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What Lay Beneath:

Queen Puabi's Garments and Her Passage to the Underworld[1]

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INTRODUCTION

The Royal Cemetery at Ur contains a spectacular group of elite burials that take us close to power and privilege in the Early Dynastic IIIa period (ca. 2600–2400 BCE) (Baadsgaard 2016; Pollock 1985; Moorey 1977). The burial of Queen Puabi is one of the few royal tombs that was well preserved (Baadsgaard 2016: 148), and it offers historians a rare glimpse into the high quality and abundance of precious goods consumed by women of high status in Sumerian society. Additionally, Puabi's tomb and its contents provide an opportunity to construct a complex narrative of the role of queens and their participation in cultic rituals in the Early Dynastic Period. While Inana, a goddess revered from the earlier Uruk Period (ca. 4000–3100 BCE), and Enheduanna, a priestess and daughter of the ruler Sargon in the following Old Akkadian Period (ca. 2350–2150 BCE), are well known, our knowledge of them is based primarily on written legends and poetry from which only limited portraits of women's place in Sumerian society can be created.[2]

It is Queen Puabi's material remains that are the focus of this essay. Their study fills an important gap in understanding the strong symbolic role they played in signifying status (gender, rank, or class) at an important moment in antiquity. There is a general agreement that the elaborate headdresses and body ornaments of gold, lapis lazuli, and other precious stones discovered in

9.1 Penn Museum Reconstruction of Ornaments Sewn to Clothing Worn by Puabi in the Royal Cemetery at Ur. Haircomb (B16693), Wreaths (B17709, B17710-11), Hair Ribbons (B17711A), Earrings (B17712A–B), Rosette Necklace (16694), Necklace and Cloak (83-7-1.9), Belt (B17063). Hafford 2019: fig. 8S4.1; also Hafford 2018. Courtesy Penn Museum; Image no. 299835

Puabi's tomb were commensurate with her status, gender, rank, or class (Fig. 9.1). However, little has been said about the textiles that lay beneath these sumptuous goods.[3] For example, Aubrey Baadsgaard (2016) quantified the variety of precious stones interred with Puabi's burial and compared them to other elite burials in the cemetery and elsewhere; those in Puabi's grave far outweigh those in other burials and are considered to have been designed with "specifically feminine forms" in mind (Baadsgaard 2016: 152). Another indicator of the distinctive quality of the assemblage is the specialized workmanship and technical quality of the accessories. Kim Benzel (2013: 11) notes that their value is beyond the commodification because they convey a "magical" presence commensurate with the divine by virtue of what Irene Winter (1999: 53) refers to as their "sacred properties." One could say they are transcendent in the sense of conveying the presence of the divine itself.

Missing from these interpretations of the material remains in Puabi's tomb is the study of the clothing styles and fabric that served as a background to the ornamentation. Partially due to the poor preservation of textiles in Mesopotamia, only a few bits and pieces of fabric have been preserved with which to inform us about preferred types of cloth used in the Ur III Period (ca. 2150–2000 BCE). In order to reconstruct the clothing worn by Puabi in her tomb, I rely on texts, statuary and two seals that were discovered at or near her tomb in order to unravel the significance of the cloth she wore in the context of an early period Mesopotamian history.

QUEENS IN THE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD

Puabi lived in the city of Ur on the alluvial plain in southern Mesopotamia sometime during the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2900–2350 BCE). Ur was one of the major cities during this period (Adams 1981). Each city worshipped its patron deity but shared in a common religious ideology in which a pantheon of gods was believed to be responsible for the well-being of the entire society. This divine sphere was sustained by cult institutions that were led by kings and royal ideology instantiated by queens who acted on behalf of the king. Our knowledge of this ideology is partially due to the translation of an archive from the city of Lagash dated to the latter part of the Early Dynastic Period IIIa (ca. 2400–2350 BCE) (Beld 2002).

Recorded in the archive are extensive travels that queens undertook to major cities and the countryside, where they participated in rituals and

royal ideologies that were among the integrative strategies designed to unite the city states into a symbolic system. The symbolism extended the court's royal status and kinship to local elites and lower ranking persons. Scott Beld (2002) refers to these arrangements as a ritual economy. The grave of Puabi, though earlier than the Lagash texts, brings together a rich material culture relevant to the development of these early Mesopotamian ideologies.

