

9 *vestes Melitenses, vestes Coae, cyclas, gausapum* – fashion and the Empire

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9.1 Introduction

Up to this point, part B has dealt with what might more or less be called traditional Roman dress. Some chapters have focused on Roman citizenship and its evolution in order to show that dress culture is not a static entity, but forms part of a dynamic social process. The main driver of this process was that the Roman society wearing ‘Roman’ dress changed drastically during these centuries. Roman culture spread from only those living in a single city to ultimately the entire Mediterranean region through the expansion of the Roman Empire. This military expansion brought with it increased contact with non-Roman (especially Greek) culture. With the exception of the *tunica* (B 2), the outer evolution of the Empire has only shortly been touched upon so far. It is, however, important for understanding Roman culture as a whole.

It was these centuries that saw Rome’s rise to become the foremost power of the entire Mediterranean basin, culminating in the conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt (30 BCE). The cultural impact of Greek culture was already felt and noticed by the Romans themselves. Horace coined the proverbial phrase *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes || intulit agresti Latio* (conquered Greece in turn defeated its savage conqueror and brought cultural pursuits to Latium).¹ Greece and the Hellenistic east did not only influence the arts, but also brought decisive changes to Roman culture and fashion. In fact, in the period covered by part B, Roman fashion is in reality Graeco-Roman fashion, both elements already being fused by then. As with the other *artes*, most of the technical sartorial terms (which we do not find in high literature) will have been Greek. They existed alongside Roman (Latin) terminology and even superseded Latin terms in many instances. In some cases, we still see Greek loanwords and Latin words designating the same garments, as for example *stola/vestis longa*, *zona/cingillum*; in some cases, the same Latin words designate Greek or both Greek and Roman garments. The reason for postponing the issue of the evolution of Roman fashion due to external influences until this chapter is that we cannot tell at what time exactly the Greek elements and

¹ Hor. epist. 2.1.156–157.

Greek terminology became integrated into Roman fashion. The issue is that we can only see the results, but not the process of acculturation. By the period from which we have literary sources, the process had already been completed or at least was well under way.

This is different with most clothes and clothing terms treated in this chapter: the *vestes Melitenses*, the *Coae vestes*, and the *gausapum*. These terms do not refer to specially cut garments, but to new materials (cotton, silk, shaggy woollen cloth). Romans encountered them (or found them to be fashionable) with the increasing expansion of the Roman Empire into the former Carthaginian zone of influence, the Near East, and the Celtic region. They appear in different phases of the first century BCE. Our sources clearly show them to be a ‘new’ fashion in Rome. After some time, the words all disappear from literature, perhaps because the respective materials became more normal and the garments were hence called by more common names.

9.2 *vestes Melitenses*

9.2.1 Terminology and appearance

The first ‘foreign’ luxury fashion mentioned in Latin literature are garments from the island of Malta.² The historian Diodorus tells us “that Malta, a Phoenician colony, had craftsmen manufacturing all sorts of things. The best of them were those producing ὀθόνια, which was considered excellent in fineness and softness.”³ The expression ‘Maltese clothes’ hence does not mean a specifically tailored garment, but refers to the material of the fabric. The word ὀθόνια can designate either a linen or a cotton cloth. As our Latin sources show, Maltese weavers indeed manufactured various garments. We explicitly hear of a **supparus* and a *mitra*,⁴ but it is certain that tunics and coats will have been produced as well.⁵

9.2.2 Social usage

Maltese garments were used in Rome by the financially well-off. They were associated with luxury. The Roman magistrate Verres, for example, had garments made at Malta for

² Marquardt/Mau (1886) 490; RE 15.1 (1931) s.v. Melita (11), col. 544 (J. Weiss).

³ Diod. 5.12.2: τεχνίτας τε γὰρ ἔχει παντοδαποὺς ταῖς ἐργασίαις, κρατίστους δὲ τοὺς ὀθόνια ποιοῦντας τῇ λεπτότητι καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι διαπρεπῇ. ἔστι δὲ ἡ νῆσος αὕτη Φοινίκων ἄποικος.

⁴ Novius Paedium F 3: *supparum purum Melitensem*. (B) *interii, escam meram!* [a *supparus*, pure Maltese stuff. (B) I am doomed, a true bait!]; cf. A 7 p. 171; Varro Men. F 333: *aliae [mitrant] reticulum aut mitram Melitensem* [other women a hairnet or Maltese *mitra*]; cf. A 9 p. 193.

⁵ Cic. Verr. 2.4.103 (see n. 7); Isid. Etym. 19.22.21 (*Velenensis tunica*); cf. on him A 6 p. 172.

his wife because he appreciated the quality of *Melitensia* very much.⁶ Cicero criticizes his behaviour in his speeches against Verres (70 BCE). He obviously thought that this kind of slander would influence the judges.⁷ In Lucretius, Maltese clothing is also mentioned among the female garments that cost a fortune.⁸ A *puella* in Novius, who is called 'a true bait,' also wears a **supparus* of this material.⁹

9.2.3 History

Cotton from India likely reached Egypt and Greece in higher quantities with the expeditions of Alexander the Great. Malta was a Phoenician colony, which later came under the influence of the Carthaginians, and it was the very end of a long trade route. Manufacturing cotton may have started in Malta in the third century BCE. However, Maltese textile products are first referred to by Latin authors in the first half of the first century BCE. Novius, Cicero, Varro, and Lucretius are the first to mention them. The sudden appearance of Maltese luxury dress probably has to do with the expansion of the Roman Empire. After the fall of Carthage in 146 BCE, Romans came to control the southern part of the Mediterranean Sea as well. For this reason, Maltese textiles will have gained easier access to Roman markets. Cotton dress, still a new and expensive product in Rome, will have attracted the rich (such as Verres) in order to demonstrate their wealth and social position. However, Maltese garments were only a single dress option in the great multi-cultural imperial capital Rome. After the first half of the first century BCE, reference to Maltese garments in Latin literature disappears. They are not mentioned anymore by Augustan authors. The reason for this is probably that they were not 'fashionable' any more. They were too 'normal' to either be mentioned by the authors or to be worn by trendy people (Malta perhaps falling behind other producers). The new material may also have simply lost its attractiveness as time went on, and it may have been called by its 'material' name *carbasus* instead of by its origin.

