

# **UCLA**

## **UCLA Historical Journal**

### **Title**

*Athenian Popular Religion. By John D. Mikalson. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983. Pp. xiv -l- 172. Notes, bibliography, index of citations, general index. \$16.00*

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1qz900tj>

### **Journal**

UCLA Historical Journal, 6(0)

### **ISSN**

0276-864X

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### **Publication Date**

1985

Peer reviewed

records of canonization proceedings and the biographies of the saints, which were an essential tool in promoting their posthumous followings. These give the details of the saints' lives and reveal what virtues and practices were considered especially holy by the people of the fourteenth century. They also show the great hardships endured by these saints, whose lives were often not recognized as holy until after their deaths.

The saintly attributes most frequently stressed in the hagiographic literature are patience, devotion to the passion of Christ, and the gifts of rapture and revelation. Each of these is treated in a separate chapter. In another chapter the lives of three individuals are discussed in detail as representatives of the fourteenth-century saintly type: Dorothy of Montau, Peter of Luxemburg, and Clare Gambocarta. In the final chapter the author discusses another figure, the Englishwoman Margery Kempe, as the epitome of the saintly ideal of the age. These accounts, and the numerous anecdotes from the lives of many others, create a revealing composite picture of the spiritual life of the fourteenth century.

Kierckhefer accomplishes his primary goal; the religious values and attitudes of the fourteenth century are explained and defined, enabling the reader to understand the lives of these saints according to the standards of the fourteenth century. He discusses such matters as flagellation, revelation, and even levitation as they were seen by contemporaries, without imposing modern judgements upon them. Unfortunately his argument becomes weak in the end, when he tries to identify the sources of and reasons for these values. This book will prove useful and interesting for anyone studying the religious history of the fourteenth century. The growing role of the laity in the church, the changes in the religious orders, and the institutional and sacramental developments of the time are discussed along with the theological and popular concepts of sanctity. The reader will come away with an awareness of the patterns of development and change within the medieval church, but will have to look elsewhere for an explanation of why these developments occurred.

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*Athenian Popular Religion.* By JOHN D. MIKALSON. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983. Pp. xiv + 172. Notes, bibliography, index of citations, general index. \$16.00

Perhaps no aspect of ancient Greek religion is in such need of new investigation as that vague area known as "popular" religion. What was

the religion of the "ordinary" ancient Greek? *Athenian Popular Religion* by John D. Mikalson, professor of Classics at the University of Virginia, attempts to answer this question by focusing on the "religious views and attitudes that were acceptable to the majority of Athenians of the late fifth and fourth centuries 4B.C.5 (p. 5)." Mikalson limits his investigation to the city of Athens between the end of the Peloponnesian War and the death of Alexander the Great, covering a period of just over eighty years. Mikalson relies on three types of sources: orations, inscriptions, and the writings of Xenophon. Philosophy, tragedy, and comedy are dismissed as unreliable indicators of popular belief. By "popular religion" Mikalson means the views of the townspeople, not those of the peasants.

Having clearly defined his boundaries, Mikalson treats in successive short chapters what Athenians said about the priority of the gods, divine intervention in human affairs, justice, oaths, divination, death, afterlife, piety, and impiety. In the final chapter, "Some Historical Considerations," Mikalson shows how the evidence demonstrates continued religious activity in the fourth century.

Rather than interpret Greek religion, Mikalson provides a narrative account. He demonstrates what the Athenians said about their religion, but makes few assessments of the importance of religion to the ordinary citizen. Although he states specifically his intention to avoid the theoretical approach, his study would be more useful had he attempted to interpret rather than simply relate his findings. Chapters on curses and magic would have been welcome and appropriate for a volume of this nature. Likewise, the quantity of source material would seem to require the chapter "The Gods and Death" to be longer than three pages.

Athenian religion of the late fifth and fourth centuries B.C. - as related by orators, inscriptions, and Xenophon - was rather somber if one compares it to the rich and lively mythological accounts of Homer, Hesiod, and the fifth century dramatists. Mikalson rightly emphasizes this point and his account, especially chapter nine, "The Nature of the Gods," carefully separating myth from religion. Mikalson concentrates on religion, not mythology, and for this he deserves praise. His insistence on separating poetry and prose accounts breaks new ground and marks a methodological advance over Martin P. Nilsson's *Greek Folk Religion*.

*Athenian Popular Religion* makes an important contribution toward developing a methodology in the study of Greek religion. Mikalson provides a well-defined framework and adroitly handles his source material. Extensive endnotes enhance the text, and a comprehensive "Index of Passages Cited" (20 pages) should satisfy the most critical reader. The book has remarkably little (too little?) ancient Greek for a text on Greek religion but does supply translations of many of the inscriptions cited. *Athenian Popular Religion* is a valuable synthesis of materials for students

of Greek religion and should be required reading in every course on ancient Greek civilization.

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*Understanding Imperial Russia.* By MARC RAEFF. Translated by ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. Pp. xix-248. Bibliography, index. \$19.95.

Marc Raeff's interpretive essay examines the effects of the tsars' absolute authority on the institutions of Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the abdication of Nicholas II. By concentrating on this subject Raeff provides a useful tool for understanding Imperial Russia, since, in his view, the absolutist state was the single greatest force for change throughout this period.

The far-reaching innovations begun by Peter the Great attempted to transform Russia following the Western pattern of the "well ordered police state." Raeff argues that Peter shared in the belief that "the fundamental trait of modern man is his determination to organize society rationally for the purpose of achieving ever greater productivity." (p. 26) Peter's efforts to introduce these reforms produced profound changes in Russian society and imperial administration. Rational control and coordination required close supervision of the entire economic and political life of the country, but this was an impossible task for the autocrat alone; the country needed a bureaucracy. Hence the old Muscovite service nobility was transformed into a corps of officials. Peter's reforms were rejected by the common people, while the nobility was divided between supporters of the principles that Max Weber called "tradition" and "rationality."

The logical conclusion of the well order police state would be an independent code of laws universally applicable - a *Rechtsstaat*. Peter, however, wished to preserve his personalized autocratic power whole and undiminished. Surprisingly, the nobility did not demand a legal code; they also preferred relations based on a personalized form of ultimate authority in which they could influence the autocrat. So, on the one hand, there was a long list of powerful court favorites throughout the eighteenth century, while, on the other hand, no autonomous legal code existed. The entire judicial system had no independent status or standards and offered no adequate protection against the arbitrariness of state administrators.

Whereas Peter's approach to the establishment of the well ordered police state was the creation of a centralized bureaucracy, Catherine the