Nikolaos Vryzidis. “Persian Textiles in the Ottoman Empire: Evidence from Greek Sacristies”

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This article features a group of post-medieval Persian textiles preserved in Greek sacristies. In order to contextualise their arrivals in the Orthodox Christian world, this article first discusses the circulation of Persian objects across the Balkans during the medieval period. Byzantine textual sources sporadically refer to things “Persian” (περσικὸν), sometimes in relation to textiles, contrasted with frequent references to Mongol textiles in Latin sources. This textual evidence is also echoed in stark contrast between the scarcity of Mongols textiles in Greek sacristies and their abandones in Latin sacristies. It is, however, interesting to know, as the author points out, about the existence of several candlesticks of medieval Persian (attributed to the Seljuq period) provenance in Greek collections, indicating that some types of Persian portable objects had already been circulated throughout the Byzantine territory.

Among the highlights of Persian textiles discussed in this article are those preserved not only in major museums in Athens, such as the Benaki Museum and the Byzantine and Christian Museum, but also in some of the monasteries of Mount Athos. Ranging from the Safavid to late Qajar period, such textiles were brought into wider Ottoman territories via the Christian network, in particular through Russia which had long-term trade connections with Persia.
These relatively unknown examples of Persian woven luxuries found in Greek collections shed new lights on the consumption and distribution of Persian artefacts not only within the Ottoman heartland in Anatolia but also in South East European contexts. Finally, this article provides a vast array of literature on Islamic textiles and other related topics, including several books and articles published in Greek.

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