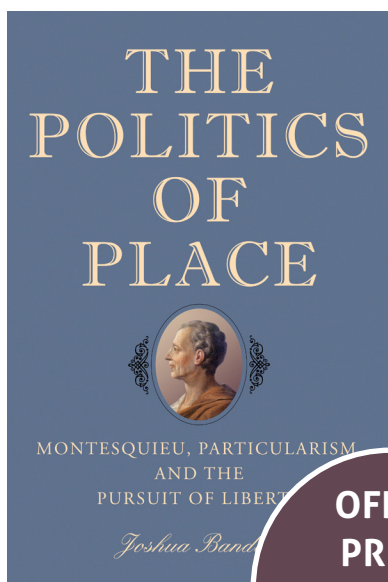


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## THE POLITICS OF PLACE

### Montesquieu, Particularism, and the Pursuit of Liberty

JOSHUA BANDOCH

Many Enlightenment thinkers sought to discover the right political order for all times and all places, and scholars often view Montesquieu as working within this project. In this reassessment of Montesquieu's political thought, Joshua Bandoch finds that Montesquieu broke from this ideal and, by taking into account the variation of societies, offered a more fruitful approach to the study of politics.

Through a careful reading of Montesquieu's political writings, Bandoch shows that for Montesquieu the politics, economics, and morals of a society must fit a particular place and its people. As long as states commit to pursuing security, liberty, and prosperity, states can—indeed, should—define and advance these goals in their own particular ways. Montesquieu saw that the circumstances of a place—its religion, commerce, laws, institutions, physical environment, and mores—determine the best political order for that place. In this sense, Montesquieu is the great innovator of what Bandoch calls the “politics of place.” This new reading of Montesquieu also provides fresh insights into the American founding, which Montesquieu so heavily influenced.

Instead of having discerned the “right” political order, Bandoch argues, the Founders instituted a good political order, of which there are numerous versions.

JOSHUA BANDOCH earned his PhD in political science from the University of Notre Dame. He has taught at Brown University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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