⁶

A piece of textile was evidently a sufficient covering for seats with backs⁹⁷ (Fig. 7.8) or backless seats placed against a wall.⁹⁸ The purpose of a short piece of drapery



Fig. 7.8. Textile on seat, marble relief, second quarter of the 4th century BCE. After Grossman (2013, no. 14, S 2870). Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

over a seat is not immediately obvious: if not purely for decoration, it may have been an attempt to hide the poor construction or appearance of the seat⁹⁹ or to add some warmth in colder weather. Additional warmth may be the reason behind the use of sheepskins spread beneath cushions on seats, as for example on a relief from Eressos, Lesbos¹⁰⁰ and on another relief stored in the Çanakkale Museum.¹⁰¹ Draped cushions are also depicted on relief fragments from the Athenian Agora,¹⁰² and sometimes a piece of cloth is shown underneath the cushion, evidently to add some beauty.¹⁰³

Hangings

In addition to providing comfort, textiles were used to protect from cold and insects or to shape an interior or exterior space. Heavy curtains provided warmth, acting as insulation for domestic interiors. They also created some sense of privacy in ancient households, a notion which was otherwise non-existent. Relief scenes often depict curtains either demarcating an outdoor space or creating a 'special' separate space within the house,¹⁰⁴ these are sometimes attached to the wall or ceiling¹⁰⁵ (Fig. 7.9) or to a column as a backdrop.¹⁰⁶ Athenaios, in reference to Cleopatra's wedding in Cilicia, mentions walls hung with embroidered clothes.¹⁰⁷ Curtains hung all around a room are mentioned for Caranus' wedding banquet, where a special mechanism apparently drew the curtains back.¹⁰⁸ Here, as in the dialogue from Theocritus' *Idyll* with which this paper began, guests noticed and commented on curtains admiring them for their beauty and style. Their aesthetic value is furthermore replicated in tombs: in the 4th-century tomb at Capua, a curtain is depicted on the gabled roof, with its folds rendered realistically in the treatment of light and shade (*chiaroscuro*) with a dark band at mid-height.¹⁰⁹

When associated with portable furniture, curtains become canopies; the heavy textile is supported on four poles that



Fig. 7.9. Hanging curtain as a backdrop, marble relief, 1st century BCE. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum inv. no. 5380. After Pfuhl-Möbius (1977, no. 1647).

define an exterior space. Such canopies are known through vase iconography (for instance, when Achilles is mourning under his fringed tent after losing Briseis);¹¹⁰ and imitated in funerary contexts, such as the Etruscan Tomb of the Hunter (*Tomba del cacciatore*).¹¹¹ The latter example proves that great originality was already present by the end of the 6th century (510–500 BCE) with the imitation of a splendid hunting tent consisting of slender wooden poles, a fabric ceiling decorated with a colourful chequerboard design and transparent (possibly linen) curtains for walls. This particular curtain hides an amazing detail: the wavy hemline gives the impression that the cloth is swaying in the wind. The small squares that decorate the curtain may have been

either embroidered or, more simply, made by inserting an additional thread while weaving.

Tent-like ceilings in tombs are interpreted to be cloth canopies (baldachins) expressing the heroic status of the deceased.¹¹² Already in the Geometric period, the motif of a *kline* under a baldachin decorated with a chequerboard design is known through depictions of the *prothesis* (funeral procession) of the deceased on *kraters*.¹¹³ This chequerboard design may indeed signify a funerary pattern that survived for a long time in other funerary contexts. This is particularly the case in the painted Etruscan tombs in Tarquinia: in the Tomb of the Leopards (*Tomba dei leopardi*) (480–470 BCE), for example, the funerary *symposion* is apparently held outdoors, judging by the plants in front of the *kline*, but under a tent, if the chequerboard design on the ceiling represents a textile (Fig. 7.10).¹¹⁴ The same chequerboard design adorns the ceiling of a *loculus* (niche) in Tomb 2327 (Bertazzoni Tomb), dated to the beginning of the 4th century BCE.¹¹⁵