⁶ Cf. also Cic. Verr. 2.2.176, 183.

⁷ Cic. Verr. 2.4.103: *insula est Melite ... in qua est eodem nomine oppidum ... quod isti textrinum per triennium ad muliebre[m] vestem conficiendam fuit* [There is an island called Malta ... on it there is a city with the same name ... Three years, it served as textile factory for this person (= Verres) to produce female clothing].

⁸ Lucr. 4.1130: *interdum in pallam ac Melitensia Ciaeque vertunt* [Occasionally, they convert it (sc. their heritage) into a splendid cloak and into robes of Malta and Kea]; cf. A 11 pp. 213–214.

⁹ Cf. n. 4.

9.3 *Coae vestes*

In fashion (and literature), the place of the Maltese clothing is taken over in part by the *Coae vestes*.¹⁰ These were elegant garments (tunics) made of silk and arrived in Rome when the empire expanded further towards the east. *Coae vestes* were already known in Greece since early Hellenistic times. They entered Rome with the conquest of the Seleucid (63 BCE) and Ptolemaic (30 BCE) empires. They were first fashionable with the Augustan *jeunesse dorée*. Maybe, an old Greek dress name was even reinvented. Afterwards, *Coae vestes* seem to have become the new normal over time and lost something of their lustre.

9.3.1 Terminology and appearance

The term Coan dress (*Coae vestes*) could be taken to indicate that these textiles were originally produced on the island of Kos. However, this assumption is not compelling even though ancient authors try to establish this connection, too. It is not even certain whether *Coae vestes* had anything to do with the island. There is no epigraphical evidence for the production of luxury clothing on Kos. On the basis of chronological considerations, it is highly unlikely that silk was produced in Europe.¹¹ Silk cloth was a produce of China, the land of the *Seres*, which entered into the Mediterranean world via Arabia and was called *Serica* afterwards.

The first one to speculate about the name of the *Coae vestes* is Aristotle. All later Latin evidence on their origin—directly or indirectly—go back to him.¹² In his *Historia animalium*, Aristotle seems to attribute the invention of the *Coae vestes* to a Coan woman. His aetiological remarks have been often taken too seriously. In fact, if we read them closely, they indicate to the contrary that *Coae vestes* were *not* produced at Cos in Aristotle's times. In the relevant section, Aristotle is talking about silk worms and silk production:

¹⁰ Becker/Göll III (1882) 284–286; Marquardt/Mau (1886) 493–494; RE 4.1 (1900) s.v. Coa vestis, col. 127–128 (W. Amelung); Blümner (1911) 244 and Blümner I (1912) 202; Wilson (1938) 4; S. Sherwin-White, *Ancient Cos. An Historical Study from the Dorian Settlement to the Imperial Period*, Göttingen 1978, 82, 378–383; Sebesta (1994) 69; GRD (2007) 37; A. Keith, *Satorial Elegance and Poetic Finesse in the Sulpician Corpus*, in: Edmondson/Keith (eds.) (2008), 194; B. Hildebrandt, *Silk production and trade in the Roman Empire*, in: B. Hildebrandt/C. Gillis, *Silk. Trade and Exchange along the Silk Roads between Rome and China in Antiquity*, Ancient Textile Series 29, Oxford 2017, 35–36. On their archaeological identification, cf. H. Weber, *Coae vestes*, *IstMitt* 19/20 (1969/70), 249–253; Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 318.

¹¹ On silk and its production, see the study of Hildebrandt (n. 10) especially p. 35.

¹² Tib. 2.3.53–54 (n. 19); Plin. NH 11.76–77 (see below p. 389).

Aristot. hist. anim. 5.19 p. 551b13–16¹³

From these animals (sc. the silk worms), some women also unwrap the cocoons, dissolve them, and weave them into a fabric. Pamphile, the daughter of Plates, is said to have been the first to weave such things on Kos.

It is evident that Aristotle knew something about the production of silk. This should not come as a surprise given the historical context of the Greeks' contact with the Persian Empire, which intensified during the campaigns of Alexander the Great. Silk textiles were probably still quite a novel product for Greeks at this time. Aristotle knew that such silk dresses were called *Coae vestes*, and he asked himself why. His question implies that they did *not* come from Kos (at least anymore). Otherwise, the answer would have been obvious. For this reason, Aristotle offers the story of the *prima inventrix* Pamphile, saying that the first woman producing silk dresses lived on Kos. His assumption, carefully marked as such by the addition of λέγεται (it is said), is obviously not based on autopsy of any Coan production sites, but on some other literary source.

That a single Coan woman invented silk dresses is implausible. The story is clearly an aetiological ad hoc explanation for the brand name *Coae vestes*. It may derive from some other foreign word we do not know. That the island Kos was no production site is also suggested by our first Latin sources, which distorted the designation and said that the dress they called *Kean* dress was produced at the island of *Keos*.¹⁴ This shows that all this is antiquarian 'knowledge' and not reality. Otherwise, the name of the island could not have been changed ad libitum.

