

Brazilian County-Level Juridical Documents as Sources for Historical Geography: A Case Study from Western São Paulo State

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I discuss the uses of juridical documents from western São Paulo State, Brazil, for the historical geography of twentieth-century environmental and agricultural change. Documents analyzed include land-survey and land-subdivision records, probate cases, land-use and land-tenure litigation, and labor complaints. Land-survey material can be used to reconstruct settlement-era vegetation and land uses. Probate inventories for rural properties show watershed-specific details of farming economies. Analysis of land-title conflicts reveals how environmental resources are contested in a wide range of settings. Labor complaints allow researchers to study the diversity of social relations in land clearance and agriculture.

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Assis Comarca counties in São Paulo state.
 Source: Estado de São Paulo. Secretaria de Planejamento e Gestão. Instituto Geográfico e Cartográfico, 1994.
 Regiões de governo do estado de São Paulo.

Land-related legal documentation in Brazil is an important source of empirical data for the historical geography of twentieth-century environmental and agricultural change. Details on the bio-physical environment, rural social relations, and land use make these documents valuable for historical-geographical inquiry. In this essay I discuss land-survey and land-subdivision records, probate cases, land-use and land-tenure litigation, and labor complaints produced in the *comarca* (Judicial administrative unit) of Assis, western São Paulo State, Brazil (Figure 1). Historical geographers, with the exception of Bell (1991) for probate inventories, and Galloway (1971) and Pebayle (1977) for municipal documents, have made little use of the [end p. 41] land-related documents I analyze here. In this brief study of legal documents produced in the context of the *paulista* frontier I hope to

indicate how such documentation may be utilized for environmental and agricultural-historical problems in other regions of twentieth-century settlement.

Similar types of land-related documentation exist in other Brazilian comarcas, but the access to and organization of the material may not be guaranteed. I consulted the documentation discussed below as part of an ongoing research project at the Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, held at the Centro de Documentação e Apoio à Pesquisa (CEDAP) at the Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP) in Assis. CEDAP is the institutional custodian of the comarca archives and provides a unique setting for consulting county-level legal documents. A preliminary description of documents exists for half of the Cartório do Primeiro Ofício (1st Judicial Notary), while the Segundo and Terceiro Ofícios await description. The more than 150,000 documents range from murder to bankruptcy to the land-related documents I discuss below.¹

The Assis region is representative of many areas of the Paulista frontier and northern Paraná (Monbeig 1984; Penço 1980; Di Creddo 1987). Agricultural settlement of forested areas in western São Paulo began in the early twentieth century and resulted in the nearly complete removal of semi-deciduous tropical broadleaf vegetation. Areas of arboreal savanna (*cerrado*) were burned for pasture or coppiced for fuel wood, and have been cultivated only since the 1970s. Rural population decline began in the 1950s and by the 1970s the acceleration of mechanization and entrance of the soya-wheat cycle concentrated land holdings among capitalized farmers. The Assis Comarca, created in 1917 when it received documents from nearby Campos Novos, presently maintains jurisdiction over four municípios or counties (Assis, Echaporã, Florínea, and Tarumã), has a total 1990 urban population of 79,300, and a total area of 1,554 km² (Figure 1). Along a 40-km transect across the comarca soils vary from basalt-derived argillic oxisols and alfisols (including terra roxa soils) in the southern area to sandy oxisols and alfisols in the northern region. Present-day land uses in the Comarca counties are pasture (49,300 ha), sugarcane (33,600 ha), maize (33,100 ha), and soya (18,000 ha) (CBH-MP 1996).

There is a large literature, dominated by social historians, based on legal documents from the Fórum (Comarca courthouse) and cartório archives. Several acclaimed monographs have demonstrated the value of criminal cases for detailing working-class life (Chalhoub 1986; Fausto 1984), violence between men and women (Corrêa 1983), and sexual crimes (Esteves 1989). Among historians with interests in rural areas, a prominent issue has been research on the transition from slave to wage labor based on legal documentation in specific municípios (Castro 1988; Dean 1976; Franco 1969; Stein 1970). Another trend in Brazilian historical research has been the use of legal documentation within a broader project of rural social history (Chasteen 1995; Barickman 1996; Diacon 1991; Garcia 1994; Holloway 1980; Martins 1995; Priori 1996; Welch 1990, 1995). Missing from these studies is the use of legal documents for research on environmental and agricultural change, such as deforestation, stream-valley sedimentation, and changes in land use and land tenure.