The rituals in Lagash took place during a twenty-year period when queens played a central role (Beld 2002). Approximately 250 years separate Puabi's burial at Ur and the rituals performed by the Lagash queens. I hypothesize that the concepts and ideologies governing the Lagash rituals were a later manifestation of similar ceremonies carried out in Puabi's time. As Beld (2002: 229) argues, the Lagash rituals were a "cult institution" that was widely known throughout the "pan-Sumerian cultural area." Serving in the capacity of representatives of the king, the Lagash queens—not unlike other notable women in the Ur III Period (Wright 2013)—traveled with a large entourage and moved about the countryside to the capital at Girsu and elsewhere in Lagash throughout the year in order to perform the rituals.

The archives in which the Lagash queens' activities were recorded are from a cult-institution in the Emunusa ("House of the Lady"), which was dedicated to the goddess Baba, and where the queens maintained a substantial household. This household included "women, their dependent children, and orphans" (Beld 2002: 15). Household personnel performed services for the institution, among which are listed linen, wool, mat, and reed weaving; other crafts; and domestic, maintenance, and agricultural activities. Also noted as part of the household were scribes, lamentation priests, jewelers and statue makers or sculptors. Some personnel are described as "people who take subsistence fields"; they were granted land and received rations during "four to six months of the year" (Beld 2002: 16), when they participated in cult and labor obligations. Individuals occupied with festival and ritual activities brewed barley beer, and supplied bread, sheep and goat during festivals. Festival-related distributions in the various rituals included dates, figs, apples, wine, fish, sheep, goats, and other ritual commodities (oils, perfumes, milk, and malts). These were distributed to local lower ranking personnel and to elites and royal family members whose participation won them membership into the king's royal family. At some festivals,

wool and linen cloth were given to priests and officials as offerings to the gods (Beld 2002: 13, 14, 17).

An important ritual known from the Lagash archive was performed in honor of the ancestors. It was participated in by people who were believed to be family members of the dead and of divine beings. Foods were distributed along with offerings of bowls, crowns, necklaces, fleeces, cloth, and garments (Beld 2002: 159, 165). The ancestral ritual served to connect the wife of the ruler to the sources of power and the "former rulers" in the underworld (Beld 2002: 181). It was a powerful legitimation of the queen's status and ability to cement a royal connection to the divine ancestral sphere (Beld 2002: 165).

The material remains discovered in Puabi's ritual burial provisioned her with all of the necessary accoutrements for admission into the world of the ancestors, and I propose here that her burial was an enactment of the ancestral ritual. It is not farfetched to imagine that the Early Dynastic kings (and queens) in the Early Dynastic IIIa Period may have initiated the rituals known later in the Early Dynastic IIIb Period in Lagash, by serving as representatives of state kingship and cementing the king's social control. In fact, Puabi was conceivably intimately involved in the creation of the cultic practices that are recorded in the later Lagash archive. Subsequently, I will return to the specifics of Queen Puabi's burial and the clothes she wore, but first I will describe the textiles and clothing styles worn by women in the third millennium BCE and the relationship between the queen's attire and female garments in general. In a later section, I use texts, archaeological evidence, and the circumstances of the production of wool and linen in order to provide a framework for the use of these materials for the female garments produced for royal (queens') and divine statuary.

CLOTHING STYLES WORN BY WOMEN

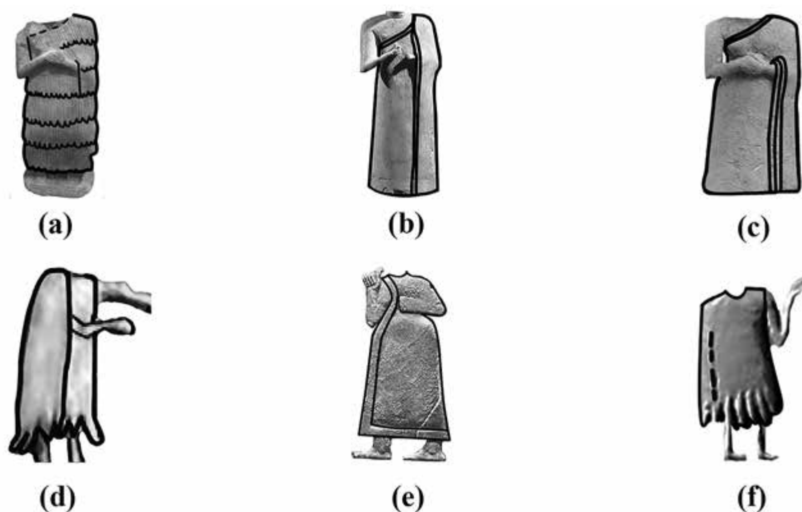
Textile fabrics and clothing styles reflect important divisions within Mesopotamian society. Specific garments and grades of cloth were reserved for royal and temple personnel and for wearing at public displays in rituals and feasts. People belonging to lower social strata wore coarser varieties of cloth of inferior quality. Some fabrics were hand-loomed, plaited, fleeced, or shaggy wool garments. They were referred to as sumptuous, best, or third

and fourth grade (as described below). Sizes of garments were categorized as small, middle, and large (Kang 1973: 297ff.; Wright 1996).

