



Connected Contest: Greek Festivals and the Coming of Rome

For most of its history, Greece was an imagined community – a geographic diaspora held together by a common language, the notion of a common descent, and a set of practices and tradition that together defined *to Hellenikon* – ‘the Greek thing’.

Rivalry and civic pride were two central factors which led to the most enduring and fascinating of Greek cultural traditions: the development of a highly complex religious festival



culture, which took the form of a network of athletic and cultural competitions, open to all Greeks. From the second century BCE onwards, these festival traditions were invented and re-invented as the Greek world adapted itself to the demands of a present that was dominated by Rome.

This paper investigates some aspects of this transformation of indigenous traditions. Making use of insights provided by network theory, it will discuss the ways in which Greek festivals in Asia Minor and Greece were adapted to serve as anchoring points for Roman rule.

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