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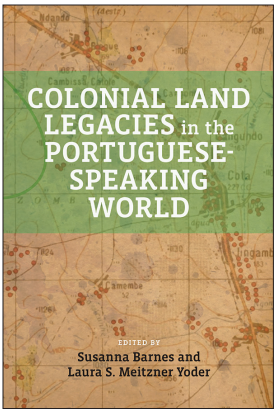

COLONIAL LAND LEGACIES IN THE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING WORLD

Edited by Susanna Barnes and Laura S. Meitzner Yoder

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Afterword

The Amphibious Colonial Empire

Ricardo Roque

Introduction

This volume is an invitation to look at the resilient forms of colonial land relations. I call them colonial mutants. They do not remain in the past; in fact they are neither simply "past" nor "present." They blend different timelines while undertaking several mutations. They are active and cut across different temporalities. Consider, to begin, a minor and apparently innocuous linguistic colonial mutant—the term "Lusophone." This is now one common way of designating the spaces that once formed the "Portuguese colonial empire," the imperial formation that, over almost five centuries, comprised a vast overseas geography in Asia, Africa, and the Americas—from India to Mozambique, Angola, Brazil, Timor, São Tomé, Guinea-Bissau, and Cabo Verde, and including Portugal itself.[1] Companion to the idea of *lusofonia*, it emphasizes a self-centred Portuguese geography based on constructs of spiritual, affective, and linguistic commonality; in doing so, some critics have noted, the term applied to Portugal and its former colonies perpetuates imperial imaginaries and helps camouflage the violent nature of the empire.[2] The term "Lusophone" insinuates the presence of these legacies in language; it is a discursive mutation that former colonial imaginaries have undertaken over time; and, at the same time, one form of (re)naming the "empire" that allows us to articulate its resilience in the post-imperial present. Yet resilience is also a feature of the imperial past, considering the longevity of the Portuguese colonial empire for almost five centuries. In effect, Portugal's dispersive imperial formation became circumstantially distinctive for one basic chronological aspect: it began earlier and lasted longer than its European counterparts—from an early start in the 1400s to a late termination in 1974–5, when a democratic revolution in Portugal put an end to the fascist Estado Novo

regime and prompted decolonization. This characteristic makes the Portuguese overseas empire and its Lusophone avatar suitable observatories for analyzing the complex and pressing issue of colonialism's land legacies, as the editors of this volume propose. Of course, longevity is an effect of complex patterns of historical contingencies, never some epiphenomenon of a fabled national essence. Hence idioms of Portuguese racial and colonial exceptionalism are flawed constructs of nationalist imperial ideology that must be rejected as interpretive lenses through which to consider this issue.[3]

The essays in this volume further expose the uselessness of these ideological idioms, addressing the question of resilience of empire against the grain of both colonial imaginaries and post-imperial nostalgia. For they encourage us to question how, or whether, such an enduring empire might be re-narrated and reassessed around the tangible problems of control, governance, and domination of land and land-based resources. Bypassing the traps of the Lusophone lexicon, the chapters engage in stimulating ways with how human relations to land, and the materiality of land itself, might constitute a lasting imprint of Portugal's overseas colonial power on places as distinct as Angola, Mozambique, or Timor-Leste. To simply call these imprints "legacies," however, Ann Stoler reminds us, hinders an understanding of the varied and complex ways through which imperial formations endure; the simple term "legacy," Stoler criticizes, makes no "distinctions between what holds and what lies dormant,"[4] and as such it leaves unexamined the nuanced ways through which the past is (or is not) reinvested in practice. This volume, however, brings to light especially those legacies that hold and remain active—because they are recurrently, even if intermittently, reactivated and performed. It is adequate perhaps to conceptually differentiate these "active legacies" and call them, as I advanced above, colonial mutants: enduring forms of land relations of colonial origin that live on and mutate actively across a wide spectrum of activities, materials, and institutions. Past, present, and future are not categories that easily apply to these figures that travel in time while metamorphosing their original configurations.

This volume, then, brings together accounts of land relations that are also histories of colonial mutations, and it places these narratives in the long duration of the Portuguese colonial empire. However, the latter is an imperial formation that some do not traditionally consider an empire focused on land. This raises the question of whether the Portuguese Empire, traditionally viewed in Portugal as primarily seaborne for most of its existence, should be reconsidered in terms of land control and domination. In this afterword, I would like to briefly reflect on this issue. I first suggest that the volume's sustained focus on land challenges sea-centric nationalist mythologies and sea/land dualisms ingrained in the

history and public memory of Portuguese imperialism. From the outset, land was at the core of the Portuguese imperial ventures through trade; it was never a purely seafaring and ocean-obsessed enterprise.[5] I thus propose the Portuguese Empire would be best approached as a shifting amphibious formation, a dispersive power-driven ensemble that moved on water as much as it moved on land. I then briefly reflect on how Portuguese language and conceptions of "land" might help capture this long-term amphibious element. I consider the relevance of the conceptual pair *terra/sertão* as a way to translate the notion of "land" in Portuguese colonizing cosmovisions. Finally, I call attention to this volume's contribution to the question of temporal comparison as regards the diversity and durability of mutant forms of colonial land relations.

Reassessing Sea-Centric Narratives

The volume's focus on land legacies matters for several reasons. As Tania Murray Li highlights in her foreword, current concerns with land justice following settler dispossession and repossession make projects aimed at historicizing land governance of pressing urgency and relevance today. This holds true most notably in countries where colonial relations to land dominantly fall under the category of settler colonialism, marked by the foreigners' voracious drive to expropriate and possess the land, and by extreme violence and destruction of the native peoples and societies.[6] In the specific context of Portuguese historical imaginaries, however, the volume's focus on land matters for one additional reason. It advances a land-based counternarrative to the seafaring discourse dominant in Portuguese histories and the public imagination.

The sea, not the land, is the quintessential element of the imagination of the Portuguese overseas empire that originated in the Age of Discovery in the sixteenth century. When thinking of so-called Portuguese expansion from the vantage point of the metropole, a set of familiar images come to mind: oceans, caravels, sailing ships, navigators, sailors, seafaring knowledge. This romantic imagery of a virtuous sea—rather than land—venture of the Portuguese Crown was forged from the outset in the 1500s through political discourses, art, and literature.[7] Consider for example Luís de Camões's famous verse in the sixteenth-century epic poem *Os Lusíadas*: "Across never sailed seas." Note Camões did not write, "Across never walked lands." Hence this verse is paradigmatic of the celebratory imagery of Portugal as an essentially maritime nation-empire that lasts until the present day.

