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Pericles of Athens

Vincent Azoulay

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Pericles of Athens Vincent Azoulay

Pericles has had the rare distinction of giving his name to an entire period of history, embodying what has often been taken as the golden age of the ancient Greek world. "Periclean" Athens witnessed tumultuous political and military events, and achievements of the highest order in philosophy, drama, poetry, oratory, and architecture. *Pericles of Athens* is the first book in more than two decades to reassess the life and legacy of one of the greatest generals, orators, and statesmen of the classical world.

In this compelling critical biography, Vincent Azoulay provides an unforgettable portrait of Pericles and his turbulent era, shedding light on his powerful family, his patronage of the arts, and his unrivaled influence on Athenian politics and culture. He takes a fresh look at both the classical and modern reception of Pericles, recognizing his achievements as well as his failings while deftly avoiding the adulatory or hypercritical positions staked out by some scholars today. From Thucydides and Plutarch to Voltaire and Hegel, ancient and modern authors have questioned the great statesman's relationship with democracy and Athenian society. Did Pericles hold supreme power over willing masses or was he just a gifted representative of popular aspirations? Was Periclean Athens a democracy in name only, as Thucydides suggests? This is the enigma that Azoulay investigates in this groundbreaking book.

Pericles of Athens offers a balanced look at the complex life and afterlife of the legendary "first citizen of Athens" who presided over the birth of democracy.

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