

Julia L. Shear, *Serving Athena: the festival of the Panathenaia and the construction of Athenian identities*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xxii, 532. ISBN 9781108485272 \$135.00.

This book builds upon Julia L. Shear's doctoral dissertation submitted at the University of Pennsylvania in 2001, which explored the history and development of the Panathenaia. In her book S. refocused her interest on the festival as an occasion for constructing Athenian identities. The author describes her approach as holistic in that she combines literary, epigraphic, and archaeological sources. While such method will (hopefully) appear obvious to many, the principle of using all the evidence available for understanding and interpreting the ancient past is not as commonly practiced as some might expect. S. also draws on theories developed in the social sciences, and proclaims that this is 'the direction in which the study of ancient (Greek) history needs to go' (p. xvii). This may be true, yet one may reasonably argue that the study of past societies should not be limited to going in one direction only.

Lavishly illustrated with high-quality figures, this book comprises eight chapters, eight appendices (on the Hellenistic archons of Athens, the Parthenon frieze, the races for the *apobates* and the dismounting charioteer, the *pyrrhiche*, the third-century BCE officials of the Great Panathenaia, the imperial cult and the Panathenaia, and a few epigraphic sources of the Hellenistic period), several tables, a bibliography, and three indices (textual sources, collections, general).

Chapter 1 introduces the Panathenaia and sets out the theoretical underpinning of the book. In reviewing past scholarship on the topic, S. stresses that her book provides the first diachronic investigation of this major Athenian festival spanning almost 1,000 years, from 566/5 BCE to the 390s CE. She draws on the now classic polis religion model and uses it in association with work done in the social sciences on identities, especially Social Identity Theory. The emphasis is on identities as being socially constructed, multiple, fluid, and constantly re-negotiated. Although useful, the section on 'Evidence for the Panathenaia' appears a little too didactic in the context of a learned book as the one under review.

Chapter 2 deals with the mythologies of the Panathenaia. S. argues that the multiplicity of stories connected with the festivities collectively commemorated the gods' victory over the Giants and Athena's role in that battle. The festival's two founders, Erichthonios (not to be

confused with Erechtheus, as most scholars have done) and Theseus, referred to issues of autochthony, unity, and inclusivity. To these stories and heroes are connected the *pyrrhiche* and the apobatic race, two of the occasion's signature events, which involved armed contestants and thus emphasised the overall martial theme of the Panathenaia. With the addition of the cult of the Tyrannicides to the festival's rituals in the late sixth century BCE, the Panathenaia also came to celebrate the end of the tyranny and the introduction of democracy. Collectively, these various narratives and activities made the Panathenaia the most important occasion for constructing Athenian identities.

Chapter 3 discusses the Little Panathenaia, an annual celebration that focused on Athenians (with an emphasis on their subgroups: *phylai*, *demes*, and *gene*), in contrast to the penteteric version of the festivities (the Great Panathenaia), which was regularly attended by an international audience. S.'s analysis of the meagre evidence for the little festivities reveals that these were much less complex than their penteteric counterpart. The highlights of the Little Panathenaia were the sacrifices to Athena, the procession to her sanctuary on the Acropolis, and the *pannychis*. A very limited set of competitions (including the cyclic chorus and the *pyrrhiche*) is attested for the later fifth and fourth centuries BCE, while the late second century BCE – S. claims – marked the introduction of an annual dedication of the *peplos* alongside its dedication every five years at the great festival. Participation in these different events provided a variety of opportunities for the creation of identities: the absence of foreign visitors meant that the Little Panathenaia emphasised the role of the individual within the Athenian community, while at the Great Panathenaia the focus was on the identity of the overall group to which individuals belonged.