Critical projects aimed at historicizing land relations in Lusophone geographies are fundamental to counter a memory excess of sea-centred narratives. Indeed, by placing the problematic of the colonial government of land at the core

of a wide comparative understanding we are encouraged not simply to focus on land—we shift focus away from the sea. This shift away from the sea interferes with a pervasive narrative of the foundational and perhaps intrinsic nature of Portuguese colonial empire as being a sea- rather than a land-oriented colonial venture. Sea-centrism is a long-standing feature of a Portuguese national mythology. Any attempt to conceive of Lusophone colonial land legacies, therefore, must first confront a long historiographical tradition and a powerful nationalist mythology concerning Portuguese imperialism as ultimately a maritime colonial venture that is essentially defined by a drive to cross and dominate oceans and water, rather than land and soil.

Violent and intrusive settler practices of grabbing the land are hardly absent from Portuguese colonization. Recent historical scholarship on colonial Angola and Mozambique—including work represented in this volume—makes abundantly clear that a settler dynamic focused on land appropriation, village reordering, and territorial engineering and planning was central in particular to the late colonial and capitalist projects of the colonial state and its chartered companies in several colonies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[8] The complex history of the Portuguese imperial formation cannot be subsumed under the concept of a white settler colonialism. Nevertheless, rarely is the very *identity* of Portugal's colonial empire considered from land-centred perspectives. In effect, although it seems undisputed that land control and settler violence were part of Portugal's *late* imperial venture, there is still some difficulty in placing land issues at the heart of Portugal's *early* modern empire, that is, the time of the so-called Age of Discoveries. This is not to say that historians disregard this dimension altogether. In recent years, as noted below, and as several essays in this volume demonstrate, new scholarship highlights the significance of territorial dynamics of conquest in early modern Portuguese imperialism in Asia and Africa. Yet, that difficulty exists because, I believe, the idea of the Portuguese colonial empire has merged with notions of Portuguese national identity that have long been dependent on historical imageries of an early modern seafaring past.

The wider dissemination and commemoration of this sea-centric national narrative took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It became a mythology of empire ingrained in the territorial politics of late Portuguese overseas expansionism. After Brazil became independent in 1822, sea-centric narratives of the imperial past accompanied the rise of euphoric and bellicose imperial nationalism during Portugal's nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy; it continued under the short-lived First Republic (1910–26) and, especially, under the hyper-imperial nationalism of the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo (1926/1933–74). Thus the sea-centric narrative of Portugal's national-imperial

past gained momentum when the imperial state was investing in hard-line and settler-type forms of conquest, knowledge, governance, and possession of land, so well-documented and analyzed by chapters in this volume. The myth of oceans and discoveries continued alongside actions of land grabbing. In fact, the two processes—growing mythologization of maritime glories, and growing interest in effective occupation of land—were historically coincidental and can be seen as interdependent. Nineteenth-century sea-centric nationalist myths of self-aggrandisement offered inspiration and symbolic legitimacy to new brutal ways of extending colonial power to inland zones—often the type of lands that, I hypothesize below, can be classified as *sertão*. The aquatic myth of Portugal's golden imperial age, in short, became a model image for a rising Portuguese terrestrial colonialism anxious to replicate on land the imagined glories of an ancient seafaring past. This mythic sea-centrism, however, did not disappear with the end of empire; it became an active legacy, a mutant, and it is constantly relived and re-enacted by the current Portuguese democratic regime. The revived post-imperial nationalism of Portugal's democratic regime after 1974 is no less inclined to commemorate the glories of the early modern seafarers. In effect, in Portugal, decolonization and the rise and consolidation of democracy did little to change sea-centric colonial imaginaries in the public space, as attested by the overload of state-authorized discourses, monuments, and events that continue to reiterate ad nauseam the mythic oceanic identity of Portugal. From the commemorations of Vasco da Gama in 1898 to the Lisbon world exhibition of 1998 (Expo '98), for instance, the "oceans" remain the core mythic element of the commemorative discourse about Portugal's Age of Discovery.[9] Informed public debate and rigorous scholarly analysis and criticism of the oceanic myth of discovery have grown in Portugal in recent years, yet these continue to be opposed by viciously defensive positions.[10]

Historical narratives obsessed with a maritime past thus come with several political effects—including the neglect of inconvenient historical truths and the production of historical silences. "Facts are not created equal," Haitian historian Michel Rolph-Trouillot wrote: "the production of traces is also the production of silences."[11] Occultation and ignorance can be a political effect of an unequal focus on certain facts to the detriment of others—say, on "maritime" versus "terrestrial" facts. In this light, even if unintentionally, histories of the Portuguese Empire that invest repeatedly in the reproduction of traces about the "facts" of oceanic expansion and the achievements of "discovery" might contribute to sideline or even to conceal certain historical realities. They contribute, to begin, as some critics recently observed, to a biased romantic and heroic image of the seas.[12] Self-celebratory sea-centrism hides the fact that the seas were the place for the

performance of the horrors of Portuguese imperialism tragically documented by the massive transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans until the 1800s—and, later on, by flows of impoverished Portuguese labour migrants. The so-called sea glories of Portuguese expansion therefore read as sea horrors instead. In addition, I argue, this sea-centric memory excess has resulted in a relative occultation of Portuguese forms of land colonialism. Portuguese nationalism is obsessed with the image of a glorious past maritime empire. This helps to downplay, or even obscure, the forms of inequality and domination of people that were associated with both sea and land violence in Portugal's overseas endeavours since the early modern era. It is thus one of the merits of this volume, in contrast, to make these hidden facts unreservedly visible.

Historicizing an Amphibian Empire

The sea-centric mythology of Portugal and its colonial empire, a true "hagiography of the seas,"[13] is not limited to political discourse and public memory. It resonates in historiography. This is obviously the case among a Portuguese historiography with nationalist overtones proliferating since the late nineteenth century, but this resonance is not limited to nationalist literature. In fact, there is an abundant body of historical work on the so-called Portuguese "expansion" that follows the sea-centric track. To be fair, much of this more recent work is neither hagiographic nor nationalistic; it is critical of Portuguese self-glorifying narratives and of the dark dimensions of maritime voyaging and human mobility. Yet, even historiography critical of nationalist imperial mythology—from Charles R. Boxer to A. J. R. Russell-Wood,[14] to name just two prominent historians of this critical tradition—is structured around the notion of *the* "maritime" or "seaborne" character of Portugal's empire from the 1400s to about 1822.[15] This is an empire defined by oceanic, not terrestrial, identity; an empire that gained traction over waves and water rather than woods and dust. This kind of historiographical sea-centrism prospers through a selective focus on the early modern period as dominantly trade-based and maritime, as if land-bound events and orientations were only to become a meaningful trait of later Portuguese imperial expansionism in the nineteenth century. The ascription of Portuguese imperialism to the "maritime trade" pigeonhole, turned into unquestioned academic common sense, risks analytical reductionism. Historian Patricia Seed provides an example of such tendency to category oversimplification when she states, "The principal object of overseas possession for the Portuguese was not land, as it was for the English, or people, as it was for the Spanish, but trade and commerce."[16]

