



**The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross:  
Witchcraft, Slavery, and Popular Religion in  
Colonial Brazil (Lilas Translations from Latin  
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*Laura de Mello e Souza*

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# The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross: Witchcraft, Slavery, and Popular Religion in Colonial Brazil (Lilas Translations from Latin America Series)

Laura de Mello e Souza

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Originally published in Brazil as *O Diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*, this translation from the Portuguese analyzes the nature of popular religion and the ways it was transferred to the New World in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Using richly detailed transcripts from Inquisition trials, Mello e Souza reconstructs how Iberian, indigenous, and African beliefs fused to create a syncretic and magical religious culture in Brazil.

Focusing on sorcery, the author argues that European traditions of witchcraft combined with practices of Indians and African slaves to form a uniquely Brazilian set of beliefs that became central to the lives of the people in the colony. Her work shows how the Inquisition reinforced the view held in Europe (particularly Portugal) that the colony was a purgatory where those who had sinned were exiled, a place where the Devil had a wide range of opportunities. Her focus on the three centuries of the colonial period, the multiple regions in Brazil, and the Indian, African, and Portuguese traditions of magic, witchcraft, and healing, make the book comprehensive in scope.

Stuart Schwartz of Yale University says, "It is arguably the best book of this genre about Latin America...all in all, a wonderful book." Alida Metcalf of Trinity University, San Antonio, says, "This book is a major contribution to the field of Brazilian history...the first serious study of popular religion in colonial Brazil...Mello e Souza is a wonderful writer."

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