

Station G: Religious Beliefs

The Panathenaic Procession

① The most important religious festival held by the Athenians was the Panathenaic Festival. This annual festival was held each July to honor the birth of Athena, the patron Goddess of Athens. The festival lasted several days and included feasts, athletic contests, music and dancing, sacrifices, and a long march, or *procession*, of people.

② The procession of the Panathenaic Festival began at the cemetery of the heroes outside Athens. It traveled through the huge public marketplace, the *Agora*, and slowly climbed the Acropolis until it reached the temple of Athena at the top.

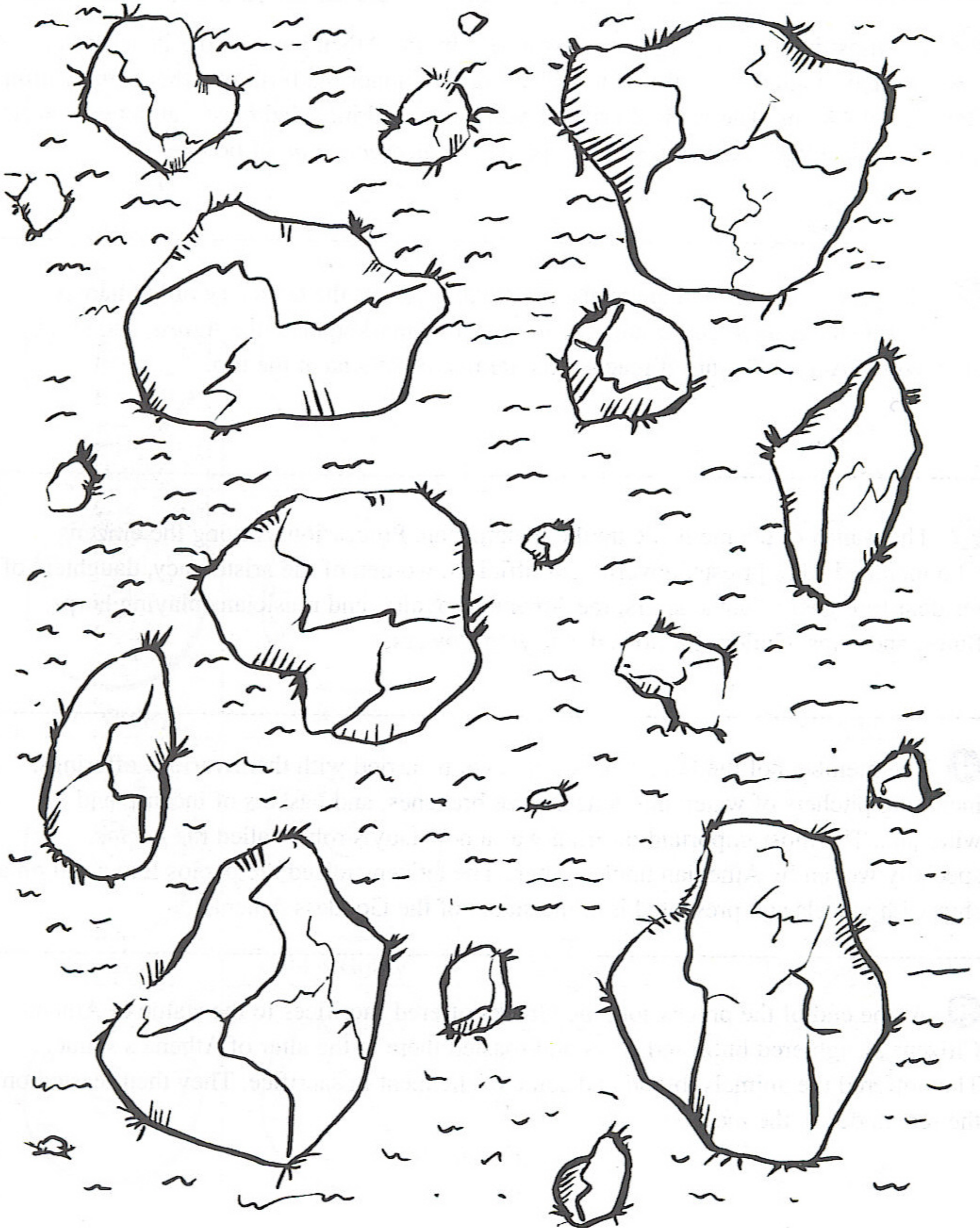
③ Thousands of people made up the Panathenaic Procession. Among the citizens who marched were priests, government officials, women of the aristocracy, daughters of resident foreigners, foot soldiers, the Athenian cavalry, and musicians playing harps, flutes, and lyres. Children followed, carrying flowers.