The concept that Portugal's empire was created without a primary focus on controlling and occupying large swaths of land, as if in essence interested in

maritime trade and commercial transactions and virtually uninterested in exerting domination over territories and peoples, needs revision. In Brazil, most obviously, Portuguese expansionism was overtly territorial from the outset.[17] Yet to represent even the early modern empire in Asia as purely maritime and commercial, in its essence ocean-centred and "non-territorial," in opposition to land-bound and conquest-oriented overseas empires (such as the Spanish in the Americas), can be misleading.[18] The Portuguese expansionism in South Asia and the drive to conquer and take territory, to conquer lands and take souls, were often inextricable processes.[19] In his masterly account of the Portuguese Empire in Asia, historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam already questioned that concept.[20] Between 1580 and 1640, before and especially after the union of Portuguese and Spanish Crowns, Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean revealed both "growing neglect of the maritime vocation" and "growing interest in the land and territorial adventurism" across a wide set of locations in Asia and East Africa.[21] Sea and land became concomitant imperial concerns by the late 1500s, as interest in conquering and grabbing Indigenous soil intensified. British historian A. J. R. Russell-Wood, whose works influentially shaped the concept of Portugal's seaborne imperial identity, acknowledged late in life that he had come to learn "the importance of rejecting a view of the Portuguese Empire exclusively from a maritime angle."[22] In an interview shortly before his death in 2019, the late Portuguese historian António Manuel Hespanha again called attention to this point with his usual wit: "We all know of Portuguese historiography's attraction for the '*gesta marítima*' [maritime deeds]. The series of chronicles about the achievements on sea is vaster than those about the history of the Portuguese who set feet on land."[23]

This volume's analytical focus on colonial land relations therefore contributes to destabilizing widely diffused images of the exclusively oceanic identity of the Portuguese Empire as an essentially seaborne undertaking. Recent historiography and several chapters in this volume make clear that there were many concerns revolving around land occupation, conquest, property rights, land access, and land-based exploitation in the early centuries of Portuguese expansionism across a wide range of locations.[24] Land, empire, and power were connected from the outset. Sailors and navigators were always looking forward to sighting land—and to claim and possess it. They performed ceremonies of possession and planted *padrões* to take ownership of land in the name of the king of Portugal. They conquered lands and subdued Indigenous rulers; they negotiated treaties with local landlords to establish outposts and gain rights of taxation, resource extraction, and/or property over land and people, even if they did so through the mediation of Indigenous groups. The right to conquest and the principle of

territorial occupation also were inherent to early notions of overseas imperial legitimacy; it was not exclusive to later forms of imperialist occupation. The legal grounds of the Portuguese rulers' early claims to legitimacy of the conquest and possession of overseas lands were certainly complex and varied.[25] It seems early modern Portuguese imperialists nonetheless followed Roman legal notions of sovereignty, Vicente Serrão observes, according to which "the fundamental title of acquisition of property, which could be applied to lands as well as territories, rested on the principle of occupation (*occupatio*)," and they used this principle "to justify territorial occupation, land ownership and sovereignty rights in overseas territories."[26] Indeed, the desire to conquer land, as well as the self-entitlement to appropriate and dispossess Indigenous soil, was rarely absent in many early colonizing projects. A variety of legal forms also came into being overseas with a view to regulate the outsiders' eagerness to take the land. The *prazos* system, for example, instituted first in the Northern Province in India and then in Mozambique in the seventeenth century, and the Portuguese medieval laws of *sesmarias* transplanted to Brazil, here discussed by José Adalima, Matthias Röhrig Assunção, and Carmen Alveal, are emblematic forms of this early colonial intrusiveness in Indigenous land property and rights, the marks of which remain effective today. However, the intrusions of colonial forms of land governance did not operate simply by imposition of external norms, nor did they necessarily imply the erasure of pre-existing local systems. Their emergence, and their mutations, often involved complex modes of interaction, coexistence, adaptation to, and/or incorporation of local forms of land governance—a process eventually exemplified by the Portuguese state's lasting engagement with the Indian *gaunkari* system of land management (also known as "village communities") in Goa since the early modern period.[27]

We may thus speak of an ocean- or sea-centric bias that needs historiographical correction; one that requires balance, for example, through writing land-centred narratives such as those offered in this volume. This is not to say maritime accounts should now simply be discarded and replaced by another, say, land-centric, narrative of Portugal's imperial formation. Instead, it is to the complex coexistence of both aquatic and terrestrial orientations that we need to attend and that we need to examine further. Re-narrating Portuguese imperial history beyond sea-centric imaginaries, in other words, should start with the concept of the structurally amphibian condition of the colonial empire in the long term. There were no doubt differences and mutations between early and late imperial formations, as there were between trade- and settler-oriented colonial ventures. Yet, it is difficult to sustain a simplistic dualistic contrast between an early modern empire of seafarers and a late-modern empire of land-grabbers. The very application

of the taxonomy of empires around a strict land/sea dichotomy in fact obscures the manifold ways through which the Portuguese overseas empire simultaneously sought to extract power from and take advantage of both sea and land in different regions. It is thus time to think through the amphibious condition of the Portuguese colonial empire and to examine the transits between aquatic and terrestrial ambient in which colonial power dwelled. It is time to address, finally, how the constancy of focus on land within the amphibious empire changed while also enduring, as this volume proposes, for several centuries.

How Colonizers Think About Land

The chapters in this volume clearly suggest it is worth considering the varied meanings land rights, ownership, and occupation, as well as the notion of "land" itself, could take in a wide range of colonial and post-colonial discourses and practices, over time and in different spaces. Attention to these shifting meanings may also help to grasp the significance of "land" concepts in colonial cosmovisions. Were colonizing practices accompanied by distinctive conceptions of land? What specific or distinctive meanings, if any, did the term "land" acquire within the activities and world views of Portuguese imperialism? How were certain notions of "land" created, shaped, configured as part of imperial and colonial praxis and cosmologies? A satisfactory response to these questions is certainly beyond the scope of this afterword. Yet, I think the pursuit of these answers should consider the complex meanings of the term "land" in the Portuguese language, seen in connection to the history of Portugal's amphibian overseas empire.