The interior of the Tomb of the Funeral Couch (*Tomba del letto funebre*) in Tarquinia, painted around 460 BCE, is also made to look like a large pavilion, open in front and hung with a curtain held up by foliage-bedecked poles.¹¹⁶ In the centre stands a huge couch adorned with heavy embroidered coverlets (Fig. 7.11). The repetitive character of the design on the ceiling is evocative of a patterned textile that has already been found in more elaborate examples dating to the Mycenaean period.¹¹⁷

The elaborately decorated ceiling of the late Hellenistic Anfushy Tomb II (room 2) in Alexandria is considered to be reminiscent of the banqueting pavilion of Ptolemy II in Alexandria which, as described by Athenaios,¹¹⁸ was adorned with Phoenician hangings.¹¹⁹ Although painted, it gives the impression of a canopy with a trellis that overlaps a tapestry which has remarkable figurative scenes (now lost) woven into its two outer bands. The outermost border of the tapestry had 28 figured scenes, and the inner border 20, divided from one another and defined by the crossing slats of the trellis. Tapestry imitation appears frequently in tombs in Egypt (Alexandria and Gabbari), South Russia and Cyprus. More specifically, in Hellenistic Cyprus, examples of decoration imitating woven textiles stretching over the whole funerary chamber come from rock-cut tombs 1 and 2 at the locality of Ammoi (north of the ancient walls of Nea Paphos).¹²⁰ In Tomb 1, the ‘knots’ in the tassels of both short sides that hang down onto the vertical side walls make the drapery look even more realistic. These tombs are thought to belong to well-to-do Cypriots emulating the style and trends of Alexandria and thereby displaying their status. This is not surprising, given that Cyprus formed part of the Ptolemaic Kingdom in the Hellenistic period.

At Gabbari, the western necropolis of Alexandria, the Fort Saleh Tomb I interweaves Greek and Egyptian motifs by positioning a Greek *kline* between Egyptian decorative elements. Dated to the Late Ptolemaic period, the



Fig. 7.10. Facsimile of the end wall of the Tomba dei leopardi (Tomb of the Leopards), Tarquinia. c. 480–470 BCE. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. HIN 133. Photo: Ole Haupt.



Fig. 7.11. Facsimile of the end wall from the Tomba del letto funebre (Tomb of the Funeral Couch), Tarquinia. c. 460 BCE. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. HIN 176. Photo: Ole Haupt.

sarcophagus imitates a bed with finely turned legs, a *fulcrum* (head rest) to hold the head in place and a painted bed-cloth with richly varicoloured bands descending almost to the ground.¹²¹ The ceiling of the *loculus* has been decorated to suggest rich drapery, creating a baldachin that may possibly be an imitation of Persian ceremonial canopies placed over the throne.¹²²

All these painted versions of textiles provide a picture of the valuable household and funerary textiles that have long since been lost. However, occasionally by pure luck an item is discovered which supports the interpretations made: a multi-coloured textile was excavated in the late 4th-century BCE Tomb Γ at Sedes in Thessaloniki which is presumed to have covered the wooden roof of the tomb.¹²³ Unfortunately, this small remnant of cloth disintegrated soon after its recovery. The same fate befell the cloth from the mid-5th-century BCE Thracian tomb at Golemata Mogila (modern Bulgaria) which is now known only thanks to a sketch by Bogdan Filow.¹²⁴ In the Macedonian tomb of Eurydice at Vergina,¹²⁵ however, many small gold discs with the Macedonian star were found scattered over the disintegrated organic material of the antechamber; these were interpreted as decoration for a large piece of cloth which possibly hung high above the floor. The list of Macedonian tombs with painted ceiling decoration suggesting woven fabrics is quite impressive¹²⁶ and leaves no doubt that certain tombs were adorned with either stretched or hanging textiles, possibly in the way that curtains have been shown suspended in relief iconography.