Like *vestes Melitenses*, *Coae vestes* are not defined by their cut, but by their material. They were made of silk. However, they were worn directly on the skin and must have been tailored like a Greek tunic (*chiton*). The term *tunica* is not applied to them because it implies other notions as to the material.¹⁵ *Coae vestes* were rather wide and flowing garments. Their main characteristic was that they were very thin (*tenuis*) and translucent, almost transparent. They thus revealed the outlines of the female body.¹⁶ In satire 1.2, Horace is explicit about the revealing character of the fabric. He compares the typical (concealing) attire of a rich Roman *matrona* with the (revealing) attire of a *liberta*.¹⁷

13 ἐκ δὲ τούτου τοῦ ζώου καὶ τὰ βομβύκια ἀναλύουσι τῶν γυναικῶν τινὲς ἀναπνηζόμενα κάππειτα ὑφαίνουσιν· πρώτη δὲ λέγεται ὑφῆναι ἐν Κῶι Παμφίλη Πλάτew θυγάτηρ.

14 See below p. 390.

15 Ovid. ars 2.297–302.

16 Prop. 1.2.1–2: *Quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo || et tenuis Coa veste movere sinus?* [Why, my darling, do you like appearing with richly-adorned hair swinging a thin Coan garment full of folds?]; Tib. 2.3.53–54 (n. 19.).

17 Cf. also B 3 p. 288.

Hor. sat. 1.2.101–102

*altera, nil obstat: Cois tibi paene videre est
ut nudam.*

In case of the other (sc. the *liberta*), there is nothing in your way. In her Coan dress, you can see her like naked.

That *Coae vestes* make a woman appear like naked is a thought that also attracted Roman moralists (see below). As to their colour, modern imagination might prefer seeing *Coae vestes* as pink (this combination of colour and translucency is like the robe of the cocotte in Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*). While not quite pink, ancient sources repeatedly associate *Coae vestes* with shades of purple. The colours rose and violet were likely typical for them.¹⁸ In addition, *Coae vestes* could be decorated with ornaments. The fabric may have been interwoven with gold threads or have golden stripes.¹⁹

9.3.2 Social usage

In general, Coan garments were luxury products and very expensive. For this reason, they were sought after by the mistresses of Roman Love Elegy.²⁰ Because of their nature and costs, *Coae vestes* are consistently associated with freedwomen (*libertae*) and beautiful hetaeras by Augustan authors.²¹ Lyce (Horace), Cynthia (Propertius), Nemesis (Tibullus), and Corinna (Ovid), all these women wear *Coae vestes* at some point. The garment is most notable in Propertius, who ironically combines Cynthia's dress with his poetic programme:²²

Prop. 2.1.5–6

*sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi
hac totum e Coa veste volumen erit*

¹⁸ Cf. Hor. c. 4.13.13–14: *nec Coae referunt iam tibi purpurae || nec cari lapides tempora* [neither purple Coan robes nor valuable stones will bring back your time of life]; Iuven. 8.101: *conchyliis ... Coa* [purple Coan robes]; Tib. 2.4.27–30; Prop. 4.5.22–23; Ovid. Ars 2.297–298.

¹⁹ Tib. 2.3.53–54: *illa gerat vestes tenues, quas femina Coa || texuit, auratas disposuitque vias* [she may wear fine clothes, whom a Coan woman has woven and decorated with golden stripes]; cf. Sherwin-White (n. 10) 383.

²⁰ Tib. 2.4.29–30: *addit avaritiae causas et Coa puellis || vestis* [the Coan dress also causes girls to be greedy]; Prop. 4.5.57–58: *qui uersus Coae dederit nec munera uestis, || istius tibi sit surda sine arte lyra* [the poetry of who gave only verses to you and no Coan dress as a gift shall be muted and without art]; Hor. c. 4.13.13 (see n. 18).

²¹ Hor. sat. 1.2.101–102; Prop. 1.2.12 (*Cynthia*); 4.2.23 (*puella*); 4.5.23, 58 (*puella*); Tib. 2.3.53–54 (*Nemesis*); 2.4.29–30 (*puella*); Hor. c. 4.13 (*Lyce*); Ovid. Ars 2.297–298 (*puellae*).

²² Cf. also Prop. 1.2.12, 3.10.15.

If I have seen Cynthia walk dazzling in a Coan robe, an entire book will emerge from this Coan fabric.

We see that the *Coae vestes* are the robe of the beautiful libertine women of the *demi-monde*. New fashion was driven very much by this social group. And as always, new fashion was an offence to the traditionalist. In the stereotypical moralistic contrast between *matrona* and *meretrix*, *Coae vestes* are a prostitute's dress and *matronae* wearing them are prostitutes. In his treatise *De beneficiis* (On benefits), Seneca gets furious about such transparent silk dresses. They are highly impractical, extremely expensive, extremely foreign, and simply scandalous:

Sen. de ben. 7.9.5

video sericas vestes, si vestes vocandae sunt, in quibus nihil est, quo defendi aut corpus aut denique pudor possit, quibus sumptis parum liquido nudam se non esse iurabit; hae ingenti summa ab ignotis etiam ad commercium gentibus accersuntur, ut matronae nostrae ne adulteris quidem plus sui in cubiculo quam in publico ostendant.

I see silk dresses, if one may call them dresses, where there is nothing to protect either the body or, ultimately, the shame, dresses in which no woman will swear with a clear conscience that she is not naked. These are imported at the highest cost, even from peoples with whom we do not have trade, so that our matrons show more of themselves in public than they would do to their adulterers in the bedchamber.

Seneca's harangue proves that not only meretrices, but also rich *matronae* wore such garments in the first half of the first century CE. If we believe Pliny the Elder, even 'degenerate' Roman men came to use Coan garments in Flavian times:

Plin. NH 11.76–78

telas araneorum modo texunt ad vestem luxumque feminarum, quae bombycina appellatur. prima eas redordiri rursusque texere invenit in Coo mulier Pamphile, Platae filia, non fraudanda gloria excogitatae rationis, ut denudet feminas vestis. bombycas et in Coo insula nasci tradunt ... nec puduit has vestes usurpare etiam viros levitatem propter aestivam: in tantum a lorica gerenda discessere mores, ut oneri sit etiam vestis.