The English term "land" is ordinarily translated to Portuguese as *terra*. This literal translation, however, does not cover an important conceptual opposition entailed in colonial conceptions of land from a Portuguese perspective. The Portuguese *terra* alone, I argue, does not fully capture the colonial conceptions of land. Land as colonial concept was an internally complex notion inherent to which were conceptual dualities such as coast versus interior, cultivated versus uncultivated, productive versus unproductive, and wild versus domesticated, for example. In this regard, I think it is especially interesting to historicize and to attend to the differences and changes in the meanings ascribed to the complementary Portuguese terms *terra* and *sertão*.

In Portuguese colonizing visions "land" is at least a double space, a conceptual pair. It encompasses the idea of coastal, cultivated, productive, civilized, and domesticated lands, and the contrasting notion of interior, unproductive, uncultivated, and wild and uncivilized bush hinterlands. "Land" as Portuguese colonial cosmovision should thus perhaps be translated as an ensemble of complementary conceptual opposites, central to which were (importantly though not

exclusively) the terms *terra* and *sertão*. My hypothesis is that these connected yet contrasting terms became a significant component of Portuguese colonial imaginaries of lands over the long duration.[28] Of course, this hypothesis must be addressed with caution. This duality of terms certainly does not convey a more complex plethora of Indigenous concepts; it also does not simply exhaust colonial vocabularies, and this volume offers abundant examples of a diversity of Portuguese colonial terms and approaches to land (*prazos*, *sesmarias*, *aldeias*, and so forth). Yet, I believe these two terms encapsulate a conceptual contrast of wider significance in colonial land relations; together, they point to a structural, though historically shifting, figure within Portuguese colonial cosmovisions of land that need to be taken into consideration. A brief, necessarily exploratory inspection of how these two terms appear in two historically representative Portuguese-language dictionaries—those compiled by Raphael Bluteau[29] and Cândido de Figueiredo[30]—might help illuminate this point.

Terra, the Coast Opposite the Sea

Father Raphael Bluteau's referential Portuguese dictionary of 1789 begins to address the polysemic term *terra* as the Portuguese name for our planet (Earth) and the term for a generator of plant life ("the heaviest of elements that ordinarily creates vegetables").[31] Bluteau alludes only in passing to an economic dimension, an idea of land as productive factor. Yet, another, perhaps more revealing trace of an earlier colonial relation to land, I believe, is to be found in Bluteau's definition of *terra* as "the coast opposite the sea" ("a costa opondo-se ao mar") as used in the phrase "Quem vai embarcado avista a terra, toma a terra" (The one who is onboard a ship sees the land, takes the land). *Terra* is here construed as the object of gaze and desire of someone who comes from the sea.[32] It stands for that portion of land that existed in relation to the interdependent experiences of navigating the sea *and* possessing the land—*see the land*, *take the land*. Portuguese rule in many areas was basically confined to the seaside and coast until the nineteenth century—even if constant connections existed with the world of the hinterland. This structure of colonial occupation could lead to seeing control over coastal lands more like a conceptual extension of control over the seas. Thus conceived, Bluteau's notion of *terra*—a contact zone with water as much as point of entry into inner lands—perhaps expressed an early colonial desire to extend the domination of seas to the domination of lands. By the early twentieth century, however, *terra* loses its connotation with seafaring and acquires a more strictly *extractive* meaning as the "soil that produces." The maritime notion of *terra* as land that is touched by the sea seems to fade in favour of a pronounced connotation of this term with a strict physical, agricultural, and economic definition. Thus

Cândido de Figueiredo in 1913 simply defined *terra* as the "soil, on which one walks. The soft part of the soil, that *produces the* vegetables."[33] A colonial extractive and settler-oriented notion of *terra*—a solid part of soil to be walked upon; an object of nature to be exploited as a productive factor—apparently supersedes, or somehow juxtaposes with, the earlier idea of *terra* as land sighted and possessed by seafarers.

This difference in meaning of course begs the question of whether this shift in the meaning of *terra*/land reflects changes in the imperial projects, or mutations within the broader Portuguese colonial cosmovisions of land. In any case, differences notwithstanding, it is significant that both dictionaries suggest the Portuguese term *terra* alone does not fully cover the range of meanings that the idea of "land" could take in Portuguese colonial activity overseas. In reality, a reading of both Bluteau and Figueiredo suggest that in order to convey the *other* part of land beyond the coast—land that is remote, wild, barely populated by humans, uncultivated, uncontrolled, unproductive—a companion term at least is required: the noun *sertão*.

Sertão, the Backlands

The use of the Portuguese term *sertão* is not exclusive to overseas lands. It could sometimes refer to certain rural areas perceived to be wild or ungoverned in Portugal itself. Thus, compared to African, Asian, and American interior lands, certain Portuguese forested areas and interior landscapes could be caught up in colonizing cosmovisions of land as *sertão* that demanded cultivation, control, civilization. Nevertheless, it seems clear the term gained stronger and wider currency in the context of the colonization of overseas possessions from an early date; it eventually became widespread across Portugal's overseas colonies, most noticeably in Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique. There, it became the common term to refer to the alterity of inner spaces opposite to the coastal areas where colonial settlements were first established. Bluteau's definition makes clear the term *terra* did not mean *all* land. It conveyed only a certain part of land—the seafront, the coast. In fact this eighteenth-century notion of *terra* as primarily the seacoast was incomplete without the complementary and contrasting concept of *sertão*. *Sertão*, Bluteau asserted, is "the interior, the heart of lands, it is opposed to the maritime, and to the coast. . . . *Sertão* is taken by bush [*mato*] far from the coast."[34] The term expressed the alterity of inner lands as regards the coast (*terra*, properly called) and apparently this meaning was preserved more or less intact in subsequent centuries. In fact, in the same vein of Bluteau, Figueiredo in 1913 defined *sertão* as an "uncultured place, distant from settlements [*povoações*] or from cultivated lands. Forest in the interior of a continent or far from the coast."[35]

Hence *sertão* conveyed the idea of an ultimate colonial *other* space, the kind of heterotopian spaces (such as deserts, mountains, or forests) associated with perceived interiority, wilderness, and remoteness, the idea of which both repelled and attracted colonizers.[36]

