On the other hand, readers in search of a conventional history may become impatient with the more anthropologically oriented chapters. They may wonder why the issue, first raised in the 1970s, disputing the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea is simply dismissed (187). And they may even founder in the detail of Chapter 7. No one unfamiliar with Australian political history—and especially the distinctive place of Queensland in that history—will find that chapter easy to follow.

Nothing I have written in the preceding two paragraphs should be read as condemning a book that, in fact, I recommend to anyone interested in Pacific Island affairs. The Torres Strait Islanders, their culture, and their history, are worthy of our attention for many reasons, and they have found a knowledgeable and sympathetic chronicler in Beckett. My criticisms are rather a perhaps circuitous way of expressing the hope that he will continue to publish his insights into the theoretical, ethnographic, and historical concerns sometimes treated all too briefly here. Certainly this book will provide a valuable basis for understanding the continuing struggle of the Torres Strait Islanders to maintain their identity and a degree of autonomy in an increasingly complex world.

EUGENE OGAN

University of Minnesota

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This book, a history of Vanuatu from the 1880s to the 1980s, is “grounded” in land. Struggles over land precipitated both the birth and the death of the former Condominium of the New Hebrides. The Franco-British Joint Naval Convention of 1887 and the subsequent Convention of 1906, which established colonial authority, aimed to regularize and sustain European control of newly alienated land in the archipelago. A hundred years later, this alienated land sparked the movement toward national independence.

In chapter one, Van Trease sketches the several traditional systems of land tenure found throughout Vanuatu. A common principle is the inalienability of land; the rights of landholders can never be completely extinguished. One might say that “land” became a meaningful economic category only as Vanuatu was absorbed within a system of plantation capitalism. Traditionally, people thought more in terms of their “place” than of their “land.”

In the next three chapters, Van Trease follows the history of land alienation. He focuses on the workings of the Condominium’s Joint Court, which was established especially to straighten out conflicting European claims to vast tracts of land and to issue titles. Given the double British and French colonial presence, the court
found its task particularly troublesome. The two powers had different colonial agendas, as Van Trease documents. The French aimed to stay, and they contrived to gain control over the archipelago's lands and economy in order to eventually dislodge the British. The British were more reluctant colonizers, having become involved in the group because of Australian worries about the French. The British were also more concerned to notice the rights—including land rights—of Islanders within the Condominium. As Van Trease notes, however, "while the French flaunted the rules to achieve their objectives, the British dutifully followed orders and did nothing to stop them. . . . Such would be the pattern of joint administration which would characterize Anglo-French rule in Vanuatu until independence in 1980." (41).

Van Trease next offers three case studies of local resistance to land alienation. Before the Pacific War, Islanders had to little avail contested the efforts of European planters to register land claims. The Joint Court did not accept a single local caveat to European title claims, although it did occasionally set aside "native land reserves." In the postwar period, however, the colonial imperative withered and Islanders' attempts to reclaim their lands carried much more force. Van Trease explores the success of Nagriamel supporters on Santo, Tautu villagers on Malakula, and urban Fila Islanders (near Vila) in regaining some of their lands.

The final chapter analyzes the importance of these struggles for land within Vanuatu's independence movement. A slump in copra prices in the late 1950s had induced plantation owners to diversify into beef production, leading to the clearing of unused portions of their claimed lands. This extension of plantations into "dark bush" ignited land reform movements in the 1960s, including Nagriamel and the Vanua'aku Pati. Van Trease documents a reactive shift in French colonial policy away from expatriate land holding. Returning some alienated land in the 1970s, the French administration at the same time created an education system in hopes of raising a francophone local elite supportive of the French presence. Van Trease also documents official French connivance in the Santo rebellion of 1980, a last offensive aimed at remaining in the group. The book's epilogue sketches the beginnings of postindependence land policies. Constitutionally, all alienated lands were returned to custom ownership at independence.

This book is a detailed and well-written historical summary of Vanuatu's colonial era from the perspective of land. Needless to say, another focus (say, labor history) would have cast different lights. The book provides particularly useful information on colonial land laws and practices, British versus French objectives and rivalry, the emergence of local land reform movements such as Nagriamel, and the events leading to Vanuatu's successful if troubled independence.

The book is well researched; Van Trease relies especially on British colonial records. He did, however, have access to confidential monthly summaries supplied by the French resident commissioner to his minister for overseas departments and territories. The
author also interviewed a number of key players in the struggles for land and independence, including Jimmy Stephens and Barak Sope.

Van Trease cites Sope's remark that "land is also a [political] tool that can help to bridge the educated-uneducated and the urban-rural gaps" (210). After independence, land still retains its function as a powerful symbol of political determination and unity. Port Vila's "riot" of May 1988 in support of Barak Sope's leadership challenge within the ruling Vanua'aku Pati was conceived and organized in terms of local rights over urban lands.

As indicated by his subtitle, Van Trease has actually written about the politics of land in the old New Hebrides. He offers only scattered speculations about land's politics in independent Vanuatu. For example, he remarks that urban elites could inveigle control of Vanuatu's land, despite its constitutional return to custom owners (240). Still, this book provides excellent grounding from which to follow land in Vanuatu's future.

LAMONT LINDSTROM
University of Tulsa

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The dilemma faced by Pacific peoples—to choose between their traditions and the European world—is elaborated in this book, a readable by-product of several years of research on Tanna, a southern island of Vanuatu, by a French geographer, Joël Bonnemaison, attached to ORSTOM, the French Institute for Research Overseas.

This book is a personal observation of the Tanna population, based on interviews, the collection of myths and stories, and archival research. La Dernière Ile is a distillation of the author's two-volume doctoral thesis in cultural geography, research on land tenure and traditional spaces. The author, obviously fascinated by the customary and the imaginary worlds of Tanna, describes the resilience of its people in resisting all outside interference and political centralism, from the days of European exploration to the present time. As a book that reconstructs the main events and ideas that shaped Vanuatu, and Tanna in particular, it is a useful contribution to historical and ethnological research. Written in French, it deserves to be translated into English. It is an accessible book, providing original glimpses into customary traditions and the political events of 1980 alike. The original creation myths, the story of the John Frum movement, and in particular the description of Vanuatu's political evolution since 1975, are a welcome addition to available works on Vanuatu.

The three main themes developed relate to early European exploration and colonization in "the invaded archipelago," the importance of custom and myths in "the tree and the canoe," and the resistance to outside forces in "the fighting in the island."

The first part of the book presents the historical background at length: the discovery of the archipelago by Spanish, English, and French explorers and its consequences for the indigenous