In assessing "style," I have considered three attributes. Certain clothes were for everyday wear, and others were reserved for special people and occasions. They came in different shapes, including cloaks or wraps, and some were adorned with super-structural elements (Oppenheim 1949) such as appliqué, embroidery, ornaments, hems, and bonding of other raw edges.

Drawing on statuary from the Early Dynastic Temple at Khafajeh, other representations of women, and textual sources, the following figures illustrate the available clothing styles that I have considered in this study. They include:

(1) Multi-layered flounced woolen clothing that was "fleecy or tiered" in multiple layers (Foster 2010: 123). This garment style is worn by a female worshiper (Fig. 9.2a) carved in gypsum and found at Khafajeh, Nintu Temple VII (OI A11441). This Sumerian worshiper statue is dated to the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2600–2500 BCE).
(2) Cloth woven in a single piece that was wrapped around the body and draped over the left shoulder (Fig. 9.2b–c). This style was worn by royalty, priestesses, and elite women.
(3) A garment with fleece fringes at the hemline (Fig. 9.2d). One style includes a cloak that may have been an extension of the wrap-around cloth; another was plain with a simple fringe (Fig. 9.2f).
(4) A garment extending to the neck and not draped. The right arm may be exposed but the left one is not. This style of garment is worn by Inana on the Warka Vase (Fig. 9.2e).
(5) A garment described by Sir Leonard Woolley (1934) in his excavation notes a "cape" or "cloak" (Fig. 9.2d). This perhaps refers to a garment that is listed in texts as a cape or shawl that was worn over full length garments (Baadsgaard 2008: 293; Wright 2013). It is described in administrative documents from regional centers that record clothing worn by women of high status for ritual performances (Foster 2010: 129). A related style is a "cut-off," a shoulder garment referred to as a wrap and "outer" garment. This was worn during the third and second millennia BCE and may actually be the style that Woolley alluded to in his excavation notes. The "cut-off" is discussed further below.



9.2 Clothing Styles Worn by Women Depicted in Statuary and Imagery in the Early Dynastic Period. Redrawn by R. Wright and G. Gallo: *a* redrawn from photo of gypsum female worshiper from Khafajeh, Nintu Temple VII, ca. 2600–2500 BCE. Oriental Institute A11441; *b* redrawn from photo of statuettes of two worshipers from the Square Temple at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), Iraq, ca. 2700 BCE. National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad; *c* redrawn from photo of statuary from Sin Temple at Khafajeh; *d* redrawn from attendant clothing on Puabi's seal (Fig. 9.4); *e* redrawn from attendant clothing on Puabi's seal (Fig. 9.4); *f* redrawn from image of Inana on the Warka Vase. National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad

Some garment styles were decorated with super-structural additions designed to break up the monotony of the mostly plain fabrics that were worn. The appliqué technique, for example, is known from the Uruk period at Tepe Gawra and the middle of the second millennium at Susa (Oppenheim 1949: 187). The only garment with super-structural elements known from the Early Dynastic Period, outside of Puabi's cloth (discussed further below), is worn by one of the soldiers on the Standard of Ur (ca. 2500 BCE); the garment in question is a cape with circular elements on its surface. The circular elements may represent metal that served as clasps; these may simply have been decorative (Fig. 9.3) or may have designated the function or role of the soldier within the military establishment. The cape is smooth and could be linen but, more likely, in view of the wearer's occupation, it was leather. The metal additions appear as innovations and demonstrate the beginning of a convention in which objects were added to cloth either for

9.3 Depiction on the Standard of Ur of a Uniform with Super-Structural Elements Worn by a Soldier. Redrawn (from Oppenheim 1949: 184, fig. 15)

a decorative or functional purpose. In a much later period, Oppenheim noted the use of these "bracteates" on cultic and ruler garments in which different types of golden ornaments ("rosettes, stars, disks, rings") were added to cloth (Oppenheim 1949). They were removed for cleaning and storage.

Excluding the soldier's uniform, other structural elements on the earliest garments are sewn or rolled hems and appliqués. The simple tunic style that wrapped around the body (Fig. 9.2b,c) has unfinished edges that Foster (2010: 129) believes were rolled. Another possibility is that they were folded over and sewn in order to hold the edges in place. Some of these garments have a double folded selvedge along the vertical edges of the garment and across its top edge. It is shown with a darker outline along the edges of the tunic on Fig. 9.2b,c. As noted, some garments are fringed, a conceit found on many articles of female clothing (Fig. 9.2d,f).

