



Civil Society: 1750-1914 (Studies in European History)

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann

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'Civil Society' has become a hot topic of debate in the last two decades, seen by many politicians and academics as a key to achieving democratic renewal. This new study offers one of the first transnational histories of civil society from the Enlightenment to the Great War, a period essential to understanding this debate.

Using Alexis de Tocqueville's view on the exceptionalism of American democracy as his starting point, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann argues that American society was less exceptional than Tocqueville suggests, given the enthusiasm for voluntary associations among practitioners of civil society in Britain, France, Germany the Habsburg Empire and Russia. Hoffmann shows the transference and adaptation of ideas and practices of civil society across national borders. By placing the tension between 'democracy' and 'civil society' at the centre of the book, Hoffmann's account reveals the dilemmas of civil society and provides a concise and incisive introduction to one of the key concepts in Global History.

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