2 *pallium* – the regular female cloak (pl. 1)

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter concerns the regular coat (*pallium*) worn by Roman women. Romans used the *pallium* in the same function as we do a coat. They did not wear it continuously, but put it on or took it off as needed to protect against cold or rain. Apart from the *pallium*, there were other forms of coats that had other names. There are two rustic ones—the *paenula* (B 7), a hooded cape put on over the head similar to a poncho—and the *abolla* (B 7). In addition, there is a luxury article of clothing called *cyclas* (B 9) that may have been, as is suggested by its name, a wrap that had a circular cut. Prostitutes with a low social status (*scorta*) could also dress in the oval-shaped *toga* (B 6).[1]

The chapter contains all important texts on the female *pallium* dating to the time of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. It has been placed second because the *pallium* (ἱμάτιον) has a basic form and is—next to the *tunica*—the most common female Roman garment in the period treated in this book (200 BCE–200 CE). It is a very ordinary garment and has therefore lagged behind the more exceptional upper-class *palla* (B 3) in modern research. Already in Antiquity, the Roman tunic and *pallium* share a common fate: They are so normal that they are rarely mentioned in our literary sources, which focus on the extraordinary. In the case of the *pallium* (and the *palla*), the top-down-perspective of Roman upper-class culture mirrored by literature has led to two serious misapprehensions in scholarship that still hamper general understanding.[2] The first misapprehension is that the word *pallium* supposedly only (or at least mainly) refers to the male cloak (OLD s.v. *pallium* 1a: '… worn mainly by man');[3] the second is

1 In contrast, there was no such thing as a **ricinium*. The word, which has played an enormous (and inordinate) role in research, is a senseless gloss and is therefore banned from part B. It is instead discussed in chapters A 1, C 1, and D 1.

2 See Ferrari (1685) 231–237; Marquardt (1864) 179–184; Becker/Göll (1882) 258–263; Marquardt/Mau (1886) 576–580; Blümner (1911) 234–235; Wilson (1938) 148–150; RE 18.2 (1949) s.v. palla, col. 152–156 (R. Hanslik); RE 18.2 (1949) s.v. pallium, col. 249–254 (R. Kreis-von Schaewen); Potthoff (1992) 146–155; Scholz (1992) 100–106; Scharf (1994) 96–114; Sebesta (1994a) 48; DNP 9 (2000) s.v. pallium, 201; GRD (2007) 136–137; Olson (2008) 33–35.

3 DNP 9 (2000) 201: "das Gegenstück zum P. war die Palla der Frauen"; GRD (2007) 136: "female equivalent of the *pallium*." Cf. against this dichotomy, already Scharf (1994) 104.

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that the word *palla* (in contrast to the male *pallium*) is supposedly the regular term for the normal female cloak. Both assumptions are mistaken. This chapter argues that the word *pallium* is the generic term for the cloaks of both genders and that the term *palla* refers to an ornamental (and therefore expensive) *pallium*.

2.2 Terminology and appearance

The etymology of the word *pallium* is still a matter of debate.[4] It is a diminutive of *palla*, which might be an Etruscan word.[5] In Republican times, a *pallium* that was more elegant and had ornaments was also called a *palla*.[6] Smaller variants, coming close to a scarf, were referred to by the diminutive *palliolum* (B 17). Latin literature also sometimes uses the unspecific terms *amiculum* and *amictus* for it. Even the most general Latin term for a garment (*vestis*) can occasionally be applied to it.

But what did a *pallium* look like? In contrast to our coat,[7] the cut of the *pallium* was very simple. It is not more than a rectangular piece of cloth—almost a kind of blanket—that is wrapped around the body in various ways and can also serve to cover the head.[8] It is a kind of cloak.[9] A rough analogue can be found in the South Asian *sari*, which is a long, untailored cloth wrapped and draped in different ways. The *pallium* presumably differed from the *palla* not so much in size, but that it was less coloured and ornamented and consisted of less valuable material. Most *pallia* were very likely made of wool and had a natural colour.

2.3 Social usage

The female *pallium* is used by all types of girls and women in the entire period considered in this book. In contrast to the male *pallium*, it is only rarely mentioned in early

4 Walde-Hofmann s.v. *palla* and Potthoff (1992) 146–151.

5 Cf. B 3 p. 290.

6 Cf. B 3 p. 289.

7 The modern fashion of a 'coat' will generally consist of four broad characteristics: (1) It is a more or less tailored garment; (2) it has sleeves; (3) it is opened vertically along the middle; and (4) it is fastened by buttons or a zipper (Romans did not know either).

