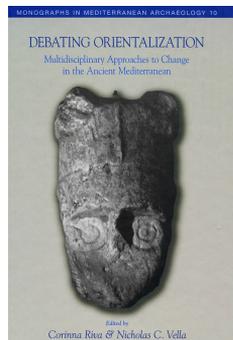


○ **REVIEW OF CORINNA RIVA & NICHOLAS C VELLA (EDS) *DEBATING ORIENTALIZATION: MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO CHANGE IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN***
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Orientalization is a term coined initially in the late 19th century by art historians and archeologists to describe an ancient artistic style first evidenced in ancient vaseware found in Etruscan tombs. The artwork and decoration was reminiscent of artistic styles found in the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent and, most particularly, Egypt. The term would quickly refer to artistic styles found in the Greek world and western Mediterranean and come to denote a process of cultural change in the Iron Age Mediterranean impelled by the increasing influences of the civilizations of the East. The essays in this volume result from a 2 day symposium held on 7 & 8 September 2002 at St John's College Oxford to discuss whether the term could still be regarded as a valid heuristic device to interpret cultural contact and change within the ancient Mediterranean or whether it was simply a construct of modern historiography and art history such that it could no longer be maintained. Does Orientalization come heavy-laden with the baggage of Orientalism? The 10 essays here address these questions through broad discussions of methodology and historiography and through specific case studies.

The editors' introduction provides not only an overview to the symposium and volume but further lays out for the reader the various archeological discoveries that led to the concept of Orientalization as a process and period of ancient, especially Greek, art history. Following the Introduction come two general essays. The first, *Orientalizing: Five Historical Questions* by Nicholas Purcell, is actually a response to the second, *Approaching Ancient Orientalization via Modern Europe* by David Wengrow, however the editors point out that Purcell's presentation 'provided much food for thought and provoked several speakers to return to the implications involved in maintaining the term Orientalizing' (2). Purcell poses five questions or problems with the term. The first is that it blurs the difference between description and interpretation. Orient-

alizing had ‘a certain use on the descriptive side’ but ‘has been transplanted to the explanatory, a domain in which it works much less well’ (23). Purcell also has problems with the question of origins – ‘Why an Etruscan in the Tyrrhenian thought alphabetic writing a useful thing to learn is a more important question than where the person who taught the person who taught him learned it from’ (24). Purcell’s third problem with the term is ‘simply that it presupposes an Orient.... Nothing that archeologists or historians can sensibly call the Orient... ever existed’ (25). Purcell further challenges the very vagueness of the term. By hovering ‘between identifying active and passive participants’ does it do ‘justice to the plurality of the recipients’ let alone ‘the undoubted complexity of the period’ as a whole (26–27)? Finally, Purcell asks whether it might be better to view the period as ‘an instance of an intensification of the interdependence that is associated with Mediterranean connectivity’, by which the region as a whole ‘is incorporated into a world system... that had its centre in the Fertile Crescent’ (28). Purcell’s essay was a response to Wengrow who explores the way European ‘dynasts, popes, archeologists and sociologists used images, material remains and observations of the manners and customs of Orientals to set European values and institutions against the social orders of ancient times’ (2). Wengrow’s survey ranges from Napoleon and Revolutionary France to the Popes and royal elites of Renaissance Europe to sociology and archeology of the 19th and 20th centuries. He attempts to highlight how much ‘modern western identity is as a whole anchored in the images and material remains of remote times and places’ (43).

The next six essays are detailed case studies, often with considerable archeological detail, of specific Mediterranean regions. While Orientalization is a phenomenon associated with the Iron Age in the first half of the first millennium BCE, the symposium organisers wanted to break down these chronological boundaries. Thus A. Bernard Knapp examines late Bronze Age Cyprus in ‘Orientalization and Prehistoric Cyprus: The Social Life of Oriental Goods’. He argues that in Cyprus (and the Aegean) Orientalization should be seen as ‘an active strategy adopted by Mediterranean... elites of the Late Bronze Age to amplify their own socio-political and economic status’ (50). Knapp concludes comparing Orientalism and Orientalization – ‘*Orientalism* is a colonialist enterprise that denies eastern agency; Orientalization is a notion that literally encapsulates and demands local agency, whether eastern or western’ (60). Sarah P Morris, in ‘The View from East Greece: Miletus, Samos and Ephesus’, likewise argues that, especially for Ephesus and Ionia, the phenomenon termed Orientalization reflects interactions that began in the Bronze Age. She further argues that while art historians and archeologists have examined the ‘hard’ traces in art, luxury goods and other commodities, the ‘most significant cargo may have been human: mobile populations, from migrants to mercenaries to slaves, produced the most meaningful and lasting “Orientalizing” effects, but remain visible primarily in texts’ (67). She concludes that Orientalizing is still a useful term because it is both ‘particularly useful and relevant in expressing ancient taste and imitation as a deliberate and meditated activity ... there was clearly an appetite for the display and imitation of exotic luxury goods’. Furthermore, ‘ancient Greek voices themselves acknowledge Near Eastern origins of innovations we call ‘Oriental’, most explicitly in their memory of the adoption of alphabetic writing’ (79).

