Law and Colonial Cultures advances a new perspective in world history, arguing that cultural practice and institutions – not just the global economy – shaped colonial rule and the international order. The book examines the shift from the multicentric law of early modern empires to the state-centered law of high colonialism. In the early modern world, the special legal status of cultural and religious minorities provided institutional continuity across empires. Colonial and post-colonial states developed in the nineteenth century in part as a response to conflicts over the legal status of indigenous subjects and cultural others. The book analyzes these processes by juxtaposing discussion of broad institutional change with microstudies of selected legal cases.

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NJIT and Rutgers University
For Eduardo,

Victoria, and Gabriela
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Some years ago I found myself in Philip Curtin’s office at Johns Hopkins University asking if I could study comparative history with him. After I explained that I was interested in the history of the Iberian empires, he asked, “Why not world history?” I suggested broadening my studies to include West Africa. “World history would be better,” he urged. I offered to label my interests Atlantic history and culture. “Study world history,” he insisted. The training under Philip Curtin that followed – in world history – provided the foundation for this book, begun many years later and after many scholarly detours. I am grateful for his example, and for his unobtrusive mentoring over the years.

Many other scholars also provided inspiration and advice. Michael Adas encouraged the project from its earliest stages and offered sage guidance at critical points. I was able to spend a semester writing while a Samuel I. Golieb Fellow in Legal History at the NYU Law School, where William Nelson welcomed me into the Law and History Seminar. Many scholars read pieces of the work in progress and generously offered comments and encouragement. I want to thank especially Lawrence Rosen, Jane Collier, Bruce Kercher, James Muldoon, John Comaroff, Herman Bennett, Byron Cannon, Matthew Mirow, Davydd Greenwood, John Russell-Wood, Patricia Seed, Jack Greene, Richard Price, Richard Lariviére, Christopher Tomlins, Jerry Bentley, Yale Ferguson, and Peter Golden. My colleagues in the joint history department at NJIT and Rutgers University, Newark, responded patiently to queries about their diverse fields and offered uninvited but appreciated prodding. Over many good lunches, Cleo Kearns assured me that I was right – about everything.
Acknowledgments

I was lucky to find people willing to help me find my way in libraries and archives, too. David Hebb generously shared his expertise in using the India Office collections and the Public Record Office in London. John Charles Chasteen gave me pointers on using the judicial archives in Montevideo, and José Pedro Barrán kindly shared his own materials on law in Uruguay. Vince Harrison, Antonia Moon, and Jennifer Howes of the British Library and Nancy Brown of the University of New Mexico Library gave invaluable assistance in locating documents in their collections. I received excellent service from the interlibrary loan staffs at NJIT and Rutgers University, Newark, and Michael Byrnes at NJIT assisted in gathering bibliographic information.

Preliminary research was supported by a small grant from the Spencer Foundation on cross-cultural legal advocacy, and I was able to conduct research in Uruguay thanks to a Fulbright grant. Trips to London would not have been possible without the hospitality of Jane Waldfogel and David Hebb.

The best kind of help came from my family. The book would have taken much longer without Charlotte Benton’s gentle, but frequent, queries about its progress. Eduardo, Victoria, and Gabriela Garcia managed to agree that I should keep working even when it took me away from them for too long. I will remember with sadness that the writing was punctuated by the illness and death of my father, George Benton, who taught me by example how to combine intellectual pursuits with the joy of family and friends.

Acknowledgments

University Press, reprinted with permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press; and “From the World Systems Perspective to Institutional World History: Culture and Economy in Global Theory,” Journal of World History 7 (2) 1996: 261–95.