MEDIÇÃO DE TERRA AND DIVISÃO DE FAZENDA: LAND SURVEY AND LAND PARTITION

Medições and Divisões are documents attesting to early-twentieth-century land surveys, partition of rural properties, and creation of land titles. The spatial unit of this document was a large watershed (<50 km²) known as a *fazenda* in this context. The Medição and Divisão cases opened for several reasons. Influential rural elites attempted to legalize or consolidate their holdings. The death of a prominent landholder created the need for heirs and squatters to legalize their properties. The arrival of legal commissions, given the task of resolving land-title disputes and producing legal titles, also may have inspired the origin of such cases. Legal maneuvers attempting to prove ownership --or disprove a squatter's claims dominate the content of these documents. Rampant land-title falsification (*grilo* and *grilhagem*) and widespread squatting (*posse*) led to customary landholding practices that the judicial branch had to legalize in order to create a property title (Cobra 1923: 97-107; Giovannetti 1943: 92-3; Dean 1995: 214-16; Monbeig 1984: 143-45). Cases ended upon division of the land unit among the various claimants. **[end p. 42]**

Land-use and cadastral maps (1:10,000 scale) of rural areas contain perhaps the most interesting data for historical geographers, especially those interested in environmental change. In most cases, maps were essential to determine property boundaries, titles, and prices. The litigants paid a court-appointed surveyor (agrimensor) to map land use, vegetation, property claims, and rural infrastructure. (One of these surveyors, Giovannetti, wrote a descriptive account of the Assis region; Cobra, cited above, was a lawyer who represented many clients in these cases.) Often one map shows hydrology, land use, and vegetation, while a second map shows the court's decisions on property boundaries. In many cases, the surveyor included a report with a qualitative assessment of the mapped area. This report discussed soils, vegetation, and potential of the lands for agriculture. Surveyors needed to determine values for different classes of land, and often distinguished among a variety of vegetational types along the grassland-forest continuum. Especially in areas of transition between basalt and sandstone derived soils, surveyors noted distinct areas of *mata virgem* (tropical broadleaf semi-deciduous forest), *cerrado* (woody savanna, found on the aluminum-rich, acidic, and sandy oxisols in this region of São Paulo), *cerradão* (mixed mata and cerrado arboreal species), *capoeira* (arboreal invasion of savanna, pasture, or fallow land), and pasture.

Two cases from 1913 illustrate some of the environmental and agricultural details contained in medição and divisão cases. The

division of the 930 ha "Matão" fazenda located east of Assis included a 1:10,000 map showing three types of land with different values, forest (*mata*) at 20\$700 per ha,³ capoeira and cerradão at 16\$500 per ha,³ and cultivated lands at 12\$400 per ha (Figure 2). The surveyor provided data on stream-flow measurements but made few qualitative or quantitative assessments of vegetation. The property was divided into 15 units from 10 to 280 ha. Documents on the division of the 3,725 ha Queixadas watershed in the present-day Cândido Mota município (under jurisdiction of the Assis Comarca until 1968) include a 1:10,000 map showing coffee plantations, pasture, cultivated areas, and houses of squatters and other residents. The court estimated the number of existing coffee plants at nearly 9,000 and the area of pasture at 126 ha. Most of the fazenda lands were described as "mata virgem." The total fazenda was valued at 84:000\$000, or 22\$700 per ha.⁴ The surveyor's twelve-person team worked for two months to survey the lands and noted that "with the exception of some pasture, maize and rice fields, the lands are uncultivated and destined to a promising future, due to its fertility and proximity" to a nearby railroad station.³