The significance of *sertão* as a Portuguese-language colonial category applied to *other* land spaces, a driving force to possess, occupy, cultivate, civilize, did not pass without notice to perceptive observers such as French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In 1955, Lévi-Strauss referred to the local meaning and importance of this term. In a passage of his *Tristes Tropiques*—the famous memoir of his time in Brazil in the 1930s (Portugal's former colony and an independent country since 1822)—he distinguished the meanings of *mato* and *sertão* while admitting it was insufficient to translate the Portuguese term *sertão* as just *brousse* (a French term meaning "bush") because, he added,

> the word has a slightly different connotation. Mato relates objectively to the bush as an element in the landscape which contrasts with the forest. Sertão, on the other hand, has a subjective significance: landscape, in this case, is considered in relation to human beings, and sertão means "the bush," as opposed to land that is inhabited and cultivated—a region, that is to say, where man has not yet contrived to set up his home. French Colonial slang has an equivalent in the word "bled."[37]

Lévi-Strauss sees *sertão* as the Portuguese term for the type of landscape that stands in a specific "relation to human beings"—or one could say instead in a specific *colonial* relation. In this passage, I believe Lévi-Strauss captures—perhaps inadvertently; he makes no further reference to the local history of the term—the distinctive specificity of the notion of *sertão* in Luso-Brazilian praxis as a colonial mode of relating to Indigenous lands as wild and uncultured entities to be possessed, conquered, occupied, cultivated, civilized by settlers. Lévi-Strauss's description is evocative of the relationship that first the Portuguese settlements, and, after 1822, the Brazilian coastal states, maintained with the otherness of the vast interior backlands of Brazil. These were settler-colonial imaginaries of Brazil as a nation created out of heroic movements of frontier occupation and conquest of the *sertão* epitomized, for instance, in Euclides da Cunha's epic novel *Os Sertões* of 1902. In the Luso-Brazilian colonizer's eyes, Lévi-Strauss suggested, *sertão* were empty and wild lands requiring actions of conquest, settlement, and cultivation by colonial men. This perception entitled settlers to selfishly (dis)possess, occupy, and extract Indigenous land property and resources, by violence if

needed. The term *sertão* encompasses a colonial mode of conceiving of, and relating to, land that is by no means exceptional to Portuguese-speaking contexts. The heterotopia of *sertão* is suited to wider comparisons; it features in colonial activities elsewhere. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss notes, *sertão* went by different names in different colonial imaginaries and languages. Hence the French anthropologist ends with a quick note of comparison, proposing a French translation of the Portuguese term *sertão*: the "French colonial slang" word *bled*. The French word *bled*—a derivation from the Arab *balad* (for country, settlement)—originated in the colonization of North Africa, and it was the term used there by French settlers to designate "the interior of lands, the countryside."[38]

Lévi-Strauss's insight also might be extended to Anglophone contexts. A brief reflection about English translations of the term *sertão*—which includes the terms "bush," "backlands," as well as "hinterland" or "outback"—is suggestive of comparable colonial connotations. "Outback," for example, common in Australian settler usage since the 1800s to refer to the "backcountry" and interior regions, pairs well with the land concept of *sertão*, similarly conveying colonial ideals of adventure and possession of wild nature and interior spaces. Moreover, this galaxy of land concepts, colonial in essence, seems to be a perfect companion to that kind of naturalist thought that, in anthropologist Phillippe Descola's views, conceives of "nature" as a purely inanimate ontological domain and as such suitable to colonizing acts of settlement, cultivation, and land extractivism.[39] Of course, those spaces classified as *sertão*, outback, or *bled* in reality did not simply fit the naturalist image of wild and unpeopled nature. Dense forests, arid deserts, or steep mountains in Africa, Brazil, or Australia were and are deeply connected to the long-standing Indigenous human communities who have inhabited and animated these spaces in complex cultural ways. These are colonial land concepts that conveniently erase this obvious fact; they set the stage for predatory activities.

Comparisons Across Time

Concepts of land, just like empire itself, persisted, but also mutated. A valuable and also challenging proposal of this volume is the focus on these mutations in the *longue durée* of the Portuguese Empire as well as *after* the formal end of the empire. They need to be historicised also in relation to the present. This framework involves exploring comparisons and crossings in *space*, a consideration of colonial land legacies in different places that were former colonies of Portugal. But also, I think more importantly and innovatively, it calls for a comparison in *time*. This approach urges us to think beyond rather static historiographical periodizations and consider not only continuity and change but also the cyclical

and recursive nature of themes across time and space. This focus on temporal comparisons reminds us that one must not overemphasize the notion of a temporal dichotomy between past and present, as if at some point in time forms of land relations and concepts simply gave way to another. Problematizing the notion of a definite break between past and present land relations and conceptions is precisely the aim of the editors of this volume. The complex forms of land relations that accompanied the Portuguese amphibian imperial formation are also not something that magically disappeared with the end of formal colonial rule. They have an active life in the present. Nor do these forms remain constant. They change. They endure.

Changing meanings and relations to land, and the need to understand them comparatively through time and space, draw our attention to the plurality and durability of colonial forms of relating to land that existed and continue to exist throughout the so-called Lusophone world. It is clear from the chapters presented in this volume that colonial governmentality of land appears under different figures and forms, both in the colonial era and after the end of empire. We are not simply talking about a white settler takeover of Indigenous lands, but a complex layering of forms of land possession and dispossession; where the authority and power to apportion, allocate, alienate, or reclaim and occupy land becomes entangled and enmeshed in relations between colonizers and colonized. The chapters in this volume show well this diversity of forms across time and space. For example, we find that colonial state legal or normative orders sought to regulate ownership, access, and use of land by enforcing norms and practices of external origin. We also find some mutual borrowing: colonizers tentatively imitating local uses, invoking "customary" authority or drawing on "customary" claims to benefit from the land—but also vice versa, as when customary indigenous authorities reuse or repurpose colonial legacies to their own ends.[40] We find the state or the Crown distributing its own sovereignty to others through land concessions.[41] We have squatters and peasantry forming from descendants of slaves whose histories are entwined with the land through layers of colonial engagement.[42] Land dispossession was clearly a strategy of an extractive settler colonialism, but it did not occur without resistance from local populations in the form of displacement,[43] squatting, negotiation, and conflict.[44] Thus we see also Indigenous peoples resisting, opposing, and giving shape to colonial constructs and experiences relating to land. In sum, a plurality of actors intervenes in the making and unmaking of colonial land relations over time. The result is an image of the "colonial" that is not limited to the European who stakes a claim to land—it is an image composed of a more complex ensemble of actors. This means attention should be paid to the manifold ways through which colonial

land legacies mutate not simply as the outcome of the actions and plans of the European colonizer—but also, and importantly, as the result of being opposed and/or appropriated and re-signified by a variety of Indigenous actors.