They weave cloths like cobwebs for a luxurious women's garment called *bombycina*. A woman called Pamphile, daughter of Plates, living on Kos was the first to invent how to dissolve the threads and to weave them again. We should not deprive her of the fame of having invented a method how a garment can make women appear naked. It is reported that silkworms also grow on Kos. ... Even men have not been ashamed of putting on these clothes as a light summer wear. Our customs have moved so far away from wearing a cuirass that even a garment is considered a burden.

It is very remarkable that Pliny does not use the term *Coae vestes* anymore, but refers to them as *bombycina* (silk dresses) called thus after the silk-worm (*bombyx*). As the double reference to Kos shows, however, the *Coae vestes* are still at stake. At the same time, Pliny mixes up Aristotle's aetiological story about the Coan *inventrix* with Roman moralism. Traditional social code is confronted with 'modern' social behaviour. The stereotypes Pliny uses are quite common. They are very similar to those we find in Seneca on men wearing coloured garments.²³ In Pliny, it is men wearing silk dresses instead of the uniform who are the symbol of ultimate Roman degeneracy.

9.3.3 History

The *Coae vestes* are first attested in Greece in the fourth century CE. They are mentioned by Aristotle (see above) and by Epicurus (the source of Lucretius). After a long time-gap, the term reappears in Latin literature in late Republican times. The first authors to mention it are Varro and Lucretius.²⁴ They wrote before the Coan robes became popular in Rome, and neither knew much more about them than their name. They only read about them in Greek literature. They even misspelled the name. They instead speak of Kean or Kian clothes and relate them to the Cyclades island of Kea.

About twenty years later, the situation had completely changed. *Coae vestes* were all the rage in Rome. Now everyone knew that it was Coan and not Kean dress. Coan dress was a new fashion worn by women appertaining to the new leisure classes.²⁵ Silk had arrived in the capital. Maybe, an old Greek name had been reinvented expressly for that purpose: Coan dress. Afterwards, the rage subsided. Silk dress got more 'normal.' For this reason, literary evidence, which is always about the new and the spectacular, on *Coae vestes* becomes slim again.²⁶ In the Flavian period, Pliny refers to *Coae vestes* twice as an item of historical knowledge.²⁷ The term does not appear in Martial, who gives us a lot of information about fashionable dress articles and their names in the late Flavian period. The term's absence is particularly striking in Martial's 14th book, which contains many poems on specific garments. At the beginning of the second century CE,

²³ Cf. B 11 p. 428.

²⁴ Lucr. 4.1130: *interdum in pallam ac Melitensia Ciaeque vertunt* [They convert it (sc. their fortune) into a splendid *palla* and into robes of Malta and Keos], cf. A 11 p. 214; Plin. NH 4.62: *ex hac* (sc. *Cea*) *profectam delictiorem feminis vestem auctor est Varro* [Varro says that very exquisite women's clothing came from this island].

²⁵ Hor. sat. 1.2.101–102 (see above p. 387); Tib. 2.3.53–54 (see n. 19); 2.4.29–30; Prop. 4.2.23 (Vertumnus): *indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella* [dress me in a Coan robe, and I will be a tender girl]; 4.5.23: *Eurypylique placet Coae textura Mineruae* [the Eurypylean weave of Coan dress pleases you], 57–58; Hor. c. 4.13; Ovid. Ars 2.297–298; cf. also Sherwin-White (n. 10) 383; Hildebrandt (n. 10) 36.

²⁶ Contrary to OLD s.v. *Cous* 2c, Persius 5.135 (*lubrica Coa*) refers to Coan vine.

²⁷ Plin. NH. 4.42, 11.76–77.

Juvenal still mentions *Coa*, but only when referring to Greek dress luxury in a historical context.²⁸ He does so in a general manner and does not describe a specific situation.

At this time, what was extravagant dress a century ago had evolved into something normal and had lost its unusual name. The acculturation of the new material silk had been accomplished. For this reason, the nomenclature changed. The primary words denoting the material (*bombycina*) or the origin (*Serica*) were used instead.²⁹ In Antiquity, silk remained a luxury product to survive all political changes. It remained so even beyond. In Diocletian's famous price edict, we find a variety of silken cloth registered. The name Coan dress then had long since disappeared.

9.4 *cyclas*

Like the *Coae vestis*, the *cyclas* is a Hellenistic luxury garment³⁰ that became fashionable anew or was reinvented in Imperial Rome.³¹ In contrast to the other dress terms mentioned in this chapter, the word *cyclas* implies a specific cut, and not a material. It is attested only four times. However, the evidence allows us to form some notion about its nature.

9.4.1 Terminology and appearance

The *cyclas* was worn directly on the body and was put on over the head. The dress term is derived from κύκλος (any circular body) and refers to the circular cut of the garment. Unlike the '*peplos*,'³² the *cyclas* was a piece of circular-shaped cloth, which from above will have looked like a plate.³³ Like the '*peplos*,' the *cyclas* was foot-long and even touched the ground (see below). It needed a great amount of (thin) fabric and that probably was what made its lustre. As to its upper opening, we have no

²⁸ Juven. 8.101: *conchyliā Coa* [purple dress from Kos].

²⁹ Chapter A 7 (p. 141) argues a similar phenomenon had already occurred with a word for cotton (*molochinus*).

³⁰ RE Suppl. 4 (1924), s.v. *Kyklas*, col. 1125–1126 (R. Hartmann); Potthoff (1992) 106–107; Sebesta (1994) 51 n. 9; GRD (2007) 45; Olson (2008) 51; ThLL IV s. v. *cyclas* col. 1583.60–77.

