

For many centuries now, Athenian democracy has been an inevitable point of reference, offering political thinkers a model either to draw inspiration or to take their distance from. During the Middle Ages, on the contrary, given the disappearance of the Greek in Western Europe, Athenian history and institutions fell into oblivion, only to resurface with Italian Humanism. Even if this reappearance is an extremely relevant topic both for Renaissance culture and the history of political thought, it has never, however, been the subject of extensive, first-hand research. As a result, the volumes on the history of democracy generally devote very little space to this decisive shift, very often misunderstanding the general process of appropriation of the Athenian political experience, given that some of the subsequent attitudes towards Athens took shape at that moment. In my paper I'll try to show the first conclusions of my ongoing research on the multiple ways Renaissance humanists reinvented Athenian democracy to make it understandable (and potentially "reusable").