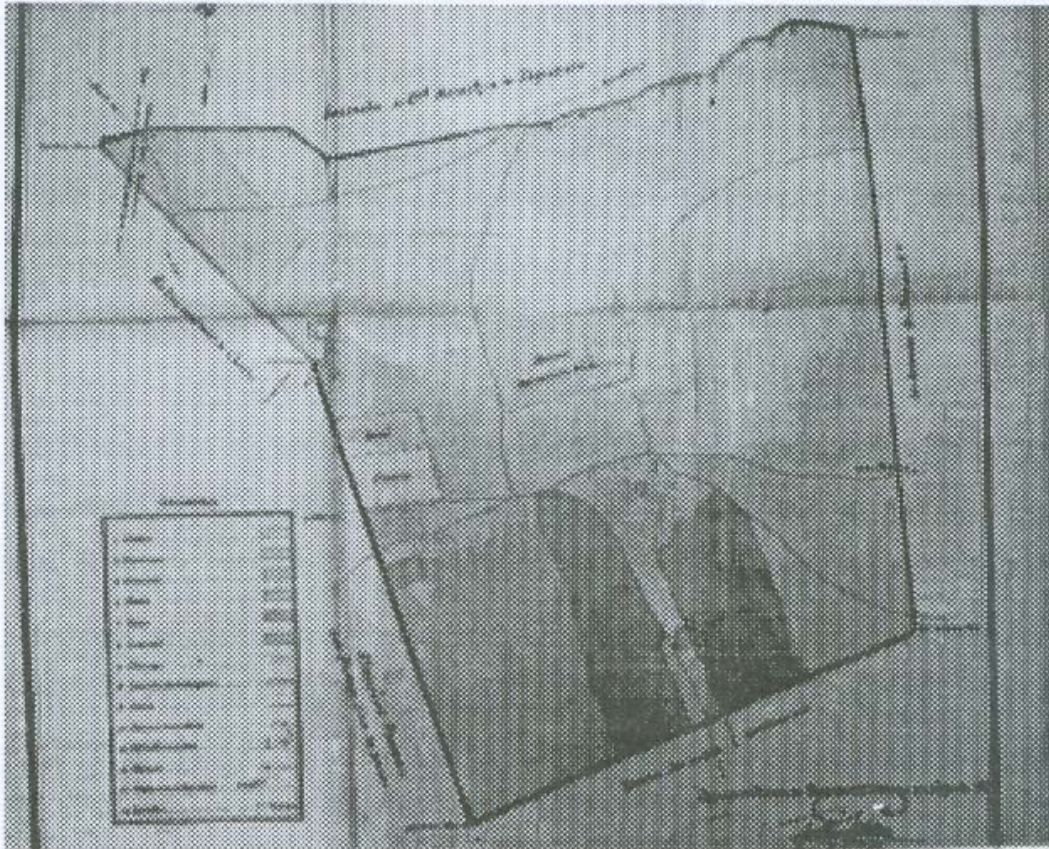


Figure 2. Detail of land-survey map from western São Paulo state, Brazil. The 930 ha estate was divided into 15 units. Original scale 1:10,000. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 24, Autos de ação de Medição e Divisão do imóvel "Mattão," November 1913, CEDAP, UNESP—Assis.

These watershed-scale documents represent the earliest, most accurate mapping of vegetation, agriculture, and property claims in the Assis region. The lack of a statewide land-surveyor cadastral mapping project makes the medição and divisão maps indispensable starting points for the reconstruction of early-twentieth-century vegetation and land use. The large cartographic scale of the maps is suitable for compiling early twentieth-century land cover data on the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística's 1:50,000 topographic map series. In comparison with the small-scale (<1:1,000,000) vegetation and deforestation maps of Victor (1975: 17, 28) and Dean (1995:169), the 1:10,000 maps provide a superior baseline from which to measure land-

use changes. The scale of the maps is also valuable for field-checking specific watersheds, especially when the surveyor included stream dimensions.

Because of widespread land-title falsification, the maps are also essential beginning points for land- [end p.43] tenure histories in the region. But more difficult than compiling cartographic data is the analysis of the power relations and political-economic interests inherent in the production of these valuable maps. Far from "neutral" or "objective," these land-survey maps mirror the political and economic tensions of the time. Land-title falsification, the growth of agro-export production, and the consolidation of power based upon rural property formed the context in which land surveyors operated. It is hardly possible for this type of cartographic data to have been removed from the political struggles and potential for economic gain so tightly related to the production of legal land titles.

The use of these land-survey maps for bio-physical information presents a variety of problems. Researchers will find only qualitative descriptions of species densities, tree widths, or canopy heights. At best, surveyors noted the common names of some arboreal species thought to indicate high soil fertility. Second, the surveyor's criteria for distinguishing among different types of vegetation is unknown. At least one surveyor in the Assis Comarca was a Swedish immigrant who may have used a different criteria for separating mata from cerradão than other surveyors. This issue is especially interesting because of vegetational transitions thought to result from an abrupt change in soil characteristics. Finally, the names of some streams changed after the surveyor mapped vegetation, making precise location of the information difficult on contemporary maps.

