

Joan B. Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess. Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010. xv + 421 pp. + 27 color plates and 3 maps. ISBN: 978-0-691-14384-2 (First edition: 2007, by Princeton University Press).

The book under review is the fifth printing of a work first published in 2007. By 2010, much acclaim and many awards had been bestowed on it: *Portrait of a Priestess* was nominated a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2007, won the 2007 Award for the Best Professional/Scholarly Book in Classics and Ancient History of the Association of American Publishers, and the 2009 J.R. Wiseman Book Award of the Archaeological Institute of America. The blurb contains quotations from praising reviews by leading experts, published by newspapers and scholarly journals.

This praise is well-deserved. The author puts forward a clear idea: ancient Greek women played a significant public role as priestesses and other sacred officials as well as leading participants in numerous rites. Today, textbooks on Greek religion begin with the fact that a modern clear-cut division between the sacred and profane did not exist in Greek society. Participation in communal rituals, first and foremost in sacrifices, was the basis of social and political relatedness: polis religion was no less public than polis politics. Furthermore, these textbooks do not ignore the involvement of women in numerous rites. However, before Joan B. Connelly (henceforth C.) nobody insisted, in a comprehensive and convincing manner, on the corollary of these two assertions, namely, that Greek women were conspicuous in a public sphere of ultimate importance, that is, in religion.

Emphasis on the public role of citizen women distinguishes *Portrait of a Priestess* from another excellent recent study on the subject, *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* by Matthew Dillon (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), which treats religious actions performed by girls and women in their private and communal life and pays much attention to humbler female worshippers, such as foreign women and slaves. C.'s book is also very different from Barbara Goff's *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), which deals with various facets of women's subservient existence in Greek patriarchal society and often places the feminist agenda and modern interpretations in higher priority than close analysis of ancient sources.

*Portrait of a Priestess* is well-structured and lucidly written. The book maintains a healthy balance between overuse and total avoidance of Greek words and professional terms, and addresses not only a readership of specialists in Classical studies, but a much wider audience. The volume is produced lavishly and illustrated with dozens of black-and-white photos and twenty-seven color plates. All the plates are reproduced in black and white in the text, apparently for the reader's convenience; duplication, however, looks excessive.

Chapter One, 'Introduction: Time, Space, Source Material, and Methods' (pp. 1-25), introduces the geographical and chronological frameworks, the range of the evidence (literary, epigraphic, and archaeological), and the methodological principles to which the author adheres. Some of these principles, for instance the criticism of "presentist" assumptions, are rather self-evident for every student of ancient societies, and their lengthy discussion may ensue from the author's desire to present her subject to the non-classicist audience. However, issues such as interpretation of visual images, application of the modern feminist theory to the study of Greek society, the interaction between place- and time-specific facts and complex historical phenomena, and especially the diachronic aspect of the latter, are treated very briefly. Given the on-going controversy on these subjects and their vital importance for C.'s study, they deserve a more detailed argumentation. The reader would also expect specific methodological questions to be addressed ad hoc, for instance, when evidence from later periods, Hellenistic and even Roman, is used throughout the book for reconstructions of much earlier attitudes and practices: this approach is legitimate, but calls for clarification and elaboration.

Chapter Two, 'Paths to Priesthood: Preparation, Requirements, and Acquisition' (pp. 27-55), treats the requirements of various sacred offices, not necessarily priesthoods, such as age, social and sexual status, and sacred roles performed by girls, maidens, mature and old women. C. demonstrates that the principal methods of acquisition of sacred offices were inheritance, allotment, election and purchase, the emphasis shifting between these requirements over time, following social, cultural and demographic changes.

Chapter Three, 'Priesthoods of Prominence: Athena Polias at Athens, Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, Hera at Argos, and Apollo at Delphi' (pp. 57-83), discusses four important priesthoods. The case of the Pythia at Delphi is especially engaging: for a long time modern interpreters claimed that the female Pythia was manipulated by male priests — yet evidence testifies to the opposite; the Pythia's prophetic experience was pictured as frenetic and uncontrolled — but the evidence suggests that although possessed by Apollo, in normal situations she remained composed and restrained. Furthermore, for almost a century modern scholarship unanimously dismissed the ancient tradition ascribing the Pythia's inspiration to the prophetic *pneuma* — now, after hallucinogenic gases have been (re-)discovered by the geologists, the Pythia's utterings appears to have been at least triggered, if not conditioned, by inhalation of intoxicating "vapors". Another paradox: the Pythia's responses are cited by a host of ancient writers, but not a single inscription from Delphi mentions a Pythia's name, and not a single statue portrays her. On this background, C.'s careful treatment of the Pythia's activities is a compelling achievement of an open-minded scholar, challenging a set of long-established prejudices.

An archaeologist and art historian, C. is especially convincing when discussing iconography and its implications. Thus, Chapter Four, 'Dressing the Part: Costume, Attribute, and Mimesis' (pp. 85-115), is more than a study of priestly attire and attributes: C. describes clothing appropriate for participation in various rituals, imitation of divine figures by worshipers, and manipulation of sacred dress and other elements by artists seeking to create images of ritual spaces. She also argues that representation with a temple key is a 'surest signifier of feminine priestly status in visual culture' (p. 92), and that sacred dress and attributes were 'a powerful nonverbal tool in the communication of status, agency, and identity' (p. 115).