TEXTILES PRODUCED FOR SPECIFIC GARMENTS

There are early references to the quality of cloth in the Early Dynastic and Ur III periods. In the Early Dynastic Period, fabrics are listed in the distribution of rations, where they are referenced as first-, second-, and third-class cloth (Maekawa 1980; Waetzoldt 1987; Wright 1996). In the Ur III Period, records detailing cloth quality and the standards applied for different types of garment provide a longer-term understanding of the significance of fabric and garment styles. Quality standards were applied to specific garments including, for example, "best," used for the wraparound garments and capes or shawls that were placed over the shoulders

(Waetzoldt 2010; Wright 2013). These "best" fabrics are described by Waetzoldt (2010; see also Wright 2013) as wool in a plain weave with a warp to weft ratio produced in an approximately 1 to 2 ratio of warp to weft and having various sizes that ranged from 3.5 to 6 meters. Other fabrics for wrap-around garments were ranked as "very good" and were woven in a twill pattern with a ratio of 1 to 1.5 up to 1 to 4 warp to weft. These were used for wrap-around garments, capes, or shawls for the shoulder. It took 480–960 days to produce a first quality cloth; 240 days to produce a second quality cloth; and 7 days to produce a fourth quality cloth. A fourth type of wrap-around garment, cape, or shawl for the shoulders was produced at Ur and Garshana. At 1.25 to 2.9 meters in size, it was smaller than the other clothes recorded, some of which reached 7.5 m in length. The material from which this fairly fine, warp-faced cloth was produced is not recorded but it appears to have been a specialized production, perhaps linen.

Textiles were produced in a limited number of colors, some of which were designated for individuals of a specific rank and class, while others were for the general population. Divinities specifically preferred black, white, and multicolors (Waetzoldt 2010: 203). The black and multicolored garments worn by Inana were thought to have "numinous powers" (Waetzoldt 2010: 203). A preferred color for royalty was "shiny yellow" produced from the finest quality fabric, although royal figures also wore white, as recorded in the myth describing the sacred marriage of Inana. In the myth, the king, acting in the role of Dumuzi, is described as wearing a multicolored cape or garment. Elite and other high-ranking individuals preferred multicolored wool woven of third and fourth quality fabrics. Fabrics produced for the general population were in a light or white color, or dark or black; the lowest quality of the latter was used for male and female slaves and for lower deities. A reddish-brown color was for shoes, sandals, and belts, and multicolored, black, yellow, and yellowish and greenish were used for ribbons (Waetzoldt 2010; Wright 2013: 401).

Some of the colors were available from the natural coats of sheep or goat. Woven wool straight from the fleece of sheep or goat hair was black or white. Multicolored fabrics likely were produced by combining naturally colored yarns. Natural linen fibers range in color from yellow, a flaxen or golden color, that could have been the shiny yellow preferred by royalty, especially for special ritual occasions (Fig. 9.4). However, raw flax ranges from yellow to a medium and darker yellow-brown and grey (O Ecotextiles,

9.4 Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seal (BM 121544) from Royal Cemetery of Ur with Puabi's Name Inscribed; Early Dynastic III Period (ca. 2600 BCE). Courtesy British Museum

2015: 1, 2). Therefore, linen could be bleached to achieve white, a process already known from a third millennium BCE account referred to as *The Bridal Sheet*. This text, published by Thorkild Jacobsen (1987: 13–15), gives a full account of the steps involved in the production of linen cloth, including details for dyeing linen and bleaching it. Quillien (2014: 285) reports textual sources from the first millennium that record the delivery of a large quantity of dye and alum, a mordant, to linen bleachers, suggesting that bleaching continued long after the third millennium.

This review of the fabrics and styles of women's garments in Mesopotamia indicates the existence of several different fabrics and garment styles for royalty, cultic rituals, and ordinary wear. Linen was the preferred cloth for royalty and fabrics for divine statuary, but other fabrics were worn depending on specific occasions. The color of different garment styles ranged from the natural shade of sheep wool, which, depending on breed, would be either black or white, to one of the dyed shades referred to above.

Wool and Linen Production

Based on lower percentages of linen (10%) compared to wool (90%) in texts, it is widely believed that a decline in linen production occurred early in the settlements of the south. Linen was after all associated with cloth worn and used by royalty and for divine statuary. Even if it was restricted to such uses, the question arises of why there is such a dearth of references

to the cultivation of flax, to the processing of its fiber for cloth, and linen weaving.