ARROLAMENTO AND INVENTÁRIO: PROBATE RECORDS

Arrolamentos and Inventários are probate documents that, in rural areas, provide historical-geographical data on rural land use, land tenure, technology, and productive strategies. These documents also include the location of rural properties, the declared and estimated value of rural property, types of rural infrastructure, rural debt and credit relations, and the nature of land subdivision among rural families. Of the four types of land-related documents I discuss here, these routine legal proceedings have been the most utilized by scholars in rural settings. Rather than discuss the intricacies of probate inventories (see Lewin 1992), I focus below on how probate cases can complement data in other land-related legal documents. My interest is on the watershed-specific reconstruction of twentieth-century resource use.

The probate case began immediately after a rural property owner died intestate. An heir, usually the surviving spouse or eldest child, declared the deceased's property, debts, and heirs in a sworn statement at the Cartório. Among rural property owners, precise location of lands was a crucial piece of information that only became common after 1920 in the Assis Comarca. Heirs often used land titles that had been created during the earlier *medição* or *divisão* (see above). Without legal title, the estate could not be divided among heirs, nor could payment be carried out of any outstanding debts. Judicial officials sometimes investigated the case to determine the veracity of the claims, opened a period for unmentioned creditors of the deceased to present evidence and testimony, assigned monetary values to the property, and divided the estate among heirs and creditors. This system sought to ensure that heirs would receive legal title to their inherited property, and that in the future they could reference the probate case to resolve land conflicts.

The twentieth-century probate cases in the Assis Comarca provide empirical detail on a variety of historical-geographical phenomena. The process of land subdivision among heirs was a prominent aspect of the probate case, for it represented a legal objective of the case. This meant that the legal system generated estimated values for different classes of agricultural lands or forested areas. Rural productive strategies are another important part of probate documents. Changes in rural "investment portfolios," such as the type and relative value of crops and farm equipment, are one of the most readily accessible aspects of the documentation. Arrolamentos and Inventários also provide detailed information on the estimated value and type of rural infrastructures, such as sawmills, grain mills, distilleries, and other small-scale rural industries often omitted from published agricultural census sources. In addition, each probate case generated a set of estimated values for various forms of rural property, including animals, pasture, agricultural fields, houses, and farm equipment. Finally, the place-specific nature of the legal proceeding allows use of the document in the watershed-scale reconstruction of land-use, land tenure, and land management. [end p. 44]

The probate case, although rich in place-specific empirical data, is not without some well-known biases. One problem is the potential for over-representation of a certain type of rural landowner or worker. If wealthier families used wills and testaments more frequently than poorer families, sampling from probate will over-represent small and medium-scale rural producers, and under-represent latifundist production. The problem of over representation of rural producers at the end of their lives is a related issue inherent to this type of document. Second, arrolamentos and inventarios tell us little about the extra-probate partition of rural property, by testaments or other means, thus avoiding the judicial system and failing to leave historical documents in the fórum. A similar problem is whether the family declared all of the property of the deceased. If the survivors agreed on how to divide the estate, there was little incentive to include all farm animals, vehicles, or equipment. But, if there was disagreement among family members, it is likely that all property was included as part of the rural estate. Finally, researchers also confront the

problem of determining how the legal system omitted certain types of inputs necessary for rural production. Labor is the key omission; probate describes rural infrastructure, but cannot provide data on the organization of labor, family or otherwise. For example, the document can describe the number of houses for resident workers, but cannot describe how property owners mobilized labor on the rural estate.

MANUTENÇÃO AND REINTEGRAÇÃO DE POSSE: LAND-TITLE AND LAND-USE CONFLICT

These cases offer specific details on a variety of land-title and land-use conflicts. They provide insight on the social networks of bio-physical resource use. The documents range from cases of land invasion to sharecropper-landowner disagreements. Cases begin with initial declarations, accusations, and testimony of witnesses of the accuser (*autor* or plaintiff). The accused (*réu* or defendant) then presents declarations and witnesses to support the opposing argument—usually, rightful possession or use of the lands in litigation, or denial of land invasion. The conclusion of the case may include reconciliation on mutually acceptable terms, or a court order for eviction of the defendant or plaintiff from the lands in litigation. During this lengthy process the judicial system generated a wide range of environmental and agricultural details, such as land use, land tenure, land management, estimated value, and socio-economic differences between accuser and accused.

