



Civic Rites: Democracy and Religion in Ancient Athens

Nancy Evans

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Civic Rites explores the religious origins of Western democracy by examining the government of fifth-century BCE Athens in the larger context of ancient Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. Deftly combining history, politics, and religion to weave together stories of democracy's first leaders and critics, Nancy Evans gives readers a contemporary's perspective on Athenian society. She vividly depicts the physical environment and the ancestral rituals that nourished the people of the earliest democratic state, demonstrating how religious concerns were embedded in Athenian governmental processes. The book's lucid portrayals of the best-known Athenian festivals—honoring Athena, Demeter, and Dionysus—offer a balanced view of Athenian ritual and illustrate the range of such customs in fifth-century Athens.

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