In an important paper, Joy McCorriston (1997) noted several factors that could account for the apparent preference for wool in southern Mesopotamia. Especially important is that wool production was economically efficient and practical when compared to linen since processing wool required less labor. A ready labor force in the form of prisoners of war, slaves, or local village women, many of whom had produced wool in their homes for generations, were compensated with low rations (Waetzoldt 1972; Maekawa 1980; Wright 1996, 2016).

Linen weavers clearly matched the skills of the wool weavers, but they were of a different sort. The production of linen cloth was known in the Near East well before the third millennium BCE. Cultivation most likely was on a small scale, undertaken and processed by household producers intimately familiar with specific grades of flax needed to produce fine linen cloth. Today, linen is produced industrially and by small-scale producers who typically cultivate flax gardens in plots in small gardens near their dwellings or in small fields. If the selection of sheep breeds and fleece for woven textiles is a highly specialized craft, the production of high-quality linen cloth requires comparable skills in assessing qualities of flax seed, optimal times for harvest and processing in order to maintain quality control. For example, the proper harvesting of flax requires removing the plant from the ground at a time when the stalk is intact and possesses long fibers (Bolley and Marcy 1907: 27), and special seeds may be used in order to produce desired colors. Although the bleaching of linen to white was carried out during the Uruk Period (Jacobsen 1987) and later (Quillien 2014), careful selection during the cultivation process itself would have enhanced the possibility of achieving the desirable flaxen or "yellow luster" (O Ecotextiles 2015: 1, 2) that was favored by royalty.

Another point noted by McCorriston is that flax would have made use of land that was otherwise suitable for growing wheat and barley. This is not supported by recent evidence. Agronomists have documented the cultivation of flax under conditions that do not compete with wheat and barley yields. Harvest yields are in fact favorable when flax is grown in rotation with cereals like wheat and barley. Good yields are also produced when grain is cultivated on flax stubble. Under the reverse conditions, when flax is grown after cereal harvests, good yields are also documented

(Flax Council of Canada: chs. 1 and 2). Flax cultivation is equally compatible with the growth of various garden-variety vegetables and is actually most favorable when grown in soil under rotation with other crops (Bolley and Marcy 1907). These modern conditions are similar to those recorded in Mesopotamia, where flax cultivation occurred in small gardens and irrigated fields and was rotated with cereals and other crops (Quillien 2014) in what appears to have been long-standing practice. Finally, Mesopotamian imagery depicts plant forms on the Warka Vase that have been interpreted as date palms and flax grown together in irrigated fields (Miller et al. 2015). The practice of growing date palms and flax together continues in Iraq in modern contexts.

Administering Linen Production in the Third Millennium

The earliest record in which the term "linen weaver" is recorded appears in the Emunusa archive in the state of Lagash at the end of the late Early Dynastic Period (Beld 2002: 15). The term, linen weaver (**ki-gu**), appears among a list of workers who were engaged in a variety of occupations and to whom rations were distributed. Texts also list flax in "arrears" in an account; this suggests that harvested fibers were received on a set basis.

At Lagash, the records note that finished linen cloth was brought to administrative personnel (Beld 2002: 15). This practice is not surprising given that linen was a productive resource that possessed highly symbolic value and would be administered under different conditions from wool production. Other details reveal an intimate association between cultivators and weavers. Although flax was grown either on land controlled by the temple or on other "well-drained garden plots" (Hruška 1995: 69; Waetzoldt 1983; Beld 2002: 31), it may have been under the charge of a weaver. According to Beld (2002: 31), the accounts in the Lagash archive do not necessarily represent activities conducted in the household but are simply records of obligations that were fulfilled by people who "provided labor to the cult."

During the reign of Gudea (ca. 2150–2125 BCE), texts from Girsu record the distribution of raw wool and bundles of flax from a "palace administrative center." Top quality garments produced in workshops were for royal women (Firth 2014: 64); these were issued by weight to workshops for the production of specific textiles (Firth 2014: 59). The surviving texts speak of weaving teams that specialized in either linen or wool, although in one group that specialized in woolen textiles, linen also was produced (Firth

2014: 61). Finally, overseers in places where linen was produced supervised, in at least one instance, both a weaving and fulling establishment (Waetzoldt 1972). The only similarity to the slightly later Ur III workshops devoted to the production of cloth woven from wool was the provision of increased rations for some women, who may have been supervisors (Wright 1996). With the exception of the rations for these "senior women," other compensation was based on age grades (Wright 1996) and at a lower rate than in the Ur III Period (Firth 2014: 64).

These various references to the organization of the production and distribution of wool and linen in the third millennium suggest important differences between flax cultivation and linen production on the one hand and wool production on the other. The specialized skills of sheep farming and wool production appear at the top of a work pyramid that was tightly controlled under industrialized conditions. In contrast, the dispersed division of labor among linen personnel suggests that linen production was less dependent on the type of centralization employed in wool production. The cultivation of linen in gardens and small plots and its special harvesting requirements indicates that linen production required the hands of a range of different types of specialists.