The Assis Comarca contains a diverse range of land-tenure and land-use conflicts. Common causes of land disputes were incomplete, vague, or erroneous descriptions of property boundaries. Sharecropping or land rental disputes occupy another portion of these legal cases. Refusal of the sharecropper or tenant farmer to leave the owner's lands could result in the owner filing charges demanding removal. Another theme prominent in the documents is that of an invasion of lands for cultivation, stock grazing, or timber removal. A general issue present in these documents is the rupture of customary land-tenure and land-use relations. Testimony often relates the history of interaction between *autor* and *réu* and describes in detail the turn in relations that caused the dispute. The descriptions of these moments reveal the intricate social and political networks that maintained customary use of bio-physical resources.

Two cases from the 1940s illustrate the environmental and agricultural details contained in these documents. The first case is relatively simple. Owner of more than 300 ha in Echaporã, Benedetto Spinardi accused a neighbor of invading 20 ha, clearing forest and planting crops, and demanded a legal order of *Manutenção de Posse*. The 20 ha had been separated from Spinardi's lands in a curve-elimination road construction project. The allegation forced Yossaburo Shinohara to present land-purchase records that showed legal ownership of the lands in question, and Spinardi later withdrew his complaint. The case included a 1:10,000 map of the area of the alleged incursion.⁵

A second, more complex case is that of a conflict between Issamu Horai and João Cortes near Echaporã. Horai had made a verbal agreement with Cortes for the clearing of 6.7 ha of partially burned forested land at Cr\$124 per ha and for subsequent rental from Horai for the same price. Cortes began the work in October 1943 but stopped as soon as he learned that an Assis legal official, Laudelino Sant'ana, claimed to be the owner of the lands. Sant'ana arranged for Cortes to purchase nearly 20 [end p. 45] ha and when Cortes returned to the lands with two of Sant'ana's workers, the three beat Horai after an argument. Horai sued for *Manutenção de Posse*, and the resulting case detailed land-use and rural labor systems for the lands in question. The judge ruled in favor of Horai, but Sant'ana appealed and a surveyor and inspector visited the area to produce a report and 1:10,000 map (Figure 3). The March 1946 appeal ruling --a discourse on the nature of "posse" (possession of land)-- was also in Horai's favor.⁶