④ The members of the Panathenaic Procession carried with them various offerings, including pitchers of water and honey, olive branches, and baskets of incense and wine-jars. The most important offering was a new lady's robe, called the *peplos*, specially woven by Athenian noblewomen. The citizens raised the peplos like a sail on a ship with wheels and presented it to the statue of the Goddess Athena.

⑤ At the end of the procession, the Greeks offered sacrifices to the statue of Athena. Citizens slaughtered bulls and cows and roasted them at the altar of Athena's statue. They offered the animals' blood and some of the meat in sacrifice. They then feasted on the remainder of the meat.

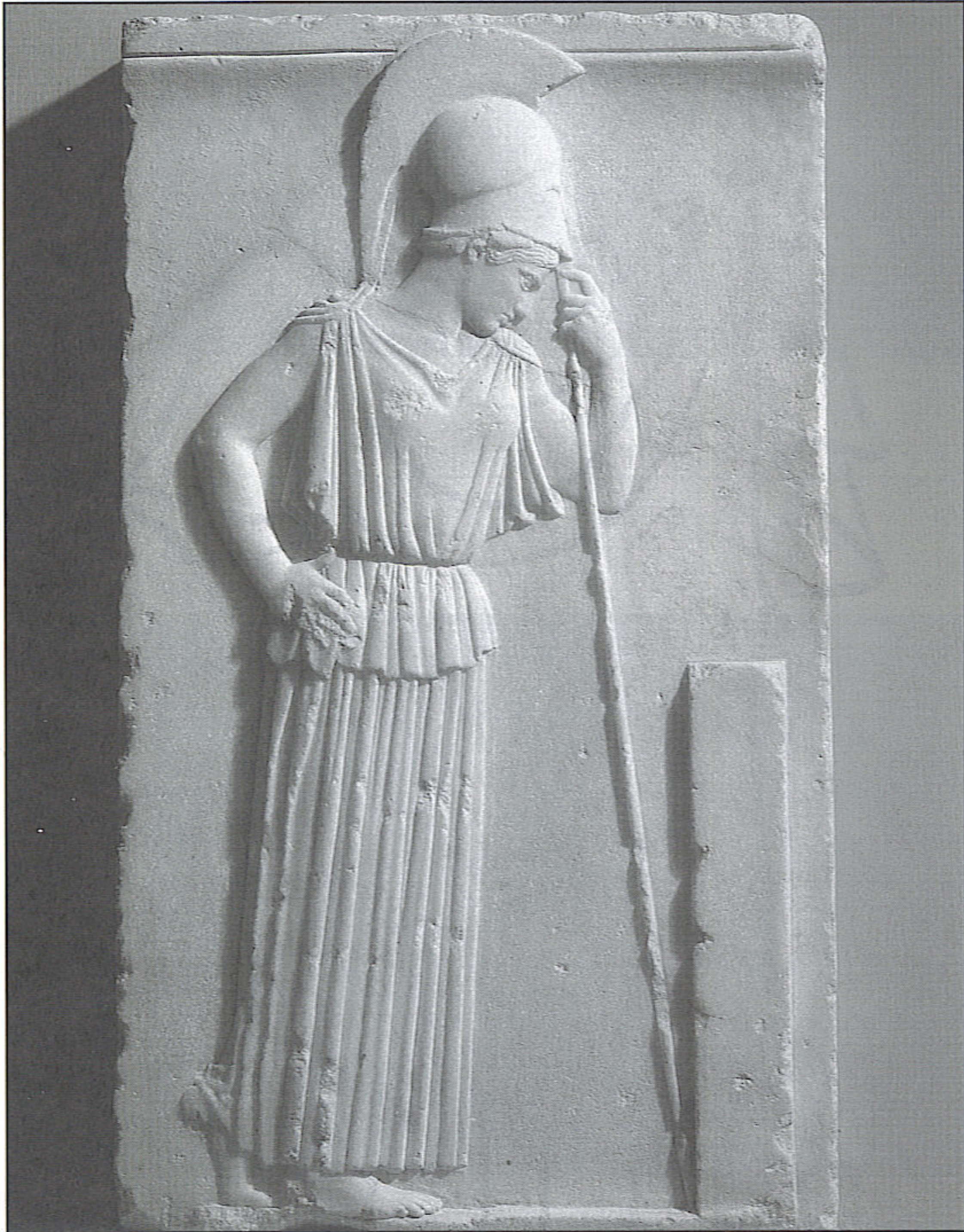
Station G: Religious Beliefs

Path Stones



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Relief of Athena



This is a stone carving of the Goddess Athena mourning for Athenian soldiers who have died in battle. The relief dates to the mid fifth century B.C.E.

Station G: Religious Beliefs

Athena's Peplos