These differences between wool and flax were essentially technical features of the two crafts. Wool required specialization in breeding and managing sheep and materials that lent themselves to industrialized production. Flax cultivation, the processing of its fiber, and the weaving of linen instead materialized according to different standards and availability of land and expertise in each community. In fact, flax and linen cloth may have been produced outside of the institutionalized workshops that are known for wool and a few other crafts.

Administering Linen Production after the Third Millennium

The administration of linen production after the third millennium follows from my description of the agricultural skills required to nurture flax in the field and produce a fine linen cloth. My argument has been that the management of linen production by the state took into account the technical differences between the keeping of sheep and cultivation of flax. Textual sources after the Ur III Period are more numerous and document the official understanding of "flax culture," and how this was taken into account in managing its production.

After the Ur III Period, in the Old Babylonian Period (ca. 2000–1600 BCE) and subsequently, a "fragmentation of power" and administrative changes occurred that affected craft organization (Van De Mieroop 1992: 70). The extent to which these changes influenced the reorganization of linen production is unknown. In any event, there are many references to the cultivation of flax and the production and distribution of linen that provide useful insights into the ways in which technical factors influenced the processing and farming of linen in Mesopotamia. In these well-documented contexts, Quillien (2014: 278) notes references to the profession of "linen weaver," though there is no indication that the weaver resided on temple grounds. Linen producers provide services that reflect different stages in linen's production. Some workers supplied raw flax to the administration, while others received combed flax and were responsible for delivering linen cloth after it was spun or woven (Quillien 2014). At Sippar, linen weavers worked in teams but a specific individual managed the dispersal of silver for purchases of flax, stages of processing such as the spinning and weaving of curtains and tunics. The weaver's work also included bleaching, washing, and making repairs of raw flax and linen thread. Even here there is variation as some bleachers are not among the teams of linen weavers (Quillien 2014: 279). At Uruk, bleachers during the same period performed all of the tasks associated with linen weavers at Sippar, except that non-weavers mended the fabric and thread (Quillien 2014: 279). A separate category of individuals who worked with fine cloth in temples was granted a prebend. Such individuals were alone responsible for preparing materials for religious ceremonies but were not located on temple grounds (Quillien 2014).

Other first millennium records kept by temples at Sippar and Uruk and studied by Quillien (2014) record the procurement of flax from fields, some of which were located at some distance from the city. In Sippar, weavers procured flax from a palm garden owned by the temple. A portion of the flax was taken as a tax, while the remainder was "bought" with silver and in a transaction involving dates (Quillien 2014: 272). A different system was recorded by a temple in the city of Uruk, in which a "bleacher" procured flax from the "steppe" or other location near the city and was paid in silver (Quillien 2014: 273). Other transactions reference irrigated lands in which relatives of a "bleacher" procured flax grown along with "cereals, vegetables, and onions." Farmers paid rents for the flax in exchange for their use of canals (Quillien 2014: 273).

In view of the restrictions on the use of linen cloth and cultivation methods that differed from those used by the grain industry or for sheep farming, and the relatively small number of texts for which we have current evidence, it appears that flax cultivation, processing, and cloth weaving materialized according to the needs of available land in each community. Flax cultivation and processing seems to have been structured following a division of labor in which farmers, producers, processors, and weavers independently carried out their shares of the linen production process. Results were coordinated by individuals in the large institutions with no apparent knowledge of the total process. This could account for the lack of elaborate records of input and output, in which only the end products (flax bundles, spun flax, and cloth) were recorded separately.

To conclude this section, then, this review of texts and agro-economics offers a new perspective on linen and its place in Mesopotamia society. Linen continued to be a viable product in the Early Dynastic and later periods but its production and distribution developed following a management strategy that was more commensurate with the farm methods, water requirements, rotation regimes, and processing of "flax culture" (Bolley and Marcy 1907). In addition, the restriction in linen's use to garments for royalty and divinities sets it apart from wool with its more industrialized production, a factor that partially explains the lower percentages of texts devoted to its production and distribution.

PUABI'S BURIAL AND PASSAGE TO THE UNDERWORLD

In reconstructing or, as some might say, in creating, Queen Puabi's outfit, I carefully noted the details of her garment as depicted on two surviving cylinder seals, object 30-12-2 (Penn Museum; see online database of the Penn Museum) and BM 121544 (British Museum; pictured here in Fig. 9.4), from the Royal Cemetery at Ur. The images created in this essay (Figs. 9.5–9.8) emphasize the contours of the clothing engraved on these two seals and are in keeping with contemporary Mesopotamian cultural norms pertaining to color, fabric, and super-structural features of Mesopotamian clothing. The fabric choice was either leather, flounced wool, or finely woven linen, possibly selected and harvested with the goal of achieving black, white, and yellow in the finished garment. I have also considered here the likely texture of the finished cloth.