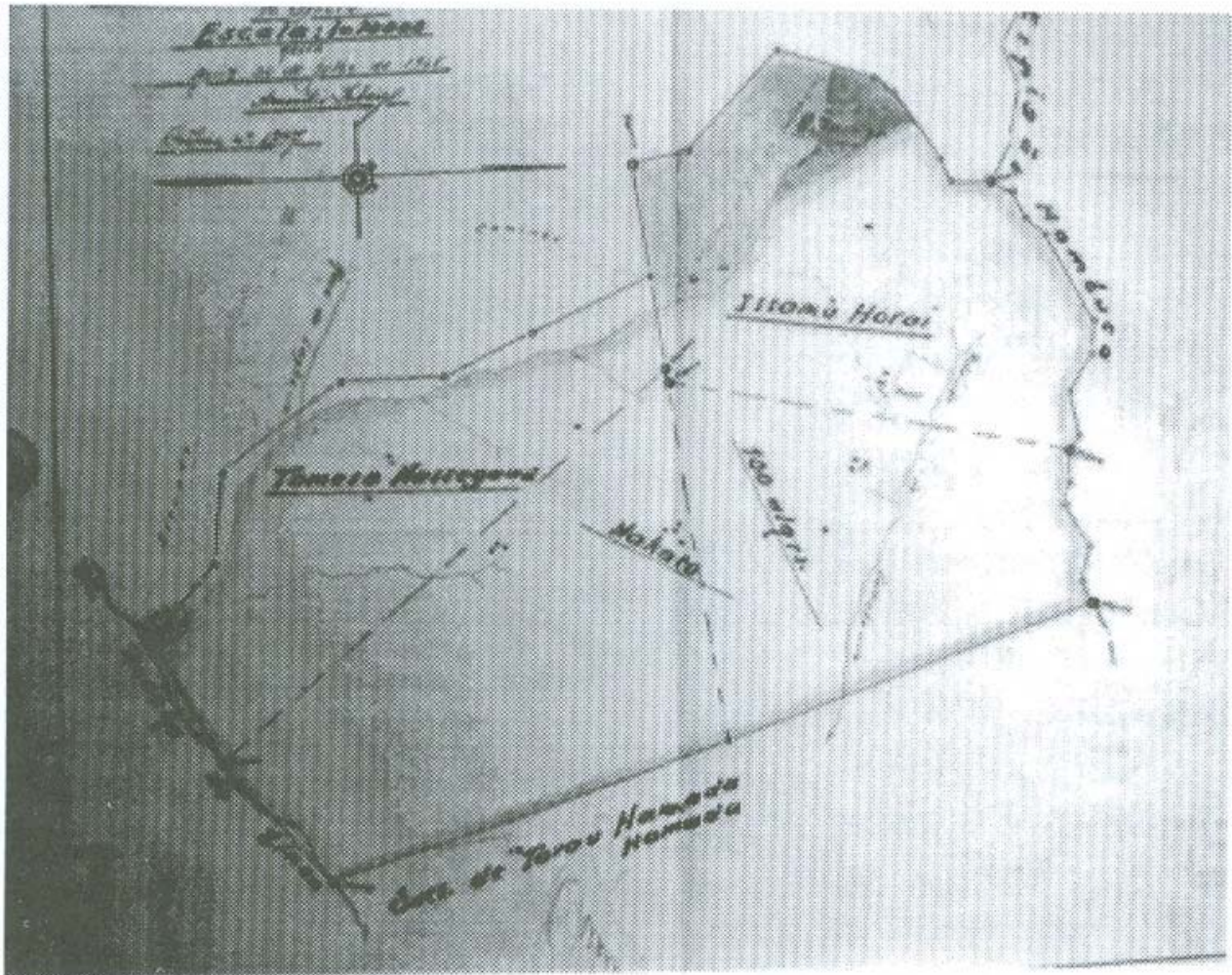


Fig. 3. Detail of map resulting from judicial inspection of contested lands in a land-tenure conflict in western São Paulo state, Brazil. Original scale 1:10,000. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 168, Ação de Manutenção de Posse, November 1943, CEDAP, UNESP—Assis.

The Manutenção and Reintegração show rural landscapes as contested arenas of social life. Agricultural lands, pasture, forests, and other natural resources were the constant targets of a wide range of conflicts. A key issue in the material is how different social groups had access to legal power. The documents show a diverse range of accusers and accused, suggesting a broad range of litigants. Urban-based landowners filed charges against squatters, but smallholders also used the legal system, and sued each other and large landholders with surprising frequency. Access to the power of the judicial system was not limited to large landowners, but it extended to a variety of socio-economic levels in rural communities.

RECLAMAÇÃO TRABALHISTA AND AÇÃO ORDINÁRIA: THE CONTESTED ARENA OF RURAL LABOR

The Reclamação Trabalhista and Ação Ordinária offer insights on the organization of agricultural labor and rural social relations. While manutenção and reintegração de Posse cases resulted from land-tenure disputes over specific areas of agriculture or forests, some reclamação trabalhista and ação ordinária cases arose from labor conflicts in sharecropping, land rental, deforestation, and other variations in the many linkages between land owner and rural worker. Both types of documents include vivid details on the wide range of labor relations in agriculture in the Assis Comarca.

The key difference between the reclamação trabalhista and ação ordinária is the legal bureaucracy of origin. Ação ordinária cases are civil lawsuits originating in the Justiça Civil or Justiça Comum system and include, for example, conflicts over damaged automobiles to cases of breach of contract in urban construction sites to agriculture-related labor disputes. By contrast, the labor complaint (*reclamação trabalhista*) originated in the Justiça do Trabalho, the labor court system. The [end p. 46] Justiça do

Trabalho handled work-related injuries and a variety of reclamações trabalhistas, protesting the lack of a paid weekly day off, an annual paid vacation, and advance notice of dismissal. These labor rights were ensured under the 1943 Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas (CLT). A key aspect of dictator Getulio Vargas' labor policy, the CLT created the Justiça do Trabalho and a labor court system extending from a supreme court to regional courts to Comarca judges.⁷ The CLT did not exclude rural workers, but was not as comprehensive toward rural workers as it was toward urban workers (Rodrigues 1983: 522-25; Welch 1990: 15-50).

