

The Great Tradition: Constitutional History and National Identity in Britain and the United States, 1870-1960

Anthony Brundage, Richard Cosgrove



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The Great Tradition traces the way in which English constitutional history became a major factor in the development of a national identity that took for granted the superiority of the English as a governing race. In the United States, constitutional history also became an aspect of the United States's self-definition as a nation governed by law. The book's importance lies in the way constitutional history interpreted the past to create a favorable self-image for each country. It deals with constitutional history as a justification for empire, a model for the emergent academic history of the 1870s, a surrogate for political argument in the guise of scholarship, and an element that contributed to the Anglo-American rapprochement before World War I. The book also traces the rise and decline of constitutional history as a fashionable sub-discipline within the academy.

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