³¹ The *cyclas* is very likely not identical with the ἔγκυκλον, which is mentioned several times in Attic comedy and in the inventory of the treasury of the temple of Artemis at Brauron. The preposition ἐν in ἔγκυκλον suggests that the word does not primarily refer to the form of the garment, but rather to how it was wrapped around the body; cf. Aristoph. Lys. 114, 1162, Thesm. 261, 499, Equ. 536, F 332.8 K.-A.; IG² 1514.48: ἔγκυκλον ποικίλον [a many-coloured *enkyklon*]; 1527: ἔγκυκλον λευκ(όν): [a white *enkyklon*]; 1529.6-7: ἔγκυκλον περιποί(κλον) [a *enkyklon* with a many-coloured border]; cf. Cleland (2005) 67, 113.

³² For a definition see B 3 p. 292.

³³ The shape of the cloth was the same as that of a *toga*, cf. already Serv. ad Aen. 1.282 p. 104.16–17 Thilo/Hagen (C 2 p. 583; D 1 p. 593).

precise information. It could have looked either like a *tunica* (*chiton*) or like a ‘*peplos*’ (with shoulder-straps and without sleeves). The latter hypothesis fits in well with a passage in Juvenal. In his sixth satire, the most misogynic poem in Latin literature, Juvenal is mocking athletic women and says they sweat a lot even in the airiest luxury robes. In order to illustrate these garments, he chooses a *tenuis cyclas* (thin *cyclas*) and *bombycinus panniculus* (small ‘scrap’ of silken cloth).³⁴ The first expression emphasizes the cut, the second the material. The *cyclas* is long; the *panniculus* (‘scrap of cloth’) is in any case small. The fabric of the *cyclas* is only said to be thin; the fabric of the ‘*panniculus*’ is expressly said to be of silk. The meaning of the passage requires that both garments are very airy and that might point to that the *cyclas* had shoulder-straps at its upper end.

The material of a *cyclas* is never specified, though we once hear of a *cyclas aurata* (gilded). This probably means that the fabric was interwoven with golden threads.³⁵ Moreover, the *cyclas* is twice mentioned alongside silken dresses.³⁶ This shows that the material of a *cyclas* was not an important characteristic (perhaps it differed) and that it usually was *not* silk. Otherwise, the juxtaposition with silken dress would not make much sense. In any case, the cloth must have been thin, fine, and, above all, much, and this is what made the *cyclas* an expensive garment.

9.4.2 Social usage

In Rome, the *cyclas* was worn by the new (and old) rich female consumer classes. Like the *Coae vestes*, the dress was coveted and worn by aspiring *puellae*. Nevertheless, it must have been very extravagant. The famous mistresses of the Augustan poets do not wear it. It is mentioned only once, in Propertius, and the passage shows it to be a rare show-piece. In elegy 4.7, the ghost of the deceased Cynthia turns against a female rival comparing her to a queen:

Prop. 4.740–41

*quae modo per uilis inspecta est publica noctes,
haec nunc aurata cyclade signat humum.*

She, who a moment ago was seen offering herself publicly for cheap nights, now leaves a mark on the ground with her golden *cyclas*.

³⁴ Juven. 6.259–260: *hae sunt quae tenui sudant in cyclade, quarum || delicias et panniculus bombycinus urit* [It is this type of woman that is sweating in a thin *cyclas*, for whose delicacy even a small silken dress is too warm].

³⁵ Prop. 4.741.

³⁶ Juven. 2.260; Suet. Cal. 52.1.

In her invective, Propertius makes Cynthia use the social opposites we often find in Latin literature. She says that her rival was once a public prostitute of the lowest social status. We may imagine her to have been clad in a short *toga* (B 6). Now, in contrast, the ex-prostitute struts around like a queen. She is dressed in a most extravagant way. She does not only wear a fabric-rich *cyclas* with a kind of train, but even one that is embroidered with golden threads. The passage shows that the *cyclas* was worn by the Roman *jeunesse dorée*—the *puella* described in it belongs to the class of freedmen—which was probably driving Roman fashion at that time. We do not hear of rich *matronae*, but we may safely assume that they did not stay behind. In any case, the *cyclas* was a pure female dress. As often, we know this from a male transgression. Suetonius tells us that Emperor Caligula (37–41 CE) occasionally appeared dressed in a *cyclas* and in silken garments (*sericatus et cycladatus*),³⁷ but Caligula was crazy and effeminate, or better, Suetonius wants to portray him as that. It is the same trope Cicero used in the case of Catilina in a more modest way more than a century earlier.³⁸ In the case of Catilina, it was a long (linen) *chiton* with sleeves; now it is a *cyclas* and silk.

9.4.3 History

The history of the *cyclas* is similar to that of the *Coae vestes*. It seems first alluded to in a Greek comedy of Anaxilas (latter 4th century BCE).³⁹ It is done by means of a riddle, but there is no solution that fits in as well as the word *cyclas*.⁴⁰ In the relevant fragment, some unknown speaker asks: “And how can a woman wear, like the sea, an island?” The joke is very similar to those we find in Plautus’ *Epidicus*.⁴¹ A man, maybe a *senex*, is misunderstanding an unusual term for a new female garment. The word *cyclas* makes him think of the Cyclades. He therefore asks (rather stupidly) how a woman can dress in an entire island.

The comic playwright Anaxilas roughly dates to the same time as Aristotle when cultural refinement began to spread over the Greek Mediterranean world. The *cyclas* was obviously a new type of dress that came into fashion and for this reason found its way into Greek literature. After this, there is a long time-gap. In the first century BCE, Hellenistic fashion, the *cyclas* and the *Coae vestes*, moved on to Italy when Rome came to conquer the entire Mediterranean world. In Augustan times, Roman society was rich and willing to enjoy Greek dress luxury. For this reason, the *cyclas* suddenly reappears in Latin literature and life after having disappeared in Greek literature three centuries earlier. Anaxilas’ *cyclas* might well have looked different from the one mentioned by

³⁷ Suet. Cal. 52.1.