During part of the 1940s and early 1950s, the Justiça do Trabalho handled rural labor complaints. But by the mid 1950s, such cases were sent to Justiça Comum and became civil suits, usually an ação ordinária. Defendants in reclamações trabalhistas often sought to disprove any formal linkages with rural workers. This was an attempt to prove that the case was outside the jurisdiction of the labor court and force the case into the civil court system as an ação ordinária (Giannattasio 1993: 105; Priori 1996: 33-50). In ações ordinárias in which rural workers filed suit against landowners, the accusation is that the landowner broke a verbal or written labor contract, an action for which the worker sought indemnization for damages incurred.

Apart from these basic differences, the reclamação trabalhista and ação ordinária follow similar courses. Testimony and witnesses of the accuser, and statement of the public prosecutor (*promotor público*) or lawyer, begin the work-related complaint. The declarations and witnesses of the accused are next, followed by transcripts of the hearing, and then a judge's ruling or attempt at reconciliation--often by payment of lost wages or the value of lost crops. Similar to the land-title and land-use legal cases, testimony in the reclamações and ações describe social relations, land use, and different perceptions of socio-economic obligations in the realm of rural production. Many originated due to a breach in the oral contract, common in the region for agricultural issues, and the testimony of the litigants and witnesses vividly reconstructs (often with few contradictions) the terms of that verbal agreement.

In the Assis Comarca, the reclamação and ação include details of sharecropping, land rental, rural wage laborers, and variations of the *colonato* labor system. The *colonato*, a mixed task and piece rate system (Alvim 1986; Dean 1976; Holloway 1980; Stolcke 1988; Stolcke and Hall 1983), persisted on many Assis Comarca coffee fields into the 1960s. For example, a mid-1940s reclamação trabalhista, in which the colono Benedito de Matos sued plantation owner Luiz Penga, details the types of payment and non-financial obligations between worker and landowner. Matos received Cr\$600 for tending (with his family) 5,500 coffee plants and was also permitted interrow cropping for subsistence crops. When Penga dismissed Matos, the colono initiated a labor complaint and Penga was forced to pay Cr\$3,500.⁸ A 1955 ação details how the *empreiteiro* Pedro Fonsatti, contracted by Jose Mucci for the planting of 10,000 coffee seedlings, successfully sued the property owner over the permitted amount of inter-row cropping of maize and beans. The court case reproduced the terms of the original contract, which specified how many rows of each food crop could be planted during each year of coffee development. Fonsatti initiated the lawsuit when Mucci imposed new restrictions on the work contract. The *empreiteiro* succeeded in receiving an indemnization of Cr\$10,000 from the landowner.⁹

Labor complaints and civil cases also originated due to disagreements in sharecropping and land rental. Cases include a tenant farmer-worker whose payment was in form of usufruct rights over specified agricultural fields. A dispute occurred over the sub rental of lands for cotton cultivation with inter-row subsistence crops. Testimony describes the verbal contract, advancement of seeds and supplies, initiation of planting, and evolution of the disagreement.¹⁰ Deforestation could also enter into the legal system. The 1937 ação ordinária of Reinaldo Messias includes a contract for the clearing of 60.5 ha of forested land north of Echaporá for 8:500\$000. But the lands became the focus of a manutenção de posse case and Messias had to interrupt his work and thus became subject to a clause in the contract in which a breach in contract would result in a 9:000\$000 fine. Messias also had to pay costs for the "large group of workers" he had contracted for deforestation. The "recisão de contrato" proceeding was intended to let Messias avoid the fine for work stoppage.¹¹ [end p. 47]

Use of these documents demands attention to a series of issues. The role of the public prosecutor or lawyer in articulating the complaints of rural workers is a central concern. The first document in the reclamação trabalhista is the worker's statement, followed by the prosecutor's argument. Whether or not the prosecutor modified the worker's charges to fit into the requirements of the legal system is visible by comparing the two statements. There is also the issue of the interaction between worker and the first legal official to hear the complaint, transcribe the allegation into legal language, and thus give it legal validity. Another question is determining the representativeness of reclamações and ações of rural social relations in general. Does the testimony describe general trends, or aberrations in the realm of productive relations? And finally, these cases raise the issue of rural worker access to the power of the legal state. Workers, sharecroppers, and renters negotiated within the legal system to revindicate wages, working conditions, and crops. But it is important to discern the limits to worker claims to legal power and the different levels of power in the countryside.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE USE OF LEGAL DOCUMENTATION