8 On its various drapings, cf. Archaeological evidence p. 678.

9 In English literature on the subject, the *pallium* (and the *palla*) are variously called 'mantle, cloak, wrap.' Looking for a word that might convey a similar notion to what the Roman *pallium* looked like, I have opted for the term 'cloak' when necessary and avoided the archaic sounding 'mantle.' The translation 'cloak' is to be understood as only an approximation, and the word is used here in the sense of a minimally tailored (if at all) large piece of fabric thrown or wrapped around the body and held together either by friction or with only a simple closure, like a brooch. In general, the chapter tries to avoid the English term and instead uses the Latin term *pallium* as much as possible.

Pre-Classical Latin literature. The first two mentions of the female *pallium* are found in Plautus. In the *Bacchides*, Plautus briefly refers to the sullied *pallium* of a nurse, which serves as a comparison to the skin of a pupil hit by his teacher because of his incompetence in reading:

> Plaut. Bacch. 433–434
> *cum legeres, si unam peccavisses syllabam,*
> *fieret corium tam maculosum quam est nutricis pallium*
>
> if you had mispronounced a syllable while reading it, your skin would have become as blotchy as a nurse's *pallium*

The comparison is very short. As regards breastfeeding, we should imagine that the nurse is positioning the infant *under* her wrapped cloak at her exposed breast (where the *chiton* has been pushed aside). The supposition currently favoured in research is that the nurse uses a special burp cloth, 'special' in the sense that it has a specific function. In modern eyes, this may seem plausible, but the assumption has a flaw: If Plautus were referring to a small cloth (as opposed to a larger sheet) thrown over the shoulder in order to protect the fabric underneath, one would expect him to use the diminutive *palliolum* instead. For this reason, it is much easier to keep to the common meaning of *pallium* and suppose that Plautus is referring to the cloak of the nurse that was sullied when breastfeeding. She used her cloak (*pallium*) to shield the infant and her bare breast from view. A second passage in Plautus can be interpreted in a similar way. A *meretrix* wants to simulate a pregnancy by lying in bed. She asks her servant to take off her sandals (*soleae*) and throw a *pallium* over her.[10] Since a bed is mentioned, the notion of a larger 'blanket' first comes to mind. However, considering stage action, it is likely that the word *pallium* refers to a simple cloak that was used as a prop on stage. Such a *pallium* would have been quickly at hand, especially in the *Palliata* (B 6). This is all the evidence we have from Pre-Classical literature. There is far more on the ornamental *palla*, which is a common object of female desire in Plautine comedy. This relative silence on the *pallium* in Plautus should not disturb us because we do have evidence from later periods.

Whichever way we understand Plautus, the word *pallium* designates the regular female cloak in neutral language in the first century BCE. Varro and Cicero both use the term in the generic sense of cloak in a perfectly natural manner.[11] Since dictionaries

10 Plaut. Truc. 479: *soleas mihi deduce, pallium inice in me huc* [take off my sandals, throw a *pallium* here on me].

11 Cic. div. 2.143: *qui* (sc. *Alcibiades*) *paulo ante interitum visus est in somnis amicae esse amictus amiculo. Is cum esset proiectus inhumatus ab omnibusque desertus iaceret, amica corpus eius texit suo pallio* [A short time before his death, Alcibiades dreamt that he was dressed in his girlfriend's coat. When he had been cast out without burial and lay there with no one caring for him, his mistress covered his body with her *pallium*]. Cf. also Val. Max. 1.7 ext. 9.

and manuals are misleading in this respect,[12] we have to briefly review the references in Varro. He mentions the female *pallium* in four places. As in Plautus, we are lucky to get at least a little glimpse of the normal. Varro's remarks are short and casual, but very important for the history of Roman dress. In *De lingua Latina*, he twice adduces the normal garments worn by the ordinary Roman citizen and his wife as everyday *exempla* to illustrate his theory of language.[13] In both places, Varro uses four different garments for illustration: two male and two female garments that made up the visible costume of Romans. The male ensemble consists of a *tunica* and a *toga*, the female one of a *stola* and a *pallium*.[14] In Varro's model, the woman's *stola* corresponds to the man's *tunica* and the female *pallium* to the male *toga*. The terms *tunica* and *stola* are clearly individuated as different types of garments and are assigned to each gender by the additions *virilis* and *muliebris*. The two cloaks are also different. The cloak of the Roman man is the *toga* (with its oval cut) and that of the woman is the rectangular *pallium*. This means that the *pallium* is unambiguously assigned to a gender as the female [!] analogue of the man's outer cloak. Varro's words thus completely undercut

12 Georges s.v. *pallium*: "der Mantel, den auch Römer unter den Griechen, sowie griech. und röm. Hetären (*amicae*) trugen"; OLD s.v. *pallium*: 1 "a rectangular piece of material worn mainly by men as outer garment"; Blümner (1911) 235: "Das *pallium* … kommt auch als Frauentracht vor …, aber … scheint … Tracht der Libertinen gewesen zu sein"; GRD (2007) 137.