If the quality and art of textiles were praised in antiquity, one may ask why painted versions of textiles in tombs were used instead of real fabrics? One explanation may be related to differences in preservation: a painted version of a cloth would have accompanied the deceased into eternity, thus fulfilling its purpose, whereas a woven one would have decayed alongside its owner. Another explanation may be related to cost: a painted imitation may have been cheaper than the real thing, as was most likely the case in earlier periods.¹²⁷ Additionally, gold woven textiles with added metal attachments, such as the cloth from Katerini (Tomb A) with hanging gold bells, would have required the close collaboration (and added cost) of a weaver and a goldsmith working together in a specialised workshop in addition to the expense of the precious raw materials.

In conclusion, the dialogue between textiles and architectural decoration including furniture is apparent. Four examples of this interconnecting relationship stand out: the ceilings of tombs imitated textiles or were draped with real textiles; certain motifs (such as the turreted motif, called *πυργωτόν* in the literary sources)¹²⁸ in painting and mosaic were related to weaving;¹²⁹ the vividly painted friezes, full of motion, painted on the vertical beams of *klinai* were replicated in embroidery on mattresses;¹³⁰ and decorative mosaic panels laid in the centre of a room acted like woven rugs, as can be seen in the Hellenistic period example from

room 2 of the Pappalardo House at Morgantina in Sicily.¹³¹ The preference for mosaics over rugs is most probably related to ease in cleaning: pebble mosaics are easily flushed with water whereas rugs would have required more arduous cleaning and drying. Finally, textiles can act as substitutes for architectural features: simple linen sheets used as partitions instead of walls can create intimacy, change or generate character within multi-functional rooms.

Bringing all the threads together, the observation of textile iconography in domestic and funerary contexts and the rich literary evidence combined with the few but valuable remains of ancient textiles mark out a colourful world in which fabric complemented or even substituted for furniture. Textiles that outfitted the household were thought to be synonymous with the domesticity of civilised life. Furthermore, narrative representations woven onto textiles sometimes substituted for a woman's voice¹³² or facilitated the preservation of oral traditions. The fabrication of complex woven patterns required the commitment to memory of a substantial amount of numerical and colour-related information. Memorised rhythmic chants (such as the ones described in *Odyssey* 5.59–62, 10.220–228) allowed weavers to both remember patterns and reproduce them as frequently as needed.¹³³ It is indeed remarkable how the intermingling of oral tradition and designs woven into textiles kept the stories alive; and how far these designs travelled and were replicated in other media.

Abbreviations

ARV ²	Beazley, J.D. (1963) <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> , 2nd edn. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
BAPD	Beazley Archive Pottery Database, electronic archive: https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/default.htm
CVA	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum</i> (1923–), multiple publishers.
ΚΤΑΜΘ I	Despinis, G., Stefanidou-Tiveriou, Th. and Voutiras, E. (eds) (1997) <i>Κατάλογος γλυπτών του Αρχαιολογικού Μουσείου Θεσσαλονίκης</i> , vol. I. Thessaloniki, National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation.
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., Jones, H.S. and McKenzie, R. (1996) <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th edn. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
PM	Pfuhl, E. and Möbius, H. (1977) <i>Die Ostgriechischen Grabreliefs</i> . Mainz am Rhein, P. Von Zabern.

Notes

- 1 For further discussion on this *Idyll* and on domestic textile production in 3rd-century Alexandria, see Whitehorne (1995).
- 2 Rusnak (2001).
- 3 Huswife in the original Loeb Classical Library text.