There are at least two general methodological issues regarding the production of the land-related legal documentation discussed

above. Empirical data on environment and agriculture passed through an uneven legal filter that altered the type of information available for historical research. Legal officials necessarily transmit testimony, evidence, and other details of the documents through the judicial bureaucracy. As I suggested above, the type of data in the legal case might be considered as negotiated texts between worker or landowner and the legal official in charge of transcribing a verbal argument. A critical issue here is how the process of negotiation may have resulted in unexpected generalizations of environment and agriculture. Secondly, legal structures had a key role in determining the type of phenomena included in the legal document. These structural and institutional parameters influence the quality and quantity of information contained in the legal documents discussed above. Different types of agricultural and environmental details, for example, disappear from particular types of legal documents because of the structure of the particular law and method of argumentation. This point is most obvious with regard to the Reclamação Trabalhista, a legal complaint made possible by the 1943 creation of a legal bureaucracy for labor issues.

The historical land-tenure and land-use data at the scale of specific watersheds that I have discussed above has ample relevance in current trends of geographic research on people-environment topics. Karl Butzer (1992: 362), for example, urged Latin Americanist historical geographers to rediscover an old tradition of integrating bio-physical field data with historical records to study human modification of the environment, especially research on "slope soils and sediments as well as alluvial microhistories, tied to an informed diachronic context for land tenure, land use, and management techniques in a particular watershed." These examples of legal documentation provide important watershed-level agricultural and environmental data for fulfillment of precisely such a research agenda.

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NOTES

1. In São Paulo state, similar types of institutional arrangements for public access to Fórum documents exist in Campinas, Ribeirão Preto, and some areas of Greater São Paulo. Throughout the state, there are more than 220 comarcas, 20 of which are in Greater São Paulo.
2. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 24, Autos de ação de Medição e Divisão do imóvel "Mattao," November 1913, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis.
3. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Segundo Ofício, Caixa 2, Divisão do 3o. lote de terras na fazenda "Queixadas," April 1913, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis. Quote from f. 90v.
4. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 152, Ação de Manutenção de Posse, August 1942, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis.
5. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 168, Ação de Manutenção de Posse, November 1943, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis. Ruling on "posse" on f. 104-13.
6. The archives of a regional center of the Justiça do Trabalho bureaucracy, the Primeira Junta de Conciliação e Julgamento in Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo, provided some empirical data for the research of Welch (1990: 218; 1995: 169) on how rural workers used the labor legal system. Between 1957 and 1964, rural workers filed over 30 percent of the complaints in the Ribeirão Preto regional labor court.
7. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 176, Reclamação Trabalhista, January 1946, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis.
8. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 279, Ação Ordinária de Cobrança, March 1955, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis.
9. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 206, Reclamação Trabalhista, October 1947, and Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 153, Reclamação Trabalhista, March 1946, both

CEDAP, UNESP-Assis.

10. Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, Caixa 122, Ação Ordinária, July 1937, CEDAP, UNESP-Assis. Contract is on f. 4.

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RESUMO

Neste trabalho discuto o aproveitamento de documentação jurídica do Arquivo do Fórum da Comarca de Assis no oeste paulista, Brasil, para a geografia histórica das mudanças ambientais e agrícolas do século XX. A documentação analisada inclui Processos de Medição e Divisão de Fazenda, Arrolamento e Inventário, Manutenção e Reintegração de Posse, Reclamação Trabalhista e Ação Ordinária. Os Processos de Medição de Fazenda podem ser usados para reconstruir a vegetação no início da época de povoamento. Os detalhes sobre o funcionamento da economia agrícola podem ser resgatados pelos Processos de Arrolamento e Inventário. A análise de Processos de Manutenção e Reintegração de Posse revela como os recursos ambientais são disputados em contextos distintos. Os Processos de Reclamação Trabalhista e Ação Ordinária permitem a pesquisa sobre a diversidade de relações sociais no desmatamento e na agricultura. [end p. 50]