As discussed earlier, the ornaments worn by Puabi are not depicted on the seals buried in the Royal Cemetery.[4] It is likely that the artisans responsible for carving the two seals cited here were not present at the funerary ceremony itself. In reconstructing the style of female dress that Puabi wore to her grave, they (the artisans) relied on cultural norms or a knowledgeable specialist. I drew especially on imagery from the seal BM 121544 (Fig. 9.4), a seal found on or near Puabi's remains and inscribed with her name. The styles represented here in Figure 9.2 show third millennium female clothing represented in other imagery, and attributes associated with her status and the cult ritual in which she performed. The reconstructed garments may not be absolutely identical to the clothes that Puabi actually wore to her death but they are in keeping with the available evidence described earlier in this chapter.

In third millennium BCE Mesopotamia, royal and elite figures wore linen and wool fabrics produced exclusively for persons of their ranks. While linen was exclusively reserved for royalty, who also wore wool garments, less finely woven (wool) fabrics were worn by people of other classes. In a seal from her tomb (Fig. 9.4), Queen Puabi is shown seated at a banquet. Her garments here are smooth rather than flounced and layered as shown in other forms of classic Sumerian dress (Fig. 9.2a), though her garment does include an elaborate fringe at the hemline. Her clothing style, instead of following the wrap-around type (Figs. 9.2b,c), combines the fringed garment and a dress that hugs her neck, a style similar to that worn by Inana on the Warka Vase (Fig. 9.2e).

A distinctive addition to Puabi's attire is the short garment that covers her shoulder and bodice. In the records reported by Waetzoldt (2010), capes were woven in a plain weave of wool or linen. The short garment with super-structural attachments shown on Puabi's seal (Fig. 9.4) may represent a "cut-off" (Foster 2010: 129) or cape, a garment worn only by high-status women on ceremonial occasions. I have paid particular attention to the super-structural additions to this cut-off (Fig. 9.4) and designed several different interpretations of fabrics. On Figure 9.5, I have shown Puabi's dress and "cut-off" in black, though white wool could also have been used. The appliqué is trimmed with black and white strips made of wool. The cut-off could also be designed with appliquéd ornaments, perhaps lapis lazuli and gold, that also would be in keeping with the emphasis on adding texture and color to the fabric (this visualization is not shown here).

9.5 Visualization of Puabi's Clothing Modeled after Fig. 9.4. Black dress and "cut-off" appliquéd with wool trim. Created by R. Wright and G. Gallo

I have also created a different visualization of the positioning of the ornaments on Puabi's garments (Fig. 9.6) that follows Woolley's (1934) initial description of the location of the beads in his excavation notes, discussed at length by Kim Benzel (2013). Working directly from Woolley's original notes (now in the British Museum), Benzel "unpacks" his texts and observations in a comprehensive interpretation of techniques and designs employed. Based on its location at Puabi's neckline, Woolley interpreted surviving "jewelry," later identified by other scholars as choker-like ornaments, as a decorative collar on what he referred to as a cape (what I have identified as a "cut-off"). Similarly, instead of identifying the jewels at the bottom of the cloak as a belt, Woolley believed they were actually attached to the cloak (Benzel 2013: 141–49). In Benzel's (2013: 213) words, Woolley believed it was "possible that the so-called belt might have been the lower border of the cloak much like the collar might have been the upper border." Although Woolley later reconstructed the lower jewelry as more likely representing a belt rather than the lower border of a cloak, my reconstructions include a version of Puabi's attire that follow his original observations in his

9.6 Visualization of Puabi's Clothing Modeled after Figure 9.4. Black Dress and "Cut-Off" with Appliquéd Ornaments. Created by R. Wright and G. Gallo

9.7 Visualization of Puabi's Clothing Modeled after Figure 9.4 (after Woolley's Interpretation). Black Dress with Linen "Cut-Off." Created by R. Wright and G. Gallo

9.8 Puabi's Clothing Modeled after Figure 9.4. Black Dress with Linen "Cut-Off" and appliquéd wool trim. Created by R. Wright, G. Gallo

excavation notes (Woolley 1934). In Figure 9.7, I have created a visualization of the same image shown with a linen "cut-off."