- 4 Ar. *Vesp.* line 1215.
- 5 Lucie-Smith (1997).
- 6 Ath. *Deipn.* III 84a.
- 7 Spinning and weaving were, according to Xenophon, the only skills that a young bride needed to bring with her to her new home (*Oec.* 7.6). The association of weaving with women's intra-domestic sphere is well established (see Reeder 1995, 200–202). Clothing signified a woman's authority and *arete* (a number of funerary reliefs depict the *kalathos* close to her seat), extending beyond the *oikos* itself; it mediated social interaction, played a role in the religious life of the community and served as a mechanism of exchange. Spinning was also performed by *hetairai*: Williams (1983, 96); Reinsberg (1989, 123–124).
- 8 See a clay votive *pinax* from Epizephyrian Locris (Tarent National Museum, inv. no. 8332).
- 9 Andrianou (2009, 97–98).
- 10 *LSJ* s.v. περιστροφή.
- 11 Andrianou (2009, 90–91, 97–98, 99–101).
- 12 A *hetaira* (courtesan) is shown stuffing a pillow on a vase (Cambridge, Harvard University Art Museum, inv. no. 1991.28). For the literary references, see Poll. *Onom.* X. 41; Andrianou (2009, 97).
- 13 *ARV²* 275.47=BAPD 202883; *CVA* Firenze, Regio Museo Archeologico 2, pls 39.2, 42.2–4.
- 14 *CVA* Deutschland 88 (München 16) pl. 49 by the Makron Painter, 485 BC.
- 15 The famous relief from Thasos with the *symposion* scene (Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 1947), dated to before 465 BCE, shows the edge of the mattress and two additional pillows on top of the *kline* in order to ease the recliner's position, Mendel (1912–1914, vol. II, 304–307, no. 578). This practice eventually led to the construction of the *kline* with a fulcrum.
- 16 *ARV²* 113.7, 1626, 1592=BAPD 200964.
- 17 *CVA* Germany 54 (Tübingen 5), pl. 18.3–4=BAPD 16846.
- 18 *ARV²* 449.4, 1653=BAPD 205338.
- 19 Apulian *kalyx krater*, 360–340 BCE (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 10.210.17A, Rogers Fund 1910; Richter 1966, fig. 642) and *ARV²* 1083.6=BAPD 214546 (Brussels) for the geometric design on the pillow to the right of the *kline*. For the tablet weaving technique, see Spantidaki (2016, 72–74). To date there is no material evidence of tablet weaving or twill weave in Classical Greece although vase paintings seem to illustrate both techniques. Small portable frames were apparently used for ribbons on fabrics; such a frame is shown on a relief from the Rhaedestos Collection carried by a female figure (*KIAMØ* I no. 17, dated to the third quarter of the 4th century BCE). For back-strap looms and tablet weaving in Bronze Age Aegean see Burke and Chapin (2016, 31).
- 20 For the decorative techniques attested on Greek fabrics, see Spantidaki (2014; 2016, 78–85). Manufacturing techniques are often not discernible from pictures alone; more than one technique may be possible.
- 21 *ARV²* 113.7, 1626, 1592=BAPD 200964; *ARV²* 125.11=BAPD 201039.
- 22 *LSJ* s.v. τὸ λη.
- 23 *ARV²* 438.140=BAPD 205186.
- 24 *ARV²* 1083.6=BAPD 214546; PM 1600 from unknown location, dated to the 2nd century BCE (British Museum, unknown inv. no).
- 25 Venit (2002, 48–49: Bella and Moustapha Pasha tombs, Alexandria).
- 26 Baughan (2013, fig. 28: Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et Histoire A717).
- 27 This effect may have been added, or it may have been created by the longer warp threads of the fabric left as fringes, as shown on garments, see Spantidaki (2016, 65).
- 28 Baughan (2013, fig. 29: Munich, Antikensammlungen inv. no. 8935).
- 29 Ath. *Deipn.* IV 142a, with a certain degree of exaggeration in order to show how Spartans degenerated into luxury before Cleomenes III (c. 235 BCE).
- 30 *IG* I³ 422, lines 257–258; Andrianou (2009, 97).
- 31 Poll. *Onom.* VII.191.
- 32 On the elongated (banana-shaped) pillows depicted on *ARV²* 1645=BAPD 203241 a loop is found on the corner. The shape of the pillows and the loop may indicate circular weaving or sprang. I would like to thank Dr Kalliope Sarri for discussing these techniques with me in detail and providing me with additional bibliography.
- 33 Langlotz (1932, pls 195, 210= BAPD 2723); *ARV²* 1567, 316.3; *CVA* Deutschland 20 (München 5), pl. 225.2 with *hetairai* on the floor; *CVA* Deutschland 21 (Berlin 2), pl. 64 with men on the floor.
- 34 Men. *Dys.* 913–930.
- 35 Ath. *Deipn.* IV 138f.
- 36 Ath. *Deipn.* IV 173e.
- 37 Ath. *Deipn.* IV 173f.
- 38 *ARV²* 367.93=BAPD 203885.
- 39 Richter (1966, fig. 178: Museo Archeologico Ferrara, inv. no. T311 and 285: Avery Brundage Collection California); *CVA* Deutschland 23 (Heidelberg 2), pl. 73.1 and *CVA* Deutschland 99 (Berlin 16), pl. 17.
- 40 Richter (1966, fig. 178, on a seat: Museo Archeologico Ferrara, inv. no. T311); Apulian red-figure *loutrophoros* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. no. F 3264) dated to 350–325 BCE (on a *kline*).
- 41 *ARV²* 95.123=BAPD 200819.
- 42 *ARV²* 360.1, 1648=BAPD 203792.
- 43 This myth is shown on various vases, but this is the only example that stresses the force of the Father of Gods through the exaggerated depiction of the mattress.
- 44 Grossman (2013, no. 170: Agora inv. no. I 6603).
- 45 Other examples include a *lekkythos* dated to 370–360 BCE, a Hellenistic stele from Alexandria and a 3rd-century BCE stele from Rhodes (Vedder 1988, figs 21.1, 23.2 and 25.1 respectively).
- 46 Kaltsas (2002, no. 425: National Archaeological Museum of Athens, inv. no. 3369).
- 47 *CVA* USA 15 (Cleveland Museum of Art I), pl. 15.
- 48 *CVA* Czech Republic 4 (Pilsen, Musée de la Bohème de l'Ouest 1), pl. 8, dated after 350 BCE.
- 49 *CVA* Deutschland 7 (Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum I), pl. 28, 520 BCE.
- 50 *CVA* Deutschland 23 (Heidelberg 2), pl. 71.1, 400 BCE.