13 Varro LL 8.13: *accedit quod quaecumque usus causa ad vitam sint assumpta, in his nos opportet utilitatem quaerere, non similitudinem: itaque in vestitu cum dissimillima sit virilis toga tunicae, muliebris stola pallio, tamen inaequabilitatem hanc sequimur nihilo minus* [Moreover, in all things that are taken into our daily life for use, we must seek utility, not similarity. Therefore, although the man's *toga* is very unlike his *tunica* and the woman's *stola* very unlike her *pallium*, we nevertheless follow this principle of dissimilarity in clothing]; Varro LL 9.48: *Ego utilitatis causa orationem factam concedo, sed ut vestimenta: quare ut hic similitudines sequimur, ut virilis tunica sit virili similis, item toga togae, sic mulierum stola ut sit stolae proportione et pallium pallio simile, sic cum sint nomina utilitatis causa, tamen virilia inter se similia, item muliebria inter se sequi debemus* [I concede that language has been made for use, but like the clothes. We must therefore, as we follow the principle of similarity in clothing (so that in case of men the *tunica* is similar to the *tunica*, and the *toga* to the *toga*, as well as in case of women the *stola* is similar to the *stola* in proportion, and the *pallium* to the *pallium*), do so also in the case of nouns. Although nouns are made for use, we must follow the rule that the males and females are similar among themselves]. In the first passage, Varro argues that anomaly (i.e. historical linguistic dissimilarities) should have precedence over analogy (i.e. formal regularization) in word formation since language serves a function in everyday life—as does clothing. As regards the various items of dress, function and difference (*dissimilitudo*) prevail over uniformity (*analogia*), and similarity (*similitudo*) is not aimed for. According to Varro's theory, this explains why men and women wear different garments. In the second passage, Varro, using the same example, also argues the other way around for the principle of analogy. This shows how ludicrous his theoretical explanations are. Like in modern discourse, banalities are dished up in complicated words. According to Varro, analogy is also important in word formation. Words must have regular endings and forms that conform to the general paradigm. This is also shown by the example of clothing. In the case of garments, there are also certain general norms to which the individual garment must be aligned. Male *tunicae* all look alike; female *stolae* are all similar, conforming to the general form of the respective garment.

14 Varro arranges the terms differently in both passages, but that need not concern us.

the common modern view that the term *pallium* specifically refers to the male cloak. On the contrary, it is actually the common female cloak that is designated by this word.

Varro mentions the *pallium* in two further passages. This time he is dealing with the early history of Roman costume.[15] In *De lingua Latina* 5.132,[16] he talks about the supposed origin of both the term *pallium* and the garment itself, which he lists among the ancient female garments. He obviously believed that the term *pallium* comes from Roman pre-history. In his cultural history *De vita populi Romani*, he deals with the cloaks (**ricinia*) worn by ancient Roman women at funerals and compares them to dark *pallia*.[17] All instances from Varro show without doubt that the regular cloak of Roman women was called *pallium* in the first century BCE.

We may now take a closer look at what kind of women wore a *pallium* and how they used it. Varro's remarks imply that it was the regular cloak of a normal Roman *matrona*. When we look at the rest of our evidence, this picture broadens further. The *pallium* is worn by every kind of woman in the Roman world. It is not restricted to any age and gender role, but comprises all social groups. It is used to cover the body from the head to the legs. In our literary sources, the veiling and unveiling of the body is often combined with an erotic effect. In Ovid's Love Elegy, the *puellae* may wear a *pallium* in public and in private.[18] In the theatre, for example, the *puella* hides her beautiful legs with it. The amorous dandy, however, finds way and means to remove it, turning his insolence into an unambiguous compliment. A *pallium* is 'chastized' for selfishly hiding a woman's beautiful legs from view:

Ovid. am. 3.3.25–36
sed nimium demissa iacent tibi pallia terra.
collige, vel digitis en ego tollo meis!