³⁸ Cf. B 1 p. 260.

³⁹ Anaxilas F 34 K.-A. (Pollux 7.53): καὶ πῶς γυνή, ὥσπερ θάλαττα, νῆσον ἀμφιέννυται.

⁴⁰ Meineke FCG III (1840) 354.

⁴¹ Cf. A 4 p. 68.

Propertius. Not every *cyclas* had to be interwoven with golden threads. In Imperial Rome, however, the *cyclas* was—as the juxtaposition of it with other valuable garments shows—an expensive and extravagant dress that became more normal among the rich as time went on. As in the case of the *Coae vestes*, it is not altogether clear whether only fashion subsided or the *cyclas* got lost. There is no word of it in Martial.

9.5 *gausapum*

Like the expressions *vestes Melitenses* and *vestes Coae*, the term *gausapum* refers to a type of cloth that became fashionable with garments in Imperial times.⁴² This time it is a northern region that contributes to Roman dress culture.

9.5.1 Terminology and appearance

The etymology of the word *gausapum* is uncertain. Ancient and modern discussions are impeded by confusion with an Assyrian garment called γάυναα.⁴³ Beyond linguistics, the nature of the garment (thick wool) and the production in the Celtic area suggest that it, like other dress designations (see below), could be a Celtic word. In Latin, the word ending and gender vary. We find both the neuter *gausapum*/*gausape* and the feminine *gausapa*/*gausapes*.⁴⁴ In Late Antiquity, scholars debated about the correct ending.⁴⁵ The different Latin forms for the Celtic garment were likely a result of several factors: adapting a foreign word to the Latin language,⁴⁶ or *gausapum* referring to the material in general (wool), and *gausapa* referring to a specific garment. In the following, the forms *gausapum* and *gausapa* will be used accordingly.

The cloth, called *gausapum*, is well attested in both Greek and Latin sources. It was a thick woollen material which was woven and then felted by fulling. The resulting fabric was not shorn or only partially shorn so that either one or both surfaces remained

⁴² H. Blümner, *Die gewerbliche Thätigkeit der Völker des klassischen Alterthums*, Leipzig 1869, 101–102; Becker/Göll (1882) 217, 388–389; Marquardt/Mau (1886) 477, 528; RE 7.1 (1910) s.v. *gausape*, col. 878–879 (R. Zahn); Blümner (1911) 216, 238–239 and (1912) 182; Wilson (1938) 66; Potthoff (1992) 116–120; Sebesta (1994) 70, 72; GRD (2007) 79; ThLL VI s. v. *gausape* col. 1729.62–1721.26. We should exclude Messala F 18 ORF² p. 532: *Armeniae regis spolia, gausapae* [the spoils of the Armenian king, *gausapae*]. The word *gausapa* is very likely confused with *caunaca*, which designates a Persian garment.

⁴³ Potthoff (1992) 116–120.

⁴⁴ In Strabo (see n. 60), we also find the masculine γάυσαιοι. The transmission may be corrupt. Casaubonus hence emended it to the feminine γάυσαιαι.

⁴⁵ Charisius inst. 1.27 p. 132.19–133.6 Barwick (= GL I 104 Keil).

⁴⁶ This problem is still encountered today, for example, when introducing English loanwords into German. The German grammatical gender of the genderless English words can lead to multiple forms existing in parallel (at least for a period of time).

a shaggy fleece.⁴⁷ The fabric is mentioned by Strabo⁴⁸ and by Pliny in his *Naturalis Historia*. Pliny covers it in an interesting though somewhat meandering section on wool production:

Plin. NH 8.191–193

est et hirtae pilo crasso in tapetis antiquissima gratia ... gausapae patris mei memoria coepere, amphyallia nostra, sicut villosa etiam ventralia; nam tunica lati clavi in modum gausapae texti nunc primum incipit.

Rough wool with a thick fleece has been popular as regards carpets from the earliest times on. ... *gausapae* (only) began to appear within my father's memory, *amphyallia* within my own, as also shaggy belts; for weaving a *tunica* with broad stripes after the manner of a *gausapa* is starting for the first time now.

Starting with woollen carpets, Pliny ends with three garments that were made of cloth of woollen fleece: the *gausapa*, the *amphyallium*, and the *ventrale*. All these have shaggy hairs (*villi*). The *gausapa* proper had them only on one side; the *amphyallium* (μαλλός = flock of wool), a later invention and subspecies of the *gausapa*, had them on both. The *villi* were the defining criterion for this type of woollen fabric.⁴⁹ We also see this in the metaphorical use of the word: Persius uses it to designate a shaggy beard, and Petronius uses it to describe a wild boar baked in pastry.⁵⁰

9.5.2 Social usage

The *gausapum* was used for blankets and coats of all sorts.⁵¹ In his *Apophoreta*, Martial tells us of a square cut *gausapum quadratum* and a *paenula gausapina*;⁵² in his *Epigrams*, he also mentions a *lacerna gausapina*.⁵³ There must have also been *gausapae* in the form of a *tunica*, although our evidence on them is very slim. Seneca describes himself as *gausapatus* when jumping into the cold sea water.⁵⁴ The context suggests that he was

⁴⁷ Blümner I (1912) 182.

⁴⁸ See below p. 397.

⁴⁹ On the *villi*, cf. Mart. 14.145, 14.147.

⁵⁰ Pers. 4.37: *maxillis balanatum gausape pectas* [you shall comb your perfumed *gausape* on your jaws]; Petron. 38.5: *apros gausapatos* [wild boars in *gausapa*]; on Trimalchio's culinary exaggerations, cf. O. Immisch, *Aus antiken Küchen*, RhM 77 (1928), 329–330.

