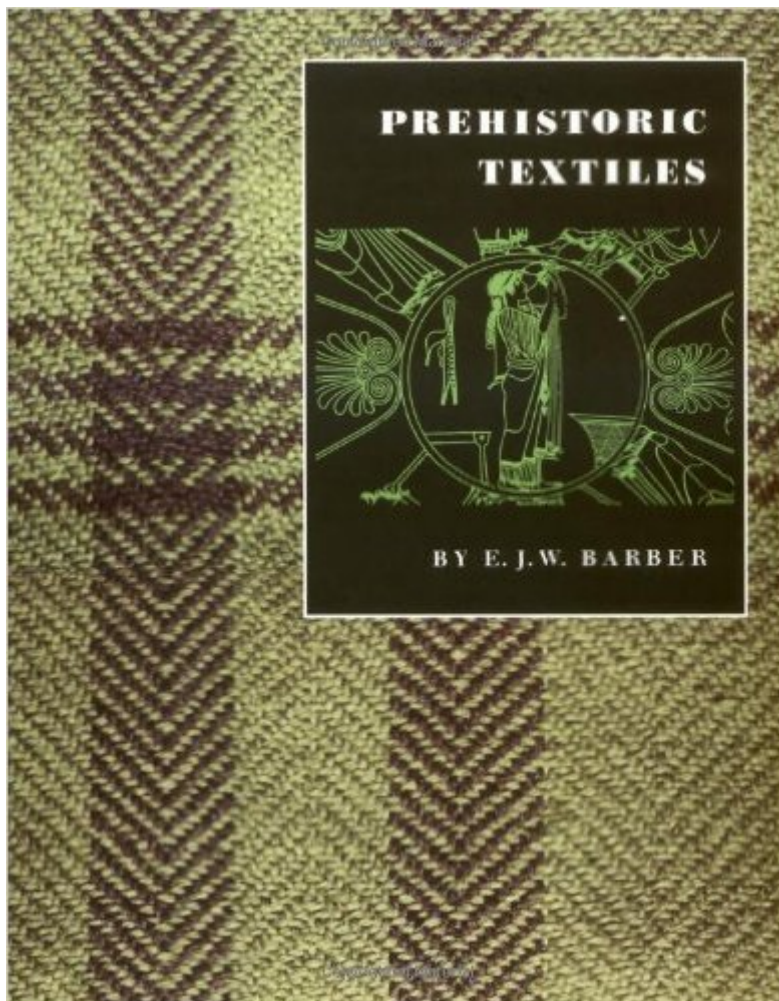


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Prehistoric Textiles: The Development Of Cloth In The Neolithic And Bronze Ages With Special Reference To The Aegean



Synopsis

This pioneering work revises our notions of the origins and early development of textiles in Europe and the Near East. Using innovative linguistic techniques, along with methods from palaeobiology and other fields, it shows that spinning and pattern weaving began far earlier than has been supposed. Prehistoric Textiles made an unsurpassed leap in the social and cultural understanding of textiles in humankind's early history. Cloth making was an industry that consumed more time and effort, and was more culturally significant to prehistoric cultures, than anyone assumed before the book's publication. The textile industry is in fact older than pottery--and perhaps even older than agriculture and stockbreeding. It probably consumed far more hours of labor per year, in temperate climates, than did pottery and food production put together. And this work was done primarily by women. Up until the Industrial Revolution, and into this century in many peasant societies, women spent every available moment spinning, weaving, and sewing. The author, Elizabeth Wayland Barber, demonstrates command of an almost unbelievably disparate array of disciplines--from historical linguistics to archaeology and paleobiology, from art history to the practical art of weaving. Her passionate interest in the subject matter leaps out on every page. Barber, a professor of linguistics and archaeology, developed expert sewing and weaving skills as a small girl under her mother's tutelage. One could say she had been born and raised to write this book. Because modern textiles are almost entirely made by machines, we have difficulty appreciating how time-consuming and important the premodern textile industry was. This book opens our eyes to this crucial area of prehistoric human culture.

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Customer Reviews

Clothing and body ornamentation were among the first means by which humans expressed their social identity. For this reason alone, the study of clothing is of primary importance for understanding the past. Unfortunately, clothing is perishable and little is left of these once flourishing art forms. But what we do possess often reminds us of traditions that have survived into modern times, both in regard to their construction and design and this presents another means for evaluating the scanty remains. Because the last two centuries have seen such accelerated social change we often forget that people in the past held on to their traditions with the greatest tenacity. The arts practiced primarily by women such as weaving and basketry were among the most conservative. Only a few scholars have sought to trace these links to the past. Prof. E. W. Barber makes a substantial contribution to this neglected field of study with her *Prehistoric Textiles*. *Prehistoric Textiles* is really two books in one. The first is a systematic and scientific treatment of topics relevant to the history and practice of weaving. These include the types of fibers used in early textiles, the techniques and tools of spinning, the types of looms and their probable historical development, the dyes used with early textiles, and most importantly, the weaving techniques themselves. Had Prof. Barber stopped here the work would have been accomplishment enough since no other work of this kind exists to my knowledge. Further, none of the more specialized monographs that do exist takes pains to explain the subject in such detail to the lay reader. Prof.

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