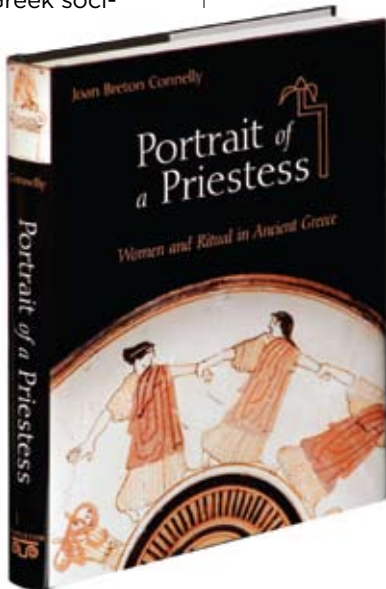


BOOKS

In **Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece**

(Princeton University Press, \$39.95) archaeologist Joan Breton Connelly of New York University argues that religious office was the one place in ancient Greek society where women's roles were "equal and comparable" to those of men.

To please and honor the gods, for example, clergy led ceremonies that culminated in sacrificing an animal, which was inspected for omens and placed piece by piece on an altar fire. Traditionally scholars believed priestesses were



forbidden to take part in the slaughter and ritual feast. Connelly asserts that some priestesses not only consumed the sacred meal, but also were involved in every aspect of the sacrifice, from selecting the

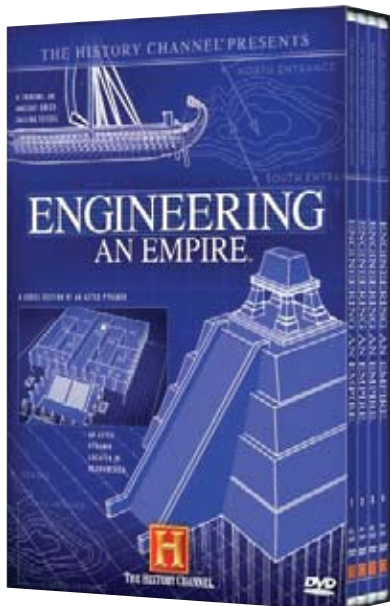
animal to butchering it. By examining the lives and work of 150 priestesses—from Troy's Cassandra, whose beauty distracted Ajax, to the historical Berenike who was celebrated for her civic and philanthropic contributions to the city of Syros—Connelly reinstates these women to their rightful place in ancient history.

—ETI BONN-MULLER

DVD

Heron, an engineer in Ptolemaic Alexandria first harnessed the power of steam with his *aeolipile*, 1,600 years before the Industrial Revolution. Remarkable buildings and inventions like Heron's are the subject of the TV series "**Engineering an Empire**" (first season on DVD, The History Channel, \$49.95) which examines feats of engineering that seem to transcend the technological know-how of their time.

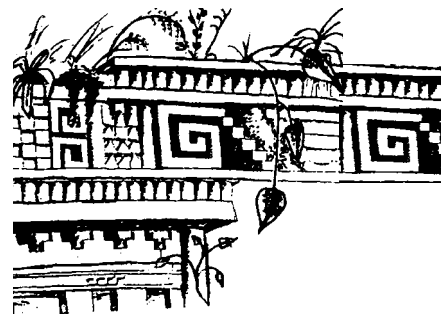
Computer animation aids in imagining the unimaginable, such as the still unexcavated tomb of the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, with its



fabled rivers of mercury and pearl-studded ceiling. But uninspired reenactments and actor-turned-art-historian Peter Weller's Robocop-style commentary weighs down an otherwise interesting series. Many

of the innovations the series explores were effective tools of empire-building, such as the Aztec irrigation canals at Tenochtitlán, and the Greek trireme ships used to defeat the Persians at Salamis, but some, like the *aeolipile*, held potential not fully realized for centuries. The sheer ingenuity of ancient engineers ultimately makes the series fascinating.

—ERIN HAYES



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