⁵¹ Augustus (a fragment of his last will) apud Charisium inst. 1.27 p. 132.22–23 Barwick: *gausapes, lodices purpureas et colorias meas* [my *gausapes*, my purple and my multi-coloured *lodices*]; Pers. 6.46: *lutea gausapa* [yellow *gausapa*]; Petron. 28.2: *involutus coccina gausapa* [wrapped in a crimson *gausapa*]; Mart. 14.147: *cubicularia gausapina* [blankets made of *gausapum*]; 14.152.

⁵² Mart. 14.145, 14.152 (see below p. 398).

⁵³ Mart. 6.59.5.

⁵⁴ Sen. epist. 53.3.

dressed in a *tunica*. The same goes for the *cinaedus* coming to an orgy in Petronius.⁵⁵ Both men are shown in circumstances in which a cloak does not seem expedient. Moreover, Pliny's use of a *tunica lati clavi in modum gausapae texta* when referring to the new invention of the specific *tunica* with broad stripes seems to imply that there was already a normal *tunica* of that material. We also learn that the *gausapum* could have various colours. We hear of purple, light red, dark green, and white.⁵⁶

Garments called *gausapa* were worn by both men and women, although there is only one passage in Ovid's *Ars amatoria* (2 BCE) referring to a woman. It is the first eyewitness evidence we have of this type of fabric used for a garment. Love teacher Ovid is instructing his pupil to compliment his mistress on whatever garment she is wearing during a given rendezvous. In an interesting catalogue, he enumerates five dress options an elegant *puella* has in Augustan times:

Ovid. ars 2.297–302

sive erit in Tyriis, Tyrios laudabis amictus:

sive erit in Cois, Coa decere puta.

aurata est, ipso tibi sit pretiosior auro;

gausapa si sumpsit, gausapa sumpta proba.

astiterit tunicata, 'moves incendia' clama,

sed timida, caveat frigora, voce roga.

If she is wearing a Tyrian cloak, praise Tyrian cloaks; if she wearing a Coan robe, think that Coan robes adorn her; if she is wearing golden robes, let her be more precious to thee than gold; if she has put on a *gausapum*, approve that she has put on a *gausapum*. When she comes in the *tunica*, call out 'you are setting me in flames,' but ask her in a fearful voice to avoid the cold.

In the list, Ovid is more concerned with the material of the garments than with their cut. The terms *amictus* and *tunica* are mentioned, but no further details are given in three of the cases. The expression *Tyrius amictus* refers to cloaks made of Tyrian (crimson) purple. It might also suggest that the garment was somewhat thicker.⁵⁷ In contrast, the *Coae vestes* were thin clothes made of silk (see above). A garment with golden embroideries concludes the series of exotic luxury garments. It is also placed in the middle of the list. Then follow the *gausapum* and the *tunica*, which form a second pair of opposites. This time, Ovid is concerned with the thickness of the material and the function of the fabric. The thick woollen *gausapum*—very likely a *pallium* (B 2) that was worn over the *tunica*—protects the woman against the cold. The *tunica*, designating a

⁵⁵ Petron. 21.2: *ultimo cinaedus supervenit myrtea subornatus gausapa cinguloque succinctus* <...> [finally a *cinaedus* arrived dressed in a green *gausapa* and belted with a <...> belt]; in the fragmentary text, the colour of the *cingillum* seems to have fallen out. Maybe it was red. On the colour green, which might have been a feminine colour, cf. B 11 p. 429.

⁵⁶ Petron. 21.2, 28.2; Pers. 6.46; Mart. 14.145 (see below p. 398).

⁵⁷ Cf. also B 8 p. 381.

Greek *chiton* here, is a light linen garment worn without an outer garment. The meaning of the antithesis is made clear by Ovid at the end when he has the lover ask his beloved to beware of the cold.

This is the only passage in Latin literature relating to women wearing a *gausapum*. We know more about men using it. However, due to its warming function, the *gausapum* was perhaps regarded as more suitable for women than for men. The literary stereotype found in connection with the *gausapum* is similar to that of the Greek χλανίς, a female coat. The four men (Trimalchio, the *cinaedus* in Petronius, Seneca, and Augustus) who use a *gausapum* as a garment or blanket are all old men (*senes*).⁵⁸ In addition, Trimalchio and the *cinaedus* are described as effeminate. They are all sensitive to cold. The defining feature of the *gausapum* seems to be that it was suitable for the cold. This in connection with the effeminate men suggests that it was deemed a female luxury. Perhaps it is no coincidence that our first text in which the word *gausapum* relates to a garment is about a female dress. The new fashion could have started with women, and men followed suit later on. As Seneca and Martial show, this kind of luxury was common for both genders in Imperial times.

9.5.3 History

The *gausapum* is a Celtic ‘invention’ and shows the cultural influence of the Gallia Cisalpina in Rome. Our sources consistently connect it with the Celtic cultural area in northern Italy. Pliny devotes some remarks to Celtic inventions in his short history of wool production.⁵⁹ The first author to describe the region and its wool manufacturers more precisely is the geographer Strabo in his *Geographica* (ca. 20 CE). He might have done so because Celtic wool products had just become in vogue in Rome at that time. Giving us the names of several production sites, Strabo associates the *gausapum* with the region of Padua:

Strabo 5.1.12 p. 218 C.⁶⁰

The region around Modena and the river Scultana produces the soft wool that is by far the best of all, Liguria and the land of the Insubres the prickly wool, which is worn by most Italian slaves, the region around Padua the medium one, of which consist the expensive carpets and the *gausapae* and the entirety of this kind that is shaggy on both sides or on one side.

⁵⁸ On Augustus, see n. 52 and B 1 p. 247.

⁵⁹ Plin. NH 8.191–193. Pliny also talks about the Celtic terminology.

