productive and reproductive contexts within one society to the relations between polities, while still giving as much attention to the exchange roles of men and women as siblings as kinship theory has given to their roles as spouses. Within Weiner's general propositions, particular differences between closely related societies may be pursued most profitably. Comparisons between Samoa and Tonga, for example, the latter Polynesian society rarely mentioned by Weiner, may be instructive. The orator chiefs in Samoa were able to acquire power through gifts and payments of fine mats for their services to their sacred chiefs, the ali'i, whereas, in Tonga, their counterparts acquired no comparable political functions through mats or other material means.

Mats in Tonga appear to be less a form of currency than objects of high symbolic value. Many of them were taken from Samoa, which produced more valued and finer mats than ever were produced in Tonga. Weiner quotes kula players as saying that “many men died because of kula shells” (136). When Princess Salamasina was invited to Tonga in the late 1950s by Queen Salote to view an exhibition of fine mats briefly on show from the Tongan palace collection, she wept when she recognized a mat that had been missing from her Malietoa line for many generations. The named fine mat (‘ie malo) was a mat of state and, like many others, had been carried to Tonga as a prize of war or to accompany the marriage of a high-ranking Samoan virgin. Salamasina said to the queen, “men of my family have died for that mat, and it has been here all the time.” Such was the price for having been thought to have kept a valuable mat away from subsequent Samoan exchanges. Far from being regarded as inalienable possessions, the cost of keeping an object that is meant to be given can be life itself. Weiner has raised many interesting issues by her documentation and discussion of the ways in which people try strategically to keep-while-giving, weighing the risks of exposure and being deprived of the object against the rewards of being recognized as powerful enough to possess it—for a time.

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This is a peculiar collection of essays that begins with a rather silly postmodernist introduction, follows with a group of case studies adhering largely to some variant of a political economy perspective, and ends with a conclusion that seeks to bridge the gap between the introduction and the rest of the volume.

The introductory essay by editor Robillard is an amazing example of postmodern nonsense. As with his chapter on aloha shirts (to be discussed later), it is difficult to tell whether the chapter is meant as satire or to be taken seriously. Arguing that there is no constant or generalizable pattern to social
change, Robillard tells us that “social change occurs wherever there is a discourse of its articulation” (21) and that we should avoid trying to shackle this seemingly omnipresent discourse in some material or rational bounds. Equally profound, and illustrative of the essay as a whole, is the author’s characterization of political economy: “the discourse of political economy, an anthropocentric ontology, projects a cognitive-purposive rational actor, and individual who, given the recognized need to extract reproduction from nature, is able to evaluate means to achieve the necessary ends of life” (20). Even more impressive is the number of times the author is able to use the word “discourse.”

In a delightful juxtaposition, the introduction is followed by a chapter by Eugene Ogan and Terence Wesley-Smith examining changing relations of production in Papua New Guinea that opens with a brief discussion of Marxist theory. This is one of the best chapters in the book, offering an insightful survey of changes in Papua New Guinea. Examining inequality in the country in relation to the egalitarian ideology of the Melanesian Way, the authors note that while nationals, rather than foreign interests, have captured most of the wealth derived from the exploitation of the country’s resources, this wealth is very unevenly distributed.

Three other chapters complete the section on Melanesia. John Connell surveys politics and economics in New Caledonia, concluding on