

BOOK REVIEW

Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice. Edited by J. RASMUS BRANDT and JON W. IDDENG. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xvii + 405. Hardcover, £89.00/\$160.00. ISBN 978-0-19-969609-3.

What is a festival? Can such an event be defined? What purpose did festivals serve for the peoples of the Greek and the Roman worlds? These questions and related ones serve as the basis for this collection, which comprises eleven papers from a 2006 international seminar together with an updated piece by Mary Beard.

By organizing the introduction (“Some Concepts of Ancient Festivals”) as a discussion of the approaches that the authors have taken, the editors establish the breadth of the methodologies employed in the text and place them in the context of approaches that scholars have used in their study of festivals.

The first chapter, “What is a Graeco-Roman Festival? A Polythetic Approach” (Jon W. Iddeng), provides a general description of the characteristics of an event called a festival. Walter Burkert’s paper (“Ancient Views on Festivals: A Case for a Near East Mediterranean Koine”) argues for the festival as a time of relaxation in a *locus amoenus*, a needed break from one’s daily toils.

For Synnøve Des Bouvrie, the Olympia/Heraia serve as cultural events that both created liminal figures in the winners of the contests and highlighted gendered cultural symbols, while the dramatic contests of the Great Dionysia explored the nature of *philia*, the violation of *philia*, and the restoration of a sense of proper civic roles.

In “Pelops Joins the Party: Transformations of Hero Cult within the Festival at Olympia,” Gunnel Ekroth uses both archaeological and literary evidence to argue that the cult of Pelops began at Olympus between 600 BC and 476 BC. The cult began as a popular hero cult but was transformed by the Romans into a darker, funerary cult.

J. Rasmus Brandt (“Content and Form”) takes both a synchronic look at the archaeological remains of different kinds ceramic containers at ten sites and a diachronic examination of the types of pottery at six sites in an attempt to use material culture to understand the content (the stories used to explain customs

and preserve the past) and the form (the physical actions which constitute the rituals) of festivals at these locations. Brandt also looks at the images on the ceramics and argues that containers were chosen which portrayed figures and events connected with the festival. In addition, Brandt details the remains of bones to understand better which animals were sacrificed and consumed as part of the meals that went along with the celebrations.

Jennifer Niels' paper, "Political Process in the Public Festival: The Panathenaic Festival of the Athenians," looks at vase paintings to suggest details about the procession. Then she offers an interpretation of some of the images of the Parthenon frieze that connects them with the Periclean political agenda. Niels argues that the ten eponymous heroes are joined by ten (eponymous?) women to represent the new Periclean rule about citizenship: both one's father and mother had to be Athenians. Niels accepts Robertson's suggestion that the annual presentation of the *peplos* began only about 450 BC and therefore argues that its representation on the frieze, with the gods as spectators, gives the ritual more legitimacy as well as makes it more Panhellenic. In this way, the Panathenaia and Parthenon Frieze mixed old and new elements as part of redefining the festival in Periclean and democratic terms.

"Talking of Festival: The Status of Choruses and Choregia" (Scott Scullion) explores evidence about choruses and concludes that choral performances and the dramatic contests were secular events rather than religious ritual.

In "Appended Festivals: The Coordination and Combination of Traditional Civic and Ruler Cult Festivals in the Hellenistic and Roman East," Kostas Buraselis details the festivals which became combined with ruler cults, beginning with the shared celebrations for Dionysus and Demetrius Poliorcetes and ending with those which added a festival for Augustus Caesar.

Christopher J. Smith attempts to recover the origin and the function of the *feriae Latinae*, concluding that, although the origin may be impossible to determine, the celebration originally functioned as a ritual important for the consuls before they left for military operations but grew into a festival that established Rome's connections with the wider community of allies. John Scheid's "The Festivals of the Forum Boarium Area: Reflections on the Construction of Complex Constructions of Roman Identity" argues for a marked gender delineation in the festivals of the Forum Boarium.

The final paper from the conference, by Jörg Rüpke, "Public and Publicity: Long-Term Changes in Religious Festivals during the Roman Republic," explores the challenges that festival organizers had in getting people to attend, es-

pecially when there were competing festivals or events on the same day. As the city of Rome and its control over a widespread area grew, public rituals (especially performances) increased to develop a social communication between the state, the gods, and the spectators.

The volume ends with Mary Beard's "The Cult of the 'Great Mother' in Imperial Rome: The Roman and the 'Foreign,'" a deep revision of a paper Beard published in 1994. Here Beard places the integration of the "foreign" cult into Roman culture in a context of otherness that ultimately characterized Rome and Romans.

As a whole, this volume offers both valuable new insights into Greek and Roman festivals and thoughtful assessment of how scholars study festivals. The bibliography for each chapter is extensive, providing a substantial resource for scholars interested in exploring any of these or other festivals further.

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