15 Cf. C 1 pp. 565–568.

16 *Hinc, quod facta duo simplicia paria, parilia primo, <deinde pallia> dicta, R exclusum propter levitatem* [Hence the *pallia*, because two simple pairs (*paria*) were made of it, were first called *parilia* and then *pallia*, the R being excluded because of the lightness (sc. of the garment)]. Although the word *pallium* is not found in Varro's text itself (the textual transmission is corrupt), his etymological explanation necessarily presupposes the form *pallia* in the plural as the point of reference.

17 Varro VPR F 411 Salvadore (= 105 Riposati): *ut, dum supra terram esset, riciniis lugerent funere ipso ut pullis pall<i>is amictae,* [... so that, while it (sc. the dead person) was still above the earth, they mourned at the burial dressed in **ricinia* like in dark *pallia*]. The form *palliis* (with a double I) has been rightly restored by editors from the transmitted *pallis* of the manuscripts.

18 Ovid. am. 1.4.41–50: *Haec tamen adspiciam, sed quae bene pallia celant,* || *illa mihi caeci causa timoris erunt. … hoc tu non facies; sed ne fecisse puteris, conscia de tergo pallia deme tuo.* [However, these things I will see, but those the *pallium* hides well will be the cause of a blind fear to me. ... You will not do this, but lest you will be thought to do it, take the conspiring cloak off your back]. In its double function as a blanket, the *pallium* might be used to conceal amorous acts.

> *invida vestis eras, quae tam bona crura tegebas;*
> *quoque magis spectes – invida vestis eras!*
> But your *pallium* is all too much let down, lying on the ground. Gather it up, or, see, I myself lift it up with my fingers! You were an envious garment to cover such fair legs, and the more one looks—envious garment you were…

More mature unmarried women also had a *pallium*. In Petronius' *Satyrica*, for example, a priestess of Priapus, who is clad in a *pallium*, suddenly uncovers her head and shows her beauty.[19] That is the start of what becomes an orgy afterwards.

We may thus sum up the social use of the *pallium* as follows: Contrary to the dictionaries, the *pallium* was an everyday garment worn by all groups of women; the word *pallium* was the everyday name for that type of cloak. Our literary sources mention it only rarely because they wrote from a top-down perspective, but we may use the term *pallium* without hesitation when describing statues or pictures and when talking about female clothing. The *pallium* is a perfectly normal article of female dress.

2.4 History

The early history of the *pallium* can only be surmised by means of linguistic inference and analogy. Since the term *pallium* is a regular Latin diminutive of the term *palla*, the *palla* preceded the *pallium* that was named in reference to it. As time went on, the everyday *pallium* got more popular than the festive *palla* because it was worn by more people. Hence the word became the generic term to designate a cloak in neutral language. This may have happened already when Latin dress culture 'merged' with Greek dress culture in the third century BCE. At least, it was in this time that the term *pallium* came to denote the common Greek coat called ἱμάτιον (*himation*),[20] whereas the term *palla* was reserved for the more elegant Roman cloak (B 3). The historical hypothesis is supported by the fact that the marginalization of the *palla* went on in Republican times and led to the eclipse of the *palla* by the end of the first century BCE.[21]

In the time from 200 BCE–200 CE, the *pallium* was worn by all groups of women. It remains in common use in Imperial times, even though there are more alternatives in a woman's wardrobe. A private Greek letter of the Egyptian woman Herais (2nd half 2nd

19 Petron. 17: *retexit superbum pallio caput*.

20 We do not know whether the Roman *pallium* was completely identical with a Greek *himation*. In a Greek text dating to the second half of the second century CE, we find the πάλλιον (*pallium*) and ἱμάτιον listed alongside each other, cf. PHamb. 33 and B 11 421. The fact that there exists a Latin loanword πάλλιον in Greek shows that a slight distinction between both garments was seen by the Greeks. However, as with Roman *tunica* and Greek *chiton*, the Romans did not see the necessity for distinction in Latin.

21 Cf. B 3 p. 288.

century BCE), the last evidence treated in this book, shows that the Roman πάλλιον (*pallium*) was exported to the provinces and formed part of the international female fashion worn in all parts of the oikumene in Imperial times.[22] In contrast to the *palla* (B 3), the *stola* (B 4), and the girl's *praetexta* (B 5), the *pallium* and the Roman *tunica* were the only part of traditional Roman dress style to survive, at least in name.

22 PHamb. 33.7, on the papyrus in general, cf. B 11 pp. 421–424.