- 51 *ARV²* 180.1=BAPD 201652; *CVA* Austria 1 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum I), pl. 23.
- 52 Richter (1966, fig. 179: Leningrad, Hermitage St, inv. no. 1807).
- 53 Tsimbidou-Avloniti (2005, pls 30–33).
- 54 Huguenot (2008, pls 46, 47 and 82, 83).
- 55 Mitchell (2004, fig. 9).
- 56 Steingraber (2006, 188).
- 57 Andrianou (2009, 100 with further references).
- 58 In Homer (*Il.* 5. 194) the term *peplos* is used for a garment and a furnishing for a chariot.
- 59 A particular type of goat-hair cloak (σισύραν) has a dual function: it is used as a garment by day and a coverlet by night (*Ar. Av.* line 122; *Nub.* line 10; *Ran.* line 1459).
- 60 *Ath. Deipn.* II. 48c.
- 61 *Ath. Deipn.* III 83d.
- 62 Grossman (2013, no. 133: Agora, inv. no. S 3562).
- 63 A term mentioned in the Attic stelai and defined by several lexicographers (Andrianou 2009, 100–101).
- 64 PM 1905, dated to the 1st century BCE.
- 65 Schmidt-Dounas (2017, 199, col. pl. 26).
- 66 *Ath. Deipn.* V. 196a–b and 197b.
- 67 Benaki Museum, inv. no. ΓΕ 43847, attributed to the Dinos Painter (420–410 BCE).
- 68 Richter (1966, figs 302 and 303: Louvre, Myrina 271 and 268 respectively).
- 69 PM 1561 from Samos (Tigani Museum) and PM 1568 from Smyrna, dated to the 2nd century BCE (Copenhagen, National Museum, inv. no. 2224).
- 70 For the institution, see Jameson (1994); Ekroth (2002, 169).
- 71 *CVA* Greece 14 (National Archaeological Museum 7), pl. 89.
- 72 *ARV²* 1187.36, 1686; Plovdiv Regional Museum of Archaeology, inv. no. 298 (1527).
- 73 *CVA* Italia 73 (Matera, Museo Nazionale di Matera ‘Domenico Ridola’), pl. 79.2, 320–310 BCE. Such ‘pearls’ or ‘beads’ have been found around funerary *klinai* in Macedonia (Greece) and are now understood as embellishments of the bedding. For example, at Aineia a total of 103 gilded clay ‘pearls’ were excavated (Vokotopoulou 1990, 81, pls 50 a, b). Most of them have an elliptical form with a hole possibly for threading onto a string or thin ribbon, creating a string of beads, much like our modern rosaries. This string was apparently attached (sewn?) onto the bedding for decoration.
- 74 Kottaridi (2004).
- 75 See, for example, PM 1416 (Varna Museum, inv. no. II 1585), 1612 (Varna Museum, inv. no. II 3717), 1693 (Varna Museum, inv. no. II 3709), 1695 (Varna Museum, inv. no. II 121), 1701 (Varna Museum, inv. no. 1516), 1725 (Varna Museum, inv. no. II 1054).
- 76 See, for example, Machaira (2011, no. 82), dated to the mid-2nd century BCE.
- 77 Moeller (1976, 26 with references).
- 78 Richter (1966, fig. 649, pelike: British Museum, inv. no. F 311); PM 2020 funerary relief of unknown provenance (Vienna, Kunsthist. Museum, inv. no. I 1085), dated to the late Imperial period.
- 79 Venit (2002, 48, fig. 33).
