grows almost daily. Blurring the distinction between American FAS and territorial status, as marked by the former's power over foreign affairs, American Samoa is jousting with Washington over its efforts to assume an international role in the South Pacific. But in major respects, Leibowitz' survey of status relations still holds, and the Congress still temporizes over the Guamanian quest for commonwealth and the Puerto Rican search for a plebiscite. The final sentence in Defining Status refers to the Congress directing "the President to establish an Interagency Group on Freely Associated States' Affairs" (703). As I write, the secretary of Interior is under congressional orders to prepare a policy statement on non-FAS entities, and advance word reports the statement will include a call for a new interagency group to deal with them. (Washington Pacific Report, 1 Dec 1990, 3). Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. The relations between the American-linked island polities remain strained, and the search continues for mechanisms that will contribute to amelioration of the perennial tension.

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Nicholas Thomas' exploration of the role of history in Pacific ethnology does a remarkable job of exemplifying problems in anthropological discourse and of showing that these are of central concern to those of us who work in other parts of the world. Conceding little either to the cruder forms of teleological functionalism and its successors, or to the extreme introversions of much modern reflexive writing, it represents a militant middle ground. Its virtue, however, is not compromise, but a willingness to salvage insights wherever they are to be found. Thomas does not cast out the reflexivist baby with the functionalist bathwater, nor the superficially crude reports of missionaries along with the equally slanted reports of such distinguished anthropologists as Malinowski, toward whose holier-than-thou condescension toward missionary reporting on Melanesia Thomas is sharply reproving. This book displays rare integrity: Thomas' intellectual stance toward the theoretical approaches of others is fully consistent with his own discursive practices.

In outline, Out of Time is an analytical rethinking of some of the major contributions to comparative Pacific ethnology, particularly those of Irving Goldman, Marshall Sahlins, and Jonathan Friedman and M. J. Rowlands. Goldman's comprehensive schema is carefully dissected, shown to rest on numerous misreadings of ethnographic detail, and criticized as evolutionism masquerading as diffusionism. Sahlins, despite the promise of his respect for history, is criticized for reproducing evolutionary models that depend on the perpetuation of elementary sym-
bolic structures, with little account taken of internally generated change. The world-systems approach, in which external stimuli appear to be the sole source of internal change, falls into the same trap, as when it treats politics based on the exchange of prestige goods as an originary form. Evolutionism, if Thomas is right, still lurks deeply within the anthropological imagination.

Yet Thomas is careful not to commit the same error of total rejection that he so reasonably criticizes in others. He is respectful of the achievements of those he criticizes, and builds upon their theoretical insights. His blend of intellectual generosity and stern inspection recognizes hitherto neglected sources of historical specificity such as the archaeological record. Whether his call for “systemic history” will prove less reductionist in the long run must be an open question; a brief polemic leaves no time for extended analysis. Pacific specialists will doubtless wish to test Thomas’ argument on their own grounds while others contemplate its implications elsewhere.

Thomas introduces us early to the cavalier treatment with which anthropologists have usually responded to missionary and other nonprofessional accounts, and points out that a carefully contextualized reading of such texts would have thrust upon the scholarly professionals some awareness of the limits of their own elaborate schemata. Behind Goldman’s disposition to treat the Pacific as an ethnographic laboratory, for example, Thomas finds the unilineal evolutionism that Goldman explicitly claims to reject. Drawing in part on the work of Johannes Fabian, Thomas shows that in dealing with temporal aspects of culture many anthropologists were not appreciably more sensitive than those who lacked their professionalism. Indeed, he argues, in a slightly grumpy but playful and disturbingly plausible genealogy linking Radcliffe-Brown to Geertz, anthropologists have relied on the rhetoric of their calling to exclude these pesky outsiders—and, with them, much real history. Intolerance thus emerges not solely as the legacy of colonialism to the discipline, but also, and in parallel, as a jealous hegemony within its respectable walls. The constitution of “the anthropologist” and “the historian” as mutually exclusive personae is, Thomas argues, cruelly counterproductive.

His is no cry of anguish designed to castigate anthropology. It is simply a more inclusive kind of anthropology. It reads the work of neglected writers in their own cultural and historical contexts. This brings us to the realization, oddly located in a footnote (131n5), that accusations of ethnocentrism can easily prove to be indolent abdications of the onus of proof.

It is perhaps ironic that Thomas does not attend to the current development of theoretically innovative ethnographic work on European societies—a common exclusion among those who have worked in traditional anthropological stamping grounds. In Europe, the integration of history and anthropology has been exceptionally fruitful in ways that Thomas would presumably value. But in Europe, too, Thomas’ case will prove refreshing as we ponder the limiting effects of, for example, failing to take folklorists and travelers seriously enough.

Thomas has given us a stimulating
argument, and one that reinserts colonized peoples in historical experience. It is up to the ethnographers of the Pacific and elsewhere to rise to his challenge.

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Writing specifically as a religious historian, Gary Trompf unfolds a panoramic vision of Melanesian religions from "the old time," referring to precontact religions, to "the new time," occasioned by the advent of Christianity. The most interesting move comes in the third chapter, where Trompf focuses on "positive" and "negative reciprocity," exchange and payback, but as dimensions of Melanesian religion broadly defined. Payback bears on the "logic of retribution," the chapter's title, defined as "the way people think or reason about rewards and punishments" (51). By implication, Melanesian religious thought is basically ethical, a conclusion that also animates Burridge's Mambu: "Warfare and economic exchange can no longer be separated from traditional Melanesian religions because so much of life's vitality was gathered up in these activities" (205).

This opens up Melanesian religious studies to a consideration of "economics," "exchange," and "politics." By the same token, it threatens to marginalize more familiar topics (pollution, magic, sacrifice, and so on). Disappointingly, Trompf pays far greater attention to negative than to positive reciprocity. Since a notion of retribution serves as an explanatory principle in terms of "trouble, sickness and death" (19), sorcery and related topics receive special attention; and the conventional foci of Melanesian religious studies are reprivileged. "Positive reciprocity" receives scant attention in comparison, though it is particularly in regard to ceremonial exchange that Trompf's rather global notion of religion could make an important contribution. His perspective motivates a new look at the relationship between quasi-capitalist, quasi-Christian forms (bisnis and lotu), for example. Trompf implies that Christianity has historically been a secularizing agent in Melanesia, since it has driven traditional religion underground (246) and carried with it a secular-rationalist-scientific cultural orientation. He also shows that cargo cults exemplify a resurgence of traditional religious-cum-ethical sensibility, and an implication of his argument is that seemingly secular transactional forms may be supported by religious values and principles (of reciprocity)—all of which suggests that contact has not always transformed Melanesian societies in "secular-rationalist" ways but has stimulated ritual innovation and religious "revitalization."

Although the book's title seems to invite generalization, Trompf distances himself from most existing generalizations, which he contradicts with sundry particulars, and offers few. There is the useful enunciation of the give-and-take principle as a religious theme. There is a more problematic insistence, inspired by Eliade, on the "rhythmic"