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# Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire

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The contrast between the temperate and the tropical is one of the most enduring themes in the history of the Western geographical imagination. Caught between the demands of experience and representation, documentation and fantasy, travelers in the tropics have often treated tropical nature as a foil to the temperate, to all that is civilized, modest, and enlightened. *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* explores images of the tropical world—maps, paintings, botanical drawings, photographs, diagrams, and texts—produced by European and American travelers over the past three centuries.

Bringing together a group of distinguished contributors from disciplines across the arts and humanities, this volume contains eleven beautifully illustrated essays—arranged in three sections devoted to voyages, mappings, and sites—that consider the ways that tropical places were encountered, experienced, and represented in visual form. Covering a wide range of tropical sites in the Pacific, South Asia, West Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, the book will appeal to a broad readership: scholars of postcolonial studies, art history, literature, imperial history, history of science, geography, and anthropology.



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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"This collection of essays . . . embraces history, geography, literary studies, and art history, and explores the multiple and often contradictory meanings imparted to the tropics in the 18th and 19th centuries and shows how the indigenous peoples contributed to, and sometimes subverted, the imperial notion."  
(*History Today*)

"An exemplarily interdisciplinary volume, the book incorporates historical, literary critical, geographical, scientific, philosophical, and art historical perspectives to compose a thick description of tropical histories and fantasies and their imbrication in European representation. . . . The collection itself combines exotic oddities . . . with thought-provoking research that demonstrates as well as argues how the tropical encounter instantiated and revised binary modes of thinking about the globe."  
(Vanessa Smith *American Historical Review*)

"This volume explores some of the diverse ways in which constantly shifting ideas and experiences of the tropics shaped Europeans' sense of themselves....The collection ranges very widely, both geographically and chronologically, taking the reader from the Himalayas to the Caribbean and from the eighteenth century to the twentieth."

(Jim Endersby *Isis*)

"*Tropical Visions* is a rare accomplishment—an interdisciplinary anthology whose essays are tightly bound by a consistent theme, yet offer a creative vision in each chapter. This combination of masterful writing and careful editing make *Tropical Visions* easy to read despite the depth and diversity of its ideas. *Tropical Visions* is highly recommended to anyone interested in the history of exploration, cartography, science, art, literature, geography — and, of course, the tropical world."  
(Richard Francaviglia *Society for the History of Discoveries*)

"It is hard to do justice to this collection of essays in a short review, but reading it will be time well spent for students of colonial history. Though tightly focused thematically, the essays touch on a very wide range of disciplines and amply demonstrate the dense and varied network of associations that constituted discourses about the tropics."  
(Mark Harrison *Victorian Studies*)

"Its solid research, abundant illustrations, and affordable price are a model for edited collections. Its readability and the importance of the subject will make this book extremely useful in upper level and graduate courses on the culture, science, or geography, of imperialism. *Tropical Visions* should be widely read by specialists in these fields, who will find much to fascinate and delight them."  
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"Although the density of detail . . . might daunt casual readers, it is hard to imagine a better short collection for scholars interested in these themes."  
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## About the Author

**Felix Driver** is professor of human geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. **Luciana Martins** is lecturer in Luso-Brazilian studies at Birkbeck, University of London.

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