The problem of these interrelations that shape the mutant colonial order of land needs finally to attend to the question of durability. There is, in many cases, a strong sense of institutional continuities between colonial and post-colonial land relations. Although decolonization and independence were followed by a rhetoric of discontinuity and change, ultimately they did not represent a profound transformation or end of colonial land relations, as several of the chapters in this volume attest. For example, in the case of Mozambique, FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, or Liberation Front of Mozambique) identified agriculture as the base of its economic policy. Land was nationalized and converted into state farms and companies.[45] Yet, at the same time this approach added new layers of state control to the pre-existing colonial chartered companies, which maintained most of their areas of intervention and privileges untouched. In addition, national independent states have continued modes of land governance that are colonial in origin—think of "concessions," "plantations," even the recognition of limited "customary" rights. Similarly, Indigenous peoples and systems have also incorporated traits and mechanisms that one may see as "colonial" in origin as they seek recognition from or benefits in formal land administrative systems, in some cases engaging with them creatively and giving them new meaning on their own terms.[46]

Conclusion

The passage of the long-lasting Portuguese colonial empire left numerous durable marks. But the grand narrative of an early empire, driven by sailors and caravels, no longer holds. The sea-centred mythology of empire is a strong and active "colonial legacy" in its own terms, a colonial mutant itself, which must be countered and balanced by land-centred accounts such as the ones presented in this volume. Yet a straightforward opposition between an early modern seaborne and a late modern land-bound Portuguese overseas imperialism is a misleading analytic, because it obscures the conjunction between the aquatic and terrestrial voracity of Portuguese colonial expansionism. The debate over the Portuguese Empire as "seaborne versus landbound" should thus give way to a heuristic focused on historicizing the amphibious dynamic of Portuguese imperial formations.

Significant colonial durability, this volume reveals, is perceptible in how different colonial-era and post-colonial governments and companies regulate land relations; it is perceptible also in how people actually live with and relate to these former colonial land relations as active legacies, or as I propose to call them, as

colonial mutants. Colonial forms of land relations take resilient manifestations in the present order and lives of many African, Asian, and Latin American countries that once were under Portuguese colonial rule. The theme of "legacies" central to this volume evokes this resilience, exploring colonial land relations as temporal crossings and enduring performances. I began this afterword by suggesting this resilience might be approached as a sequence of mutations. The hypothesis is that of the strong mutant character of many of the plural and durable colonial forms of relating to land, of governing land, and of accessing or using land. Taken together, then, the essays in this volume show that historicizing Lusophone land relations based on solid archival and ethnographic research is critical for re-narrating the Portuguese colonial empire beyond sea-centric mythologies, and recovering its amphibious complexities. Furthermore, finally, this volume is an important demonstration that histories of colonialism are deeply entangled with contemporary lives in multiple places. The question of the legacies of colonialism cannot reduce to a matter of "judgmental assessments," and as such be excluded from historical scholarship.[47] This volume bears proof to the contrary: non-judgmental and rigorous historical analysis of colonial legacies is possible—indeed it is necessary. Histories of empire and colonialism often are also histories of the present. More than shedding light on a presumably distant imperialist past, therefore, the fine historical and anthropological essays collected herein make clear that the project of historicizing the mutant lives of colonialism is vital for shedding light on contemporary realities.

NOTES TO AFTERWORD

I am grateful to Susanna Barnes and Laura Yoder for their generous editorial work and for encouraging me to develop my closing remarks to the conference Lusophone Land Legacies held in 2021 for the present essay. I thank the editors Susanna Barnes and Laura Yoder, Bárbara Direito, and the anonymous reviewers for valuable suggestions and critiques that helped to improve this essay. I have translated into English all passages originally in Portuguese. A project grant from FCT, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, *Indigenous Colonial Archives: Micro-Histories and Comparisons* (PTDC/HAR- HIS/28577/2017), supported my research for this work.

1 The term "Lusophone," used to convey juxtaposition to the former imperial formation, tends to leave out a variety of diasporas contained within and extending beyond the imperial geography. See Cristiana Bastos, "Intersections of Empire, Post-Empire, and Diaspora: De-Imperializing Lusophone Studies," *Journal of Lusophone Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 27–54; Pamila Gupta, *Portuguese Decolonization in the Indian Ocean World: History and Ethnography* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

2 There is already a significant critical literature on the traces of colonial imageries in the notions *lusofonia* and related "Luso-" constructs, including the colonial ideology of *Luso-tropicalismo*. See, for example, Cláudia Castelo, *O modo português de estar no mundo: O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933–1961)* (Afrontamento, 1998); Michel Cahen, "Lusitanidade e lusofonia: Considerações conceituais sobre realidades sociais e políticas," *Plural Pluriel: Revue des cultures de langue portugaise* 7 (2010): 3–17; Victor Barros, "A lusofonia como retrato de família numa casa comum," *Revista Angolana de Sociologia* 7 (2011): 83–106.

3 See also Warwick Anderson, Ricardo Roque, and Ricardo Ventura Santos, eds., *Luso-tropicalism and Its Discontents: The Making and Unmaking of Racial Exceptionalism* (Berghahn Books, 2019).

4 Ann Stoler, *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Duke University Press, 2013), 353.

5 Zoltán Biedermann, *(Dis)Connected empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

6 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 288.

7 See Ângela Barreto Xavier and Nuno Senos, *1498* (Tinta-da-China, 2019), 20–54.

8 See Cláudia Castelo, *Passagens para África: O Povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com Naturais da Metrópole (1920–1974)* (Afrontamento, 2007); Tiago Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (MIT Press, 2016), chap. 6; Samuël Coghe, "Reordering Colonial Society: Model Villages and Social Planning of Rural Angola, 1920–45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 1 (2016): 16–44; Bárbara Direito, *Terra e colonialismo em Moçambique: A região de Manica e Sofala sob a Companhia de Moçambique, 1892–1942* (Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2020).

9 Elisa Lopes da Silva and José Miguel Ferreira, eds., "History of the Commemorations of the 'Portuguese Discoveries,'" special issue, *Práticas da História*, no. 8 (2019).

10 For a critical overview, see Pedro Cardim, "Reassessing the Portuguese Imperial Past: Scholarly Perspective and Civic Engagement," *Journal of Lusophone Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 176–205.

11 Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 29.

12 See Cristiana Bastos, "Portuguese in the Cane: The Racialization of Labour in Hawaiian Plantations," in *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges: Ambiguous Inclusions: Inside Out, Inside In*, ed. Sofia Aboim, Paulo Granjo, and Alice Ramos (Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2018), 65–96, and the papers collected in André Nóvoa, "Introduction: the Sword and the Shovel," *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 33 (2020): 1–12.