In Figure 9.8, I have depicted clothing styles, ornaments, and fabrics in line with color preferences for royalty and divinities noted in the texts, and I have maintained the position of the beads shown in Figure 9.1. I believe that this version of her garment most closely follows the cultural norms described in this chapter. Puabi's dress is shown in black wool with a high neck and fringe, as they are shown in the seal BM 121544 (Fig. 9.4). The color white would have been less appropriate for a funerary performance since it is more typical of bridal dress. I have used a light linen fabric, a shiny yellow in color, for the small "cut-off" that extends from the shoulder to the bottom of Puabi's bodice. I selected alternating black and white wool trim for the appliqué to enliven the plainness of the cloth and draw attention to the "cut-off" as a ceremonial badge of royalty. If made of linen, the very fine and loosely woven threads would have endowed the "cut-off" with a transparent quality, so that all of the beads worn beneath the "cut-off" would be visible (this possible outcome is not reproduced).

CONCLUSION

All life must end in death, but the significance of Puabi's funerary performance remains with us thanks to the surviving material culture from her grave. Forensic studies of her skeletal remains are also providing some understanding of the circumstances of her death (e.g., Hafford 2019). These have led historians to reconstruct a portrait of a queen who was dedicated to the ideologies of her time and who served them in a spectacular performance in a moment in history we might otherwise never have known. Investigation of the cloth opened our vision to the symbolic nature of fabric and the more mundane concerns of cultivation practices and practical concerns of a bureaucracy; it also has filled other important gaps in Mesopotamian history. While the actions of kings were celebrated in literary texts, administrative accounts, imagery, and ideology, women have remained on the margins of history. The more detailed circumstances of Puabi's death, as they have been reconstructed, move her to the forefront of history. Although the visualizations I have created here of the clothes she wore to her death are based on images fashioned by an artisan and on evidence from surviving texts, we cannot be sure that it is a true portrait of how Puabi looked and what she wore. Still, complemented by her grave's rich material culture and the numerous analyses of its significance, we at least glimpse something of the symbols of her office.

The sumptuous nature of the materials and resources in Puabi's grave overshadow those of any other burials during the period. The reconstruction of Puabi fully adorned provides insights into the fabric that lay beneath the sumptuous ornaments. The queen's spectacular accessories, though important, have diverted our attention away from the cloth that lay beneath the eye-catching ornaments, which deteriorated (or de-materialized) long ago and so has been mostly invisible to us in the present day. My attempts in this paper have been to gather together the various threads that pertain to the production and use of cloth in order to complete a narrative of (and to re-materialize missing elements from) Puabi's signature funerary performance.

NOTES:

9.1 This paper was inspired by an exhibition of Near Eastern holdings from the Royal Cemetery at the Penn Museum and a lecture delivered by Holly Pittman to my undergraduate students in an installation in one of the galleries. She walked us

through the placement of the queen's magnificent ornaments, toggle pins, and meticulously reconstructed bead work that was sewn on to the queen's garment that were appropriate to a woman of Puabi's status, cultural norms, and connections to a world beyond Mesopotamia. Holly and I first met at Tal-i Malyan, ancient Anshan. Holly was our seal expert; working in a trench next to one she was excavating, we stood in wonder as she found seal after seal throughout the season. Over the years Holly has helped me to understand seals and their significance in Mesopotamia and in the regions between Mesopotamia and the Indus civilization, where I spent most of my field experience. I will always treasure her generosity and friendship.

9.2 Recent studies on women in Mesopotamia include multifaceted treatments of women not only in literary and religious but also social, economic, and legal spheres (among numerous others: Asher-Greve 2013; Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013; Crawford 2014; Couto-Ferreira 2016).

9.3 There is an extensive literature on the headdresses, earrings, and other ornamentation worn by Puabi. They are not included here, since they are not shown on the seals discussed in the main text below. Of note are the various fruits and plants represented that captured the richness of the fruits of the land: pomegranates (Woolley 1934: 89); apples (Miller 2000: 154); dates (Ellison et al. 1978; Postgate 1987); golden leaves of willow (Tengberg et al. 2008); Indus Sissoo (Tengberg et al. 2008: 927); and date palm. For an extensive list of types and discussion of production technologies, see Benzel (2013).

9.4 This omission is not unlike Sir Leonard Woolley's reaction to his discovery of the Royal Cemetery at Ur overall. Rather than excavating immediately, Woolley returned to the British Museum and secured the funds needed to conduct a full-scale excavation of his "royal" burials before beginning to dig. Woolley's announcement of the finds and early art put the Royal Cemetery and perhaps even Near Eastern art and archaeology generally on the map (Chi and Azara 2015). What immediately caught Woolley's own eye and the public interest was the display of mineral resources that showcased the vast exchange networks within which the early Sumerian cities were embedded.

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