- 80 *ARV²* 1339.5=BAPD 217527.
- 81 Poll. *Onom.* 10.42.
- 82 Most recently, see Drougou (2018, esp. fig. 5) for the new reconstruction of its shape.
- 83 Drougou (2018).
- 84 *Ath. Deipn.* V 196.
- 85 Richter (1966, fig. 325).
- 86 Pritchett (1956, 253–254); Andrianou (2009, 97).
- 87 Richter (1966, fig. 311. Corinthian krater: Louvre, inv. no. E 629).
- 88 Richter (1966, fig. 111. Lucanian lekythos: Archaeological museum of Naples, inv. no. 81855).
- 89 Grossman (2013, no. 29: Agora S 3446 and 164: Agora I 5041).
- 90 *CVA* Deutschland 28 (München, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst 6), pl. 298, dated to 540 BC; *CVA* Deutschland 23 (Heidelberg 2), pl. 79.3, dated to 340 BC.
- 91 *CVA* USA 2 (Providence, Rhode Island Museum of Design), pl. 19 1b; *CVA* Great Britain 17 (London, British Museum 9), pl. 52.
- 92 PM 1763 (Samos, Tigani Museum, inv. no. 210).
- 93 Andrianou (2017, no. 57, 232–233: AGK 30, Komotini Archaeological Museum).
- 94 Grossman (2013, no. 246, dated to the Julio-Claudian period: Agora, inv. no. S 1907).
- 95 PM 1090, possibly of East Greek origin, dated to the 3rd century BCE (?) (Erlangen, Kunstlg. der Universität, inv. no. I 521e).
- 96 PM 831 (Leiden, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. Pb 75) dated to the first half of the 2nd century BCE. The existence of the cord may suggest that the width of the weft had simply been decreased as weaving progressed, with warp threads cast off and later twisted into a closing cord. This design is noted on the toga of the late Etruscan life-size portrait known as the Arringatore, exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Florence (Granger-Taylor 1982, 14).
- 97 Grossman (2013, nos 11: S 1609 and 14: S 2870).
- 98 PM 1452 from Kyzikos, dated to the 1st century BCE (Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 261).
- 99 As, for instance, the wicker chair on a relief from Philadelphia, Lydia (PM 701, Louvre, unknown inv. no.).
- 100 PM 919, dated to the 1st century BCE (Eressos, inv. no. 133).
- 101 PM 1006, dated to the 3rd century BCE (?) (Çanakkale Museum).
- 102 Grossman (2013, no. 248, dated to the Julio-Claudian period: Agora, inv. no. S 1106).
- 103 Fraser (1977, fig. 92c, dated to the Late Hellenistic period); PM 867 from Smyrna, dated to the 2nd century BCE; PM 906 possibly from Smyrna, dated to the 2nd century BCE (British Museum, unknown inv. no.).
- 104 PM 1511 from Samos (Vathy Museum, inv. no. 217) and PM 1544 (Berlin, Pergamon Museum, inv. no. Sk. 831) from Erythraia, dated to the 2nd century BCE.
- 105 PM 1647 dated to the 1st century BCE (Istanbul, Archaeological Museum inv. no. 5380).
- 106 PM 1656 from Iznik (?), dated to the 1st century BCE (Iznik Museum).
- 107 *Ath. Deipn.* IV 147f.

