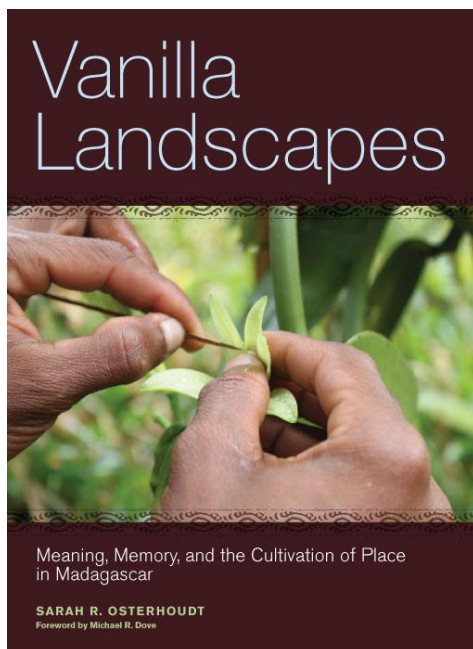


NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 24, 2017

Exploring a Madagascar Community and the Land That Sustains Its Residents, *Vanilla Landscapes* is Now Available from NYBG Press as a Paperback or an E-Book

Blending Anthropology and Economic Botany, *Vanilla Landscapes* is the Newest Title in the NYBG Press Series *Advances in Economic Botany*



Bronx, NY—Portraying the seemingly timeless relationship between a community of indigenous farmers and the fields and forests that they have harvested sustainably for generations, ***Vanilla Landscapes: Meaning, Memory, and the Cultivation of Place in Madagascar*** by Sarah R. Osterhoudt is now available from The New York Botanical Garden Press. Published as both a paperback (\$39.99) and an electronic book (\$5.99), the title can be purchased in both formats at a discount (see ordering information below).

Incorporating research that stretched over 11 years, *Vanilla Landscapes* blends anthropology and economic botany—the study of how people use plants—as it explores the lives and culture of Imorona, a village on the northeastern coast of the island nation of Madagascar. The residents of Imorona and the surrounding region are mainly the Betsimisaraka, Madagascar’s second-largest ethnic group. For generations, the Betsimisaraka have grown rice in marshy lowland paddies and tended nearby forested lowlands and hillsides, where they cultivate the plants that produce such sought-after commodities as vanilla, coffee, and cloves.

Dr. Osterhoudt first visited Imorona in 2005 as an environmental volunteer for the Peace Corps. In her introduction, she recalls a visit by the local Peace Corps program director, who asked, "Why are there so many *trees* here?" Unlike other areas of Madagascar—and the tropics in general—that are undergoing rapid deforestation, the terrain around the village boasted a mixture of old-growth forest, woodland that had grown back after being forested, and areas where crops and trees intermingled, a farming practice known as agroforestry. The director's question stayed with Dr. Osterhoudt and became the catalyst for *Vanilla Landscapes*.

Highly valued on the world market, vanilla is one of Madagascar's chief products. The popular flavoring is derived from the seed pod, or bean, of the vanilla orchid, which is native to Central America, where it is pollinated by a local bee species. To cultivate vanilla plants, the farmers of Imorona maintain agroforestry fields and hand-pollinate each vanilla flower. Successful pollination requires skill and knowledge that are taught by parents and grandparents to children, all of whom go out from the village together to work their family's farm.

The managed forests of Imorona provide its residents with food and income, but as Dr. Osterhoudt spent time in the field with farmers, she discovered that the woodlands offered the villagers something else. "Through the quotidian interaction with their local landscapes, farmers in Imorona remember past histories, articulate present conditions, and imagine aspirations for the future," she writes. "Cutting a clove tree is not only cutting a clove tree: it is severing ties with ancestors, or erasing a memory of a day harvesting with friends, or harming the legacy one will leave to his or her children."

Vanilla Landscapes is volume 18 in the NYBG Press series *Advances in Economic Botany*, which offers original, interdisciplinary book-length research papers, collections of papers, and symposia dealing with the use and management of plants.

An interview with Dr. Osterhoudt, conducted by series editor Charles M. Peters, Ph. D., Kate E. Tode Curator of Botany at The New York Botanical Garden, is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKjhcMux2XA>.

About the Author of *Vanilla Landscapes*

Sarah R. Osterhoudt, Ph. D., is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University. She received her doctoral degree from Yale University through the combined program in anthropology and forestry and environmental studies, as well as a joint doctoral degree from The New York Botanical Garden. She has been active in development and conservation programs for more than 15 years, including co-founding an organization that partners with Malagasy spice producers to foster equitable trade relationships.

Advance Praise for *Vanilla Landscapes*

Sarah Osterhoudt's book brilliantly succeeds in literally grounding the claim that an indigenous, agrarian society narrates its genealogy, its collective history, and its value and meaning *through* its agro-forestry landscape. She has "realized" to a rare extent a cultural reading of landscape so celebrated by Maurice Bloch and Keith Basso. The result is something of a model that other ethnographers of landscape and environment will learn from.

—James C. Scott, Ph. D., Sterling Professor of Political Science and Professor of Anthropology and Environmental Studies, Director of the Agrarian Studies Program, Yale University

About The New York Botanical Garden Press

Since 1896 The New York Botanical Garden Press (nybgpress.org) has been publishing books and journals based on original research by scientists from around the world. The mission of NYBG Press is to put information in the hands of those engaged in exploring, understanding, and conserving plants and fungi. Areas of focus include floristics, systematics, economic botany, ecology, evolution, conservation, and ethnobotany. A growing list of books for general readers includes field guides and botanical history.

Ordering Information: *Vanilla Landscapes: Meaning, Memory, and the Cultivation of Place in Madagascar* is available through NYBG Press (\$39.99, paper; \$5.99 e-book; \$29.99, set of paperback and e-book). To order, go to nybgpress.org or call 718.817.8721.

###

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants, an educational institution, and a scientific research organization. Founded in 1891, the Botanical Garden is one of the world's preeminent centers for studying plants at all levels, from the whole organism down to its DNA. Garden scientists conduct fundamental research on plants and fungi globally, as well as on the many relationships between plants and people. A National Historic Landmark, the Garden's 250-acre site is one of the greatest botanical gardens in the world and the largest in any city in the United States, distinguished by the beauty of its diverse landscape and extensive collections and gardens, as well as by the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and plant research and conservation. Learn more: nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

Contact: Stevenson Swanson, 718.817.8512/8616, sswanson@nybg.org.