Chapter Five, 'The Priestess in the Sanctuary: Implements, Portraits, and Patronage' (pp. 117-63), follows the development of votive statuary from the Archaic through the Roman period. Here, C. uses the evidence provided by the offerings and accompanying inscriptions to reconstruct life stories of wealthy women from influential families. In the author's opinion, statues of priestesses and their inscribed bases 'attest to a well-developed sense of identity and, to a certain extent, to freedom in using their own financial resources to set up their commemorative displays' (p. 163). The latter assumption invites further substantiation. For instance, C. cites a Hellenistic Athenian decree of a *genos* (*SEG* 29. 135) granting a priestess the permission to erect her statue in a sanctuary 'at her own expense' as 'a powerful witness to the fact that this priestess had her own money and was able to use it as she wished' (p. 144). Yet the decree could purport that the *genos* was anxious to stipulate that the statue should not be paid from the communal funds, and did not care whether the money belonged to the honored woman or to her family. Eager to demonstrate that at least some Greek priestesses were economically independent, C. seems to overstate her case.

In the same chapter, the author also suggests that some archaic *korai* represent votaries rather than deities. C. argues convincingly that dedication of a worshiper's statue in a sacred precinct 'ensured that the prayer would be repeated in perpetuity before the divinity' (p. 163), which means that setting a statue ensued not only, and perhaps not primarily, from the personal and familial pride of the dedicator, but also from her genuine desire to maintain certain intimacy with the deity even when she was not physically present in the sanctuary.

Chapter Six, 'The Priestess in Action: Procession, Sacrifice, and Benediction' (pp. 165-95), explores the priestess' activities. The author stresses that 'women's centrality in the performance

and perpetuation [of rituals] was essential to the functioning of the city' (p. 166). Evidence on women's participation in cultic processions, acts of prayer, as well as libations, abundantly demonstrates this point. However, the main ritual in Greek religion was blood sacrifice of an alimentary type. C. assembles a rich corpus of data to support the view that women were not excluded from the ritual slaughter of victims and took part in their consumption. In contrast, in her treatment of female benefactors, the author tends to treat too literally testimonies pertaining to donations by women as proof of their independence and tends also to underrate the possibility of control by male relatives.

Priestly honors and authority are treated in Chapter Seven, 'Priestly Privilege: Perquisites, Honors, and Authority' (pp. 197-221). C. demonstrates that priestly privileges comprised not only social prestige, including material and legal benefits, but also public influence. She maintains that 'the priestesses who oversaw the business of cult can be understood, in a very real sense, to have been civic leaders with civic authority' (p. 198). They received perquisites and enjoyed *proedria* and other marks of distinction, performed curses and blessings, and gave advice. Furthermore, C. shows that at a fairly early date, in the fourth century BC, priestesses appointed sacred officials and argued cases dealing with sacred law in councils and assemblies. This chapter reveals the power of the priestess within her community. Those who are still confident that ancient Greek women were invisible in public will be compelled to modify their views.

Chapter Eight, 'Death of the Priestess: Grave Monuments, Epitaphs, and Public Burial' (pp. 223-57), brings the reader to the priestess' grave. Public funeral was an exceptional honor conferred by the Greek poleis on their most distinguished citizens. C. demonstrates that in the extraordinary cases when women were awarded this supreme expression of admiration, they were usually prominent priestesses. Although the evidence for priestesses' public burial is mostly late, the funerary steles of less renowned priestesses, dated as early as the fifth century BC, commemorate the pride of the families in the esteem the deceased had enjoyed, and their contribution and devotion to the communities. The author discusses types of grave markers of priestesses in various areas of the Greek world, as well as the characteristic features of these monuments.

Chapter Eight, 'The End of the Line: The Coming of Christianity' (pp. 259-75), compares the status and functions of women, who served as religious leaders in Christian and Jewish communities, with the authority and spheres of activities of pagan priestesses. In the Conclusions (pp. 275-81), the author juxtaposes the inferences from her close examination of ancient sources with a critical survey of a hundred years of modern scholarship and its prejudices.

*Portrait of a Priestess* offers the reader an engaging discussion of multifarious roles of citizen girls and women in Greek religion, from the archaic to Roman periods. Stories of more than 150 priestesses enliven this evidence-driven study. Although Pericles advised Athenian women to be the subject of 'the least possible talk by men, either for praise or for blame' (Thuc. 2. 45), C. has demonstrated that the Greek citizen women — or at least some of them — talked, were talked about, were praised by men, and were admired by their communities as performers of religious functions, which were deemed to be public responsibilities of paramount importance.

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Dimetri Gutas, *Theophrastus, On First Principles (known as his Metaphysics). Greek Text and Medieval Arabic Translation, Edited and Translated with Introduction, Commentaries and Glossaries, as Well as the Medieval Latin Translation, and with an Excursus on Graeco-Arabic Editorial Technique*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010. XXIII + 506 pp., indices. ISBN 13:978-9-004-17903-5.