
Interpretative refinements since the 1970s have seen 'acculturation' ('the process by which elements are transferred from one culture to another'—J.J. Honigmann) understood in terms of the centre-periphery model, whereby a subordinate periphery tries to pull itself up to the level of a dominant centre, using imported objects and copied styles. But as Margaret C. Miller (M) points out (244-6), Athenian response to Persian goods and Persian luxury culture in the fifth century does not easily fit the centre-periphery model. Success in resisting Persian control was central to the development of Athens and Greece, and instead of joining a Persian periphery Athens became itself an imperial centre.

M's most important sources are objects, and 150 well-produced figures put discussion on a solid footing. In the first chapter (3-28), an overview of Athenian-Persian relations focuses on the later fifth century, seeking to establish in what circumstances cultural information about Persia would have been available to Athenians. As to availability of Persian-made objects, M asks how much was captured at Marathon—answering that there must have been substantial and valuable spoils: Herodotus' silence on the point, she argues, should be understood as a move to avoid detracting from the impact of his description of the spoils of Plataea (30-32).

In 'a social structure in which an absence of the physical symbols of status would threaten to diminish the dignity of rank', Persian kings and high officers took large quantities of valuables on campaign. M surveys evidence for Iranian objects found in Greece and explores who got captured goods; she adds modern parallels for the large and richly adorned Persian royal tents.
Nor was capture the only means of acquisition, even though M argues for ascribing an important role to Persian War spoils in ‘shaping Athenian taste and desires’ (146). Trade and diplomatic gifts brought high-status goods into the Greek world on an ongoing basis. M points to the reality of settlement by Persians in Asia Minor (91-2), and the way a satrapal capital reflected the styles of the royal court. Clothes have an important part to play: a suitable gift, in Esther, for ‘the man whom the King delights to honour’ (cf. 125-6). In Athens, Chinese silk was found in the fifth-century Kerameikos Grave HTR 73 (cf 77-8 and n.101), and scattered references point to embroidered textiles being known; in both cases, interaction with the East is responsible.

The use and adaptation at Athens of Persian objects and styles M calls ‘Perserie’, on the analogy of Chinoiserie and Türkerei (1). Noting an inevitable tension between status symbol and patriotically-motivated anti-Persian feeling, she examines uses of Persian luxury items, arguing (in the case of fans, parasols and flywhisks, for example, used by men in Persian and earlier contexts) that use of these by women in Greece served to marginalise the honorific symbol, making adoption of it not seem pro-Persian (193-206, 250).

Animal-head cups, clothes, peacocks, exotic slaves—M discusses the place each of these took at Athens. There was a ‘qualitative expansion of the concept of a luxury culture’ (216), and M argues that as Perserie items and practices came to signify superabundance, and (in Thorstein Veblen’s phrase) ‘vicarious leisure’, so ‘the role of élite women in the expression of social standing through luxury’ grew (217): hence from the last part of the century scenes on painted pottery of ladies at leisure in the gynaikon, attended by flywhisk-bearers.

An interesting chapter discusses the Odeion of Pericles, inclining to accept M. Korres’ suggestion that the near-square hypostyle hall was built without walls (229 n.70). Not accepting the claim in Pausanias that the Odeion was meant to resemble
Xerxes' tent, M argues that it imitated Apadana architecture—a view supported by, although not based exclusively on, the observation that its dimensions were very similar to those of the Hall of a Hundred Columns at Persepolis (237). Dismissing the view that it was built for Pericles' Panhellenic Congress, and noting that if it had been intended as an indoor concert venue it would have been unique (since musical performances took place out of doors everywhere else), M says that 'its purpose appears to have been purely semiotic' (240)—what in another age we might call a 'prestige project'.

This persuasive study deserves to make a great impact. At the end élite Lakonism is well explained as a reaction to the democratization of Perserie. M's discussion of luxury culture integrates pictorial representations with literary evidence on a more ambitious scale than has been attempted before for this period. Produced to an excellent standard, this book must be welcomed unreservedly; it is certain to be influential for many years.

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In introducing this collection of essays, which has been published as representative of the conference of the International Plutarch Society, 7-11 September 1994, Judith Mossman has downplayed the value of the collection, stating '... so versatile was Plutarch's intelligence, and so great his intellectual energy,