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The Secret History of Democracy

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The Secret History of Democracy explores the intriguing thesis that there is a lot more democracy in human history than historians generally admit, and presents some surprising evidence for this case. The idea that democracy could have a 'secret' history might at first seem strange. Indeed, the history of democracy has become so standardized, is so familiar and appears so complete that it is hard to believe it could hold any secrets. The central argument of this book is that there is much more to the history of democracy than this foreshortened genealogy admits. There is a whole 'secret' history, too big, complex and insufficiently 'Western' in character to be included in the standard narrative.

In exploring this 'secret' democratic heritage, the contributors to this volume establish that democracy was developing in the Middle East, India and China before classical Athens, clung on during the 'Dark Ages' in Islam, Iceland and Venice, was often part of tribal life in Africa, North America and Australia and is developing today in unexpected ways through grassroots activism. This book is a timely collection of essays that make a substantial contribution to the emerging debate about the history of democracy and set the tone for future discussion and research.

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Introduction: Democracy and History

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What is so 'Primitive' about 'Primitive Democracy'? Comparing the Ancient Middle East and Classical Athens; *B. Isakhan*

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Conclusion: Democratizing the History of Democracy; *B. Isakhan & S. Stockwell*

Reviews:

"This exciting book surely enlivens and enriches our debate on democracy and its future by digging afresh oft-forgotten, yet most enlightening democratic experiences found in human history. "

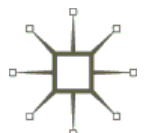
- Takashi Inoguchi, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo and President of the University of Niigata Prefecture, Japan

"The thought-provoking essays gathered in *The Secret History of Democracy* provide convincing evidence that democratic mechanisms have been invented many times and in many places, including times and places neglected in common accounts. This collection is a sobering reminder that democratic practices have often been succeeded by something else. But one also takes away a sense of the dynamic character of democratic history and the endless diversity of practices with some reasonable claim to embody democratic principles. As growing numbers wonder about what sorts of political institutions make sense in the face of the enormous problems confronting the twenty-first century, this demonstration of the long human history of political creativity gives some reason for hope."

-John Markoff, Professor, University of Pittsburgh, USA

"A fascinating, thought-provoking and well-informed survey of little-known "roots of democracy" and "proto-democratic" systems and movements across the globe , from ancient and "primitive" to modern societies. An eye-opener that forces us to differentiate more carefully and to rethink the history of democracy."

- Kurt Raaflaub, Emeritus Professor, Brown University, USA



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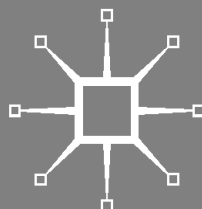
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