Chapter 4 explores the ways in which identities were constructed at the Great Panathenaia through participation in the procession, the sacrifices, and the dedication of the *peplos* and other offerings on the Acropolis. Various individuals and groups were involved in these rituals with a multitude of different roles. After 508/7 BCE, Athenians included the *demarchoi*, who were assigned the job of marshalling contingents from the *demes* for the procession. Military officials and *ephebes* also participated in the parade. The only attested female Athenians are *kanephoroi* and cult personnel. Athenian subgroups could bring their own offerings to the goddess. In the classical and early Hellenistic periods the contingents of *kanephoroi* were joined by *metics* and their daughters acting as assistants. From the 430s, the city's colonists brought cows and panoplies, thus reinforcing their relationship with

Athena and their mother city. In the later fifth century, the city's allies were also included. After 229 BCE, when the *metoikia* seems to have come to an end, the Athenians solicited contingents from cities that had no former relations with Athens. Unafraid to repeat herself—in this chapter and throughout the book—, S. meticulously examines a wide variety of roles and restrictions and stresses the changes that they underwent over time.

Chapter 5 focuses on the games as an occasion for the creation of identities. S. analyses in great detail the elaborate series of competitions that were included in the Great Panathenaia and their variation over the centuries: a multiplicity of musical contests, athletic games, and hippic events. Since some of these were only open to Athenian citizens who represented their tribes (individually or as part of a team), participation in the games entailed a clear-cut distinction between Athenians and non-Athenians. Many of these restricted events, such as the apobatic competition and the *pyrrhiche*, had a clear military flavour, and thus connected with the overall martial theme of the festival. Women's involvement was limited to the open hippic contests, which enabled them to hire professionals to race on their behalf.

In Chapter 6 S. concentrates her attention on the multifaceted processes of identity construction of Athenian men at the Great Panathenaia. Unsurprisingly, male citizens had more opportunities to participate in the festivities than anybody else. They could do so not only generally as Athenian men, but also more specifically as benefactors and as members of the cavalry and subgroups of the city. The variety of roles available to them allowed the creation of more complex identities than was possible for other participants. As S. extensively illustrates, the identities of male citizens were particularly sensitive to political change in the city. The first turning point was the institution of the Kleisthenic system, after which participation in the festival became a significant occasion for Athenian males to show support for democracy. Naturally, when the city was under an oligarchic or tyrannical regime, the democratic aspects of men's identities were less important and the focus shifted to the ideal role of an individual who fought for Athens and served both the goddess and the city. S. concludes that the relationship of Athenians to Rome was not reflected in the festival.

Chapter 7 looks at the ways in which other residents and non-residents constructed identities by participating in the Great Panathenaia. According to S., Athenian women and girls, metics and their daughters, colonies, allies and, after 229 BCE, other cities created

identities that focused on their service to the goddess (yet, the assistance provided by metics' daughters to the *kanephoroi* is regarded as service to the city). In contrast, the identities of Athenian boys, beardless youths, ephebes, and foreign benefactors concentrated on their relationship to the polis, and only indirectly on serving Athena. S. relegates to a brief mention in a footnote the fact that metic women, metic boys and slaves were excluded from participation in the festival. Within the community of 'all the Athenians', differences in rank and visibility were evident and (of course) depended on the citizenship, social and economic status of its various members. Despite its international dimension, the Panathenaia were an Athenian festival, and as such, never joined the four great games of the cycle (the Olympia, the Pythia, the Nemea, and the Isthmia), which were Panhellenic festivals. Conversely, S. claims that the Panathenaia were never part of the cycle due to their focus on constructing identities and on demonstrating what it meant to be a member of 'all the Athenians'.

In the final chapter (Ch. 8) S. presents some closing remarks. She illustrates similarities and differences between the Little and the Great Panathenaia; since the differences pertained to participation and inclusivity, they affected the politics of identity at the festival. While the annual occasion was a local and inclusive event, the penteteric festivities had an international and exclusive character. The chapter also includes a comparison between the Panathenaia and a few other Athenian festivals, which leads S. to the conclusion that the former stood out as the most inclusive and international celebration in Athens.

This book is a very valuable and significant contribution to our knowledge of the Panathenaia at Athens, the city's most important festival in honour of Athena. Through a comprehensive analysis of a variety of primary sources, S. provides the first diachronic investigation of the history and development of the Panathenaia at Athens, with an emphasis on the changes the festival underwent over its nearly 1,000 years of existence. These are (in the reviewer's opinion) the greatest merits of the present monograph. While one could lament the continuous repetitions and question the author's decision to shift her focus to processes of identity creation, S.'s book remains a major piece of scholarship which will certainly serve as a reference work for a long time.