- 108 Ath. *Deipn.* IV 130a (κατά μηχανάς σχασθέντων τῶν φραγμάτων).
- 109 Benassai (2001, 77–78, figs 98–99).
- 110 Richter (1966, fig. 608, *kylix*, Briseis Painter, British Museum, inv. no. E 76).
- 111 Steingraber (2006, 102 bottom, 113).
- 112 Steingraber (2006, 132 bottom left).
- 113 *CVA* France 18 (Paris, Musée du Louvre 11), pl. 13.1; *CVA* France 43 (Paris, Musée du Louvre 29), pl. 24 where ribbons are used under the head and over the chest of the deceased.
- 114 Steingraber (2006, 130).
- 115 Steingraber (2006, 186 bottom left).
- 116 Steingraber 2006, 140.
- 117 One notable example is the carved decoration on the limestone ceiling of the side chamber of the Treasury of Minyas at Orchomenos, dated to the LH IIIB period. Shaw and Chapin (2016, 119).
- 118 Ath. *Deipn.* V 196–197.
- 119 Tomlinson (1984, 263); Nowicka (1984).
- 120 Michaelides (2004, 90–91); Guimier-Sorbets and Michaelides (2009, 226–229); Andrianou (in press).
- 121 Venit (2002, 93).
- 122 Guimier-Sorbets (2001, 220–221); Ath. *Deipn.* II 48f.
- 123 Kotzias (1937, 866–895); Andrianou (2009, 93).
- 124 Filow (1934, 103–104). Apparently nothing is preserved from this cloth and Filow made a linear sketch from the imprints of the cloth on the ground.
- 125 Andronikos (1984, 178–179, figs. 143–144).
- 126 Miller (1993, 45–46 and n. 58).
- 127 Shaw and Chapin (2016, 106).
- 128 Ath. *Deipn.* V. 196–197c in connection with the *symposion* tent of Ptolemy II.
- 129 Miller (1993, 45, esp. note 53).
- 130 Compare, for example, Richter (1966, figs 286, amphora: Munich, Antikensammlungen, inv. no. 2303; 316, *kotyle*: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. no. IV 3710; 297, *kylix*: Munich, Antikensammlungen, inv. no. 2618).
- 131 Tsakirgis (1989). Equally, mosaics that act as doormats are evidenced in houses, Tsakirgis (1989, 408, n. 40).
- 132 This is the case of Philomela. According to the myth, Philomela revealed her rape and mutilation by Tereus through a vivid story-cloth, possibly a tapestry (Ov. *Met.* 6. 438–674).
- 133 Tuck (2006).
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