⁶⁰ ἐρέαν δὲ τὴν μὲν μαλακὴν οἱ περὶ Μουτίνην τόποι καὶ τὸν Σκουλτάναν πόταμον φέρουσι πολὺ πασῶν καλλίστην, τὴν δὲ τραχεῖαν ἡ Λιγυστική καὶ τῶν Ἰνσούβρων, ἐξ ἧς τὸ πλεον τῆς οἰκετείας τῶν Ἰταλιωτῶν ἀμπέχεται, τὴν δὲ μέσσην οἱ περὶ Πατάουιον, ἐξ ἧς οἱ τάπητες οἱ πολυτελεῖς καὶ γαύσαποι καὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶδος πᾶν ἀμφίμαλλον τε καὶ ἐτερόμαλλον.

Strabo's remarks are very interesting for several reasons. They do not only show that the *amphimallum* is a species of the *gausapum*, but also call to mind that it was mainly the quality of the material, and not the cut of a garment, that made the social difference. According to Strabo, the tunics of Italian *familiae* of slaves were made of cheap, rough wool, whereas the wool used for the *gausapum* had a higher quality. Garments of that material were hence more expensive and would not be worn by the poor population. Strabo's explanations are a reminder of the bias of our sources, which mainly talk about the well-off classes.

The *gausapum* is also assigned to Padua by Martial, in contrast to the *lodices* (loden cloth), which is said to come from Verona:

Mart. 14.152
gausapum quadratum
lodices mittet docti tibi terra Catulli:
nos Helicaonia de regione sumus.

Square *gausapum*: The land of the learned Catullus (= Verona) will send you *lodices* (loden cloth). We are from the region of Helicaon (= Padua).

The production of thick woollen fabrics will have had a long tradition in the Celtic areas in northern Italy and beyond the Alps. Romans will have known it for some time. The first Latin author to speak of the material *gausapum* is Lucilius (2nd half of the 2nd century BCE). In his *Satires*, he describes how a slave wiped a table with a purple *gausape*.⁶¹ It seems that the *gausapum* was initially used for towels and rags. It is then Varro who first applies the term to a blanket or a cloak. In an intriguing 'footnote,' Varro lists it among the foreign names for *operimenta* (covers).

Varro LL 5.167⁶²
in his multa peregrina ut sagum, reno Gallica, gausapum et amphimallum Graeca.

Among these, you will find many foreign words/things, like *sagum* and *reno*, which are Celtic, *gausapum* and *amphimallum*, which are Greek.

⁶¹ Lucilius F 568 M. (= 566 Chr./Garb.): *purpureo tersit tum late gausape mensas* [he widely wiped the tables with a purple *gausape*]; imitated by Hor. sat. 2.8.10–11.

⁶² *gausapum* Groth: *gaunacuma* codd.: *gaunacum* Scaliger. The manuscripts offer the senseless *gaunacuma*. Editors usually prefer Scaliger's emendation *gaunacum*, but the form is a hapax. It should then rather be *gaunaca* (γαννάχα) or *gaunaces* (γαννάχες). Groth's *gausapum* is preferable since the *gausapum* is twice mentioned elsewhere together with the *amphimallum* (its subspecies). As Priscianus tells us, Varro thought *gausapum* to be a Greek word, cf. Priscian. inst. 7.76 (GL 2 p. 333.22–24) = Varro LL F *15 p. 194.1–5 Goetz/Schoell: *Varro vero De lingua Latina ait talia ex Graeco sumpta ex masculino in femininum transire et A littera finiri: ... ὁ γαννάπης haec gausapa* [Varro says in *De lingua Latina* that such words that are derived from Greek pass from the masculine to the feminine gender and end in the letter A, like ... ὁ γαννάπης haec *gausapa*].

The passage shows without doubt how Celtic garments (*sagum*, *reno*) became integrated into Roman dress. It is striking that Varro regarded the *gausapum* as a Greek word even though the product came from Celtic producers. Maybe he did not know much about it. In the next few years, Roman interest in these woollen garments from the Po valley increased. This probably had to do with Caesar's conquest of Celtic France and the proceeding integration of the *provincia* Gallia Citerior (~ Transpadana) into the Roman state. After some debate, its inhabitants got Roman citizenship in 49 BCE (the area became part of Italia in 41 BCE). It is likely that the political union further promoted trade since there were also senators in Rome with Celtic roots.

For the Imperial period, we are lucky to have Pliny, who gives us a little history of the woollen cloth. He tells us that garments called *gausapa* first appeared in Augustan times. Ovid's *puella* (see above) thus wears a fashionable dress. Nothing less would have been expected of her. In Julio-Claudian times, as we see from our sources, the *gausapa* already was a quite normal dress, which could have natural and artificial colours. It is again Pliny who tells us that sartorial inventiveness proceeded to use the woollen cloth for ever more types of differently tailored garments in the Flavian period. Martial gives us several examples of them in his epigrams. One concerns a *paenula*:

Mart. 14.145

paenula gausapina

is mihi candor inest, villorum gratia tanta est,

ut me vel media sumere messe velis

A *paenula* from *gausapum*: My colour is so white, so beautiful is my woollen fleece that you would like to carry me even in midsummer.

It is most interesting to see in Martial how a simple hooded coat, which originally was developed for practical purposes, can metamorphose into a luxurious 'designer' garment in Imperial times. The epigram also gives us a glimpse of the diversity of dress culture lost to us. In Martial's times, Rome had been the centre of the Mediterranean world for more than a century and the place where all cultural influences met and merged. It was a cosmopolitan city with cosmopolitan dress. It adopted and subsequently spread foreign fashion, such as the *Coa vestis* and the *cyclas*. And yet Roman cultural adoption not only occurred with eastern *haute couture*. Even a humble Celtic cloth, *gausapum*, was able to weave itself into the amalgamation of influences that was this empire-spanning syncretic 'Romanness.'