13 Nóvoa, "Introduction," 2.

14 Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (Hutchinson and Co., 1969); A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and America 1415–1808* (Carcanet, 1992).

15 But for updated and sophisticated comparative reassessments of the notion of Portuguese seaborne empire, see Gabriel Paquette, *The European Seaborne Empires: From the Thirty Years' War to the Age of Revolutions* (Yale University Press, 2019); Cátia Antunes, "The Portuguese Maritime Empire: Global Nodes and Transnational Networks," in *Empires of the Sea: Maritime Power Networks in World History*, ed. Rold Strootman, Floris van den Eijnde, and Roy van Wijk (Brill, 2019), 294–311. On maritime historiography of empire and its ideological limits, compare also Jaime Rodrigues, "Vicente d'Almeida Eça e a historiografia marítima em 1898," *Práticas da História* 8 (2019): 139–61, and Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Tendências na historiografia da expansão portuguesa: Reflexões sobre os destinos da história social," *Penélope* 22 (2000): 141–79.

16 Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 154.

17 For example, Márcia Motta, José Vicente Serrão, Marina Machado, eds., *Em terras lusas: Conflitos e fronteiras no Império Português* (Editora Horizonte, 2013).

18 Building on this dichotomy, for instance, historian Luís F. R. Thomaz influentially defended the early Portuguese expansion in Asia, claiming that it "aspired more to controlling the seas than to the domination of land"; that it was in essence a sea-centred "network" where power in and over land was, at best, of secondary value. Luís F. R. Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor* (Difel, 1994), 201, 215–16.

19 A point demonstrated most notably by the works of Zoltán Biedermann (for Sri Lanka) and Ângela Barreto Xavier (for Goa). Ângela Barreto Xavier, *A invenção de Goa: Poder imperial e conversões culturais nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2008); Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires*.

20 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (Longman, 1993), 107-143.

21 Subrahmanyam 122, 137.

22 A. J. R. Russell-Wood, quoted in Mafalda Soares da Cunha, "The Historiographical Reception of A. J. R. Russell-Wood's *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and America, 1415–1808*," *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 11, no. 1 (2013): 104.

23 António Manuel Hespanha and André Nóvoa, "Uma entrevista com António Hespanha," *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 33 (2020): 199. Hespanha added this historiographical emphasis was "very selective." For while it overemphasized the sea voyages, it left out important social history dimensions concerning the ways African slaves or Portuguese subaltern groups, ordinary sailors, fishermen, and other groups lived through the ocean experiences.

24 José Vicente Serrão, Bárbara Direito, Susana Münch Miranda, and Eugénia Rodrigues, eds., *Property Rights, Land and Territory in the European Overseas Empires* (CEHC-IUL, 2014); José Vicente Serrão, M. S. Motta, Susana Munch Miranda, dirs., *e-Dicionário da terra e do território no Império Português* (CEHC-IUL, 2013).

25 Early Portuguese claims to "conquest" of Asia and Africa, for example, seem to have entailed a complex juridical distinction between *jus in re* and *jus ad rem*, between a merely potential and an actually realized right to land acquisition. See Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor*, 218.

26 José Vicente Serrão, "Introduction: Property, Land and Territory in the Making of Overseas Empires," in Serrão et al., *Property Rights*, 8–9; cf. Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 391. The Roman notion of *nullius* could also be used to claim legitimate control of overseas lands "discovered" or conquered by force of arms. Eduardo dos Santos, *Regimes de terras no ex-ultramar: Evolução da política legislativa até 1945* (Instituto de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, 2004), 16. But see also, on the diversity of Portuguese ways of claiming legitimate land acquisition overseas, Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor*, 224–43.

27 See, for instance, Nagendra Rao, "The State, Village Communities and the Brahmanas in Goa (1000–1600 ce)," *Indian Historical Review* 49, no. 1 (2022): 51–68; Rochelle Pinto, "The *Foral* in the History of the Comunidades of Goa," *Journal of World History* 29, no. 2 (2018): 185–212.

28 The contrast revealed in the *terra/sertão* pair is perhaps noticeable under different linguistic guises and, in this regard, it is also worth considering the expression *terra/s firme/s* (dry or steady land/s) and its complementary opposites. In early modern Goa, for instance, this term referred to the coastal regions that stood in relation to the so-called *outra banda* (the other side), a term that conveyed the *terra firme*'s surrounding lands that were untouched by ocean waters. Similarly, in northern Mozambique, *terra firme* conveyed the wide coastal strip of land as opposed to its hinterland, which went by the name of *Macuana*. See José Miguel Ferreira, "As Novas Conquistas: Florestas, agricultura e colonialismo em Goa (c. 1763–1912)," (PhD diss., University of Lisbon), 22–4; Maria Bastião, "Entre a ilha e a terra: Processos de construção do continente fronteiro à Ilha de Moçambique (1763–c. 1802)," (MA thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2013).

29 Rafael Bluteau, *Diccionario da lingua portugueza composto pelo padre D. Rafael Bluteau, e accrescentado por Antonio de Moraes Silva*, 2 vols. (Officina de Simão Thaddeo Ferreira, 1789).

30 Cândido de Figueiredo, *Novo dicionário da língua portuguesa* (Lisbon: A. M. Teixeira, 1913).

31 Bluteau, *Diccionario*, 454.

32 It is worth noting the famous early modern Portuguese stone pillars (*padrões*) were often planted on promontories and capes with the purpose of being seen from *sea* rather than from land. They were a sign aimed primarily at those sailing and approaching land/*terra* from the ocean.

33 Figueiredo, *Novo dicionário*, 1940.

34 Bluteau, *Diccionario*, 396. P: "o interior, o coração das terras, opõe-se ao marítimo, e costa . . . o *sertão* toma-se por mato longe da costa."

35 Figueiredo, *Novo dicionário*. P: "Lugar inculto, distante de povoações ou de terrenos cultivados. Floresta, no interior de um continente, ou longe da costa."

36 See Ricardo Roque, "Mountains and Black Races: Anthropology's Heterotopias in Colonial East Timor," *Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 263–82.

37 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Librairie Plon, 1955), 183. I cite the English translation: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (Criterion Books, 1961), 142.

38 I follow here Pierre Varrod, dir., *Le Nouveau Petit Robert: Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2001), 259. See also "Definitions de 'bled,'" *La langue francaise*, accessed 24 February 2022, https://www.lalanguefrancaise.com/dictionnaire/definition/bled#3.

39 Philippe Descola, *Par delà nature et culture* (Gallimard, 2005).

40 Jossias; Barnes; Alveal, all this volume.

41 Adalima; Direito, both this volume.

42 Rohrig, this volume.

43 deGrassi, this volume.

44 Kammen; Hagerdahl; Rohrig, all this volume.

45 Direito; Adalima, both this volume.

46 Jossias; Barnes, both this volume. See also Serrão, "Introduction," 10.

47 Serrão, "Introduction," 10.

About the Contributors

Dr. José Laimone Adalima earned his doctorate in anthropology from the University of Pretoria in South Africa. He is currently an assistant professor of anthropology at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. His research focuses on natural resources and livelihoods, land rights, land dynamics and economic transformation, and civil society and democracy.

Dr. Bernardo Almeida is an assistant professor at Leiden University College and the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society at the Leiden University Law School. He works as a socio-legal researcher and practitioner in land tenure, law, lawmaking, and development, and is currently researching the nexus between climate change response and land rights.

Dr. Carmen Alveal is an associate professor in the Department of History at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, and a researcher at CNPq. She received a PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 2007. Her research interests include the history of property rights, rural history, colonial Brazilian history, and the Portuguese Empire. She is also the director of LEHS, the Laboratory of Experimental Social History.

Dr. Matthias Röhrig Assunção is professor of history at the University of Essex, United Kingdom. His research deals with the history of slavery and post-emancipation society in Brazil, in particular in Maranhão, popular culture, capoeira and the martial arts of the Black Atlantic. He coordinates the Capoeira History website (www.capoeirahistory.com). You can learn more about his work at https://essex.academia.edu/MatthiasRöhrigAssunção.

Dr. Susanna Barnes received her doctorate in anthropology from Monash University. Her research interests include the anthropology of island Southeast Asia, customary governance and land tenure, intergenerational well-being and healing, colonial and post-colonial history, and international development. She is currently an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Aharon deGrassi is an interdisciplinary geographer focusing on the political economy of rural development in Africa. His research examines the agrarian geo-history of Angola, Amílcar Cabral's political ecology, and the colonial contexts of Weberian approaches in African studies. He obtained his PhD at UC Berkeley, held fellowships at Yale and Bayreuth Universities, works with international organizations, and is an assistant professor at College of the Desert.

Dr. Bárbara Direito holds a PhD from the University of Lisbon (2013) and since 2019 has been a research fellow at the Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia (School of Science and Technology, NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal). She is interested in the history of colonial Mozambique in the twentieth century, in particular in agrarian history, the history of medicine, and environmental history, on which she has published in national and international journals.

Dr. Laura Gerken is a political sociologist. She pursued her doctorate at the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy in cooperation with the University of Duisburg-Essen. Her research interests include social movements, global governance, and rural livelihoods.

Dr. Hans Hägerdal is a professor of history in the Department of Cultural Studies, Linnaeus University, Sweden. His research areas include colonial diplomacy in Southeast Asia, slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean world, and colonial-Indigenous interaction in eastern Indonesia, in particular the Timor islands and Maluku.

Dr. Elissio Jossias is an assistant professor of social anthropology at Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique) and a guest researcher at the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg (Sweden). His research interests include the historicity of land and transformative notions of property and belonging, the impacts of changing land governance systems, and land acquisitions (large-scale national and international investments in land) in northern Mozambique.

Dr. Douglas Kammen is an associate professor in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. He is the co-author of *A Tour of Duty: Changing Patterns of Military Politics in Indonesia in the 1990s* (Cornell Southeast Asia Program) and *Cina Timor: Hakka and Cantonese in the Making of East Timor* (Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies), the author of *Three Centuries of Conflict in East Timor* (Rutgers University Press) and *Independent Timor-Leste: Between Coercion and Consent* (Cambridge University Press), and has written numerous articles and book chapters.

Dr. Tania Murray Li is a professor of anthropology at the University of Toronto, Canada. Her field-defining research has been grounded in long-term, comparative analysis of the Indonesian uplands and beyond, spanning research on land and labour, Indigenous rights, development, governance, and environmental advocacy. Her research engages activists and policy-makers, and her recent work on plantations (*Plantation Life: Corporate Occupation in Indonesia's Oil Palm Zone*, with Pujo Semedi) examines the intersection of land governance, the politics of commodity production, and Indigenous livelihoods and well-being in historical and modern contexts.

Dr. Ricardo Roque is research professor in history at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, Portugal, where he is the current group leader of the Empires, Colonialism, and Postcolonial Societies research group and teaches in the history and anthropology doctoral programs. His current research includes projects on the history and ethnography of colonial collections and Indigenous archives in the Portuguese Empire.

Dr. Laura S. Meitzner Yoder is professor of environmental studies and John Stott Chair and director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program, Wheaton College, Illinois, USA. Her work centres on environmental histories and political ecology of Southeast Asia, especially the smallholder farmers and forest dwellers of Oé-Cusse, Timor-Leste, as they relate to state institutions on land and forest governance.

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From the intersection between land, imperial politics, legal discourses, and social practices spanning several centuries, an intricate, profoundly intriguing, and inspiring patchwork emerges which, in this form, has no equal in the existing literature. Colonial Land Legacies in the Portuguese-Speaking World *is likely to set the agenda for scholars of the Lusophone world and beyond for years to come.*

—Zoltán Biedermann, University College London

Colonial Land Legacies in the Portuguese-Speaking World presents a comparative exploration of the enduring impacts of Portuguese colonial land governance in Portugal and across five former Portuguese colonies: Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Flores, and Portuguese Timor. Through ethnographic, historical, and legal analyses, the book investigates how colonial land policies and interventions were not simply implemented and forgotten or supplanted but have shaped contemporary land access, governance, and socio-economic structures in profound ways.

Portuguese colonialism was shaped by shifting political and economic priorities. From trading routes to plantation economies and extractive industries, land became central to Portuguese colonial interests. *Colonial Land Legacies in the Portuguese-Speaking World* is a critical and comparative analysis of colonial land governance and its afterlives. It highlights how these legacies continue to shape contemporary struggles over land, making it essential to address them in the pursuit of more equitable land governance. Through its case studies, the book contributes to broader discussions on the relationships between land, power, and colonialism, offering insights into the ongoing challenges of land policy and practice in post-colonial contexts.

Susanna Barnes is a socio-cultural anthropologist at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada whose research focuses on customary land governance in Timor-Leste.

Laura S. Meitzner Yoder is a political ecologist at Wheaton College, Illinois, USA whose research explores the interaction of state and customary authorities over land, agricultural fields, and forests of Southeast Asia.

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