The question of Phoenicia and Phoenicians is addressed by Eric Gubel, ‘Notes of the Phoenician Component of the Orientalizing Horizon’, and Maria Eugenia Aubet, ‘On the Organization of the Phoenician Colonial System in Iberia’. Gubel looks at the role of the Phoenicians from a

Mediterranean perspective but points out that this process of Phoenician expansion ‘was bolstered by Aramaeans and other ethnic entities of the Levant... starting with the A of Ammonites down to the Z of Zemarites to paraphrase Old Testament sources’ (85). After surveying Phoenician expansion from 1200 – 675 BCE, Gubel focuses on the Sidonian contribution to Orientalizing art. Aubet concentrates on Phoenician colonies in southern Iberia, relating Orientalizing to economic and social processes. She identifies a hierarchy of colonies based on two categories. The first is a group of early modest sized colonies dominated by elite groups consisting of ‘associations of merchants and entrepreneurs enjoying a high social status... belonging to a mercantile bourgeoisie, very close to political power’ (105). A second category is the highly organised polity focused around Gadir, in the Cadiz area, ‘whose sphere of influence was enormous and extended over the whole region of Tartessos’ with ‘enough power and capacity to impose its commercial domination overseas’ (106).

Corinna Riva, ‘The Orientalizing Period in Etruria: Sophisticated Communities’, focuses on the role of indigenous elites. The 8th and 7th centuries in Etruria marked a period of escalating change which saw the formation and rapid growth of new communities leading to ‘re-organization of increasingly and inevitably more complex socio-political relations within themselves.’(128). Riva argues that the ‘only way... we can retain the phrase of Orientalizing movement or phenomenon for Etruria is ... as the manifestation of funerary sophistication in which objects and symbols... were being appropriated, used and given new meanings’ (128). Orientalizing was very much a process of indigenous (and elite) appropriation and agency. Peter van Dommelen, ‘The Orientalizing Phenomenon: Hybridity and Material Culture in the Western Mediterranean’, examines the role of hybridity, especially as theorised by Homi Bhabha, to ask whether Orientalizing can be seen as a case of cultural hybridity. After examining the colonial processes in Punic Sardinia he then turns to Iron Age Nuragic Sardinia to conclude that, in Sardinia at least, hybridisation is not characteristic of Orientalizing. Of much greater importance were local background and practices. Sardinia suggests that ‘the Orientalizing phenomenon was much less uniform than often thought and that its presumed Mediterranean-wide occurrence is more apparent than real, concealing substantial local differences’ (150).

The concluding essay, ‘W(h)ither Orientalization’, by Robin Osborne is a response summing up the proceedings at the symposium. Osborne argues against dropping the term or subsuming it into colonialism. Orientalizing is a process ‘of taking up and transforming another culture, while maintaining political independence’ (157). Ironically Orientalism is the means of resistance by which such independence is sustained.

The book is clearly addressed to a specialist field in archeology and ancient (art) history. Nevertheless it would also be a worthwhile read for those concerned with things biblical. However, some readers might find the archeological data in some of the area studies a bit too detailed. I highly recommend the essays by Purcell, Wengrow, and Osborne, especially for those concerned with issues of cultural transformation and exchange. I also enjoyed the essays of Morris and van Dommelen. Gubel’s essay caused me to reflect on how the cultures of Canaan/Israel might have contributed to and been shaped by these processes of Mediterranean interconnectivity and what impact that might have had on the religious world/s that subsequently produced the biblical and para-biblical texts. Some of this interconnectivity can be glimpsed in Jonah’s desperate but thwarted flight to the uttermost west.