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Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas
by Tamar Herzog (review)

Hal Langfur

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introduces interdisciplinary protagonists, such as poet, fabric designer, and Communard activist Eugène Pottier, and she includes a marvelous (anti-Communard) description of shoemaker Napoléon Gaillard photographed in front of his finest work of art, a barricade.

Rachel Chrastil
Xavier University

Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas. By Tamar Herzog (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2015) 384 pp. \$35.00

This important study begins with an insight that might seem obvious had it not largely eluded generations of historians: The territorial formation of Spain and Portugal, on the one hand, and Spanish and Portuguese America, on the other, have connected histories. Throughout the early modern period, a diverse cast of Iberian characters on both sides of the Atlantic settled contested spaces and put them to varied use. Farmers, ranchers, nobles, clergy, settlers, soldiers, and Crown and local officials asserted claims to those spaces that left rivals either excluded, subordinated, or, less frequently, united in common interest. Rather than following a royal design, the resulting confrontations tended to be spontaneous, unplanned, and often violent. In the process, the New World's native peoples suffered more than others, but conflicts also pit Spaniards against Portuguese, settlers against missionaries, hamlet against hamlet, and nobles against peasants.

Gradually, modern borders in Iberia and South America emerged from these multifarious interactions over the *longue durée*, but not in the way that scholars conventionally propose. Boundaries were neither merely the product of intervention by consolidating states nor the product of local imperviousness to such intervention. Herzog stresses a more dynamic process, involving an “accumulation of actors, interests, activities, and justifications” focused on individual and communal efforts to use specific lands for farming, grazing, hunting, building, missionary work, and commerce. “Far from mechanical, artificial, or imposed from above or below, the border that resulted was a living organism” (248–249). Rather than resolving or superseding these multiple vying interests, early modern treaty making and border legislation are best understood as their imperfect reflection.

An authoritative melding of history and law undergirds Herzog's approach. Prodigious research in dozens of archives lends substance to her refrain that in this interdisciplinary realm, too, “things were more complicated than they appear” (267). The wide variety of sources consulted testifies to law's influence far beyond texts written by jurists, philosophers, and royal councilors. From settlers to soldiers, those who occupied the outer edges of Iberian territory demonstrated a remarkable familiarity with

the relevant principles of Roman and canon law, the basis of Spanish and Portuguese legal codes and territorial claims. Such actors may not have articulated these principles perfectly in writing, but their actions demonstrated surprisingly sophisticated understandings of judicial practice, justice, equity, possession, entitlement, and rights, which they presumed common to other Iberians and even to all humanity.

Herzog challenges expectations and teleologies by devoting the first half of the study to South America and the second half to the Iberian Peninsula. In South America, by Herzog's account, the consolidation of Spanish and Portuguese territory required the full three centuries of colonial rule. In Europe, the process took more than six centuries, from about 1300 to 1950, when the final border stones were set, thus both preceding and outlasting the American counterpart, though territorial contests continued to play themselves out in South America long after Spain and Portugal departed. Ending the first story around 1800 serves Herzog's focus on Iberian kingdoms and empires but simultaneously undercuts her argument that individuals and political communities, not states or nations, were what mattered most. Many of the actors that Herzog identifies as decisive in territorial confrontations continued to pursue their interests well into the nineteenth century as new nations and their borders took shape only gradually despite achieving formal independence in the 1820s. For native peoples, the story was far from over in 1800, given that great swathes of South America remained under the control of independent Indians. That said, the vastness of the book's scope justifies restricting coverage to the early modern period. Readers will be rewarded with a pioneering approach not only to Iberian but also to, more broadly, imperial and transatlantic history that will likely influence these fields for many years.

Hal Langfur
State University of New York, Buffalo

Power and Corruption in the Early Modern Portuguese World. By Erik Lars Myrup (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2015) 256 pp. \$42.50

This new study intends an analysis of the Overseas Council, the principal metropolitan administrative body of the Portuguese Empire in the early modern period, as understood through the prism of social-network analysis. Myrup includes chapters about events in continental Portugal, colonial Brazil, and Macau. But *Power and Corruption in the Early Modern Portuguese World* is not simply an exercise in institutional history; rather, it is a collection of short biographies of figures from the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries whose activities intersected with the Council's deliberations. The figures analyzed include Jorge de Mascarenhas, a sometime president of the council; António Raposo Tavares, an explorer of the Amazon basin; Rodrigo César de Meneses, a colonial governor in Brazil;