Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective

This collaborative volume offers the first historical reconstruction of the concept of popular sovereignty from antiquity to the twentieth century. First formulated between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, the various early modern conceptions of the doctrine were heavily indebted to Roman reflection on forms of government and Athenian ideas of popular power. This study, edited by Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, traces successive transformations of the doctrine, rather than narrating a linear development. It examines critical moments in the career of popular sovereignty, spanning antiquity, medieval Europe, the early modern wars of religion, the revolutions of the eighteenth century and their aftermath, decolonisation and mass democracy. Featuring original work by an international team of scholars, the book offers a reconsideration of one of the formative principles of contemporary politics by exploring its descent from classical city-states to the advent of the modern state.

RICHARD BOURKE is Professor in the History of Political Thought and co-director of the Centre for the Study of the History of Political Thought at Queen Mary University of London. His books include Peace in Ireland: The War of Ideas (2003, 2012) and Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke (2015).

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Contents

List of figures ................................................................. vii
Acknowledgements ......................................................... viii
List of contributors ......................................................... ix

Introduction ......................................................... 1

1 Athenian democracy and popular tyranny ............... 15
KINCH HOEKSTRA

2 Popular sovereignty as control of office-holders: Aristotle on Greek democracy .......... 52
MELISSA LANE

3 Popular sovereignty in the late Roman Republic: Cicero and the will of the people .......... 73
VALENTINA ARENA

4 Popolo and law: late medieval sovereignty in Marsilius and the jurists ................. 96
SERENA FERENTE

5 Democratic sovereignty and democratic government: the sleeping sovereign ............... 115
RICHARD TUCK

6 Parliamentary sovereignty, popular sovereignty, and Henry Parker’s adjudicative standpoint .......... 142
ALAN CROMARTIE

7 Popular sovereignty and representation in the English Civil War ................. 164
LORENZO SABBADINI

v
vi Contents

8 Prerogative, popular sovereignty, and the American founding
   ERIC NELSON 187

9 Popular sovereignty and political representation:
   Edmund Burke in the context of eighteenth-century thought
   RICHARD BOURKE 212

10 From popular sovereignty to civil society in
    post-revolutionary France
    BRYAN GARSTEN 236

11 Popular sovereignty as state theory in the
    nineteenth century
    DUNCAN KELLY 270

12 Popular sovereignty and anti-colonialism
    KARUNA MANTENA 297

13 Popular sovereignty in an age of mass democracy:
    politics, parliament and parties in Weber, Kelsen,
    Schmitt and beyond
    TIMOTHY STANTON 320

Bibliography 359
Index 398
Figures

1.1 Stele, called Marble of Choiseul, with Greek inscriptions, c. 410/409 BCE. Ma 831. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Daniel Lebée and Carine Déambrosis/Art Resource, NY. page 33

4.1 Lex de imperio Vespasiani (CIL VI 930; ILS 244), Capitoline Museum, Rome. © Steve Kershaw, licensed under (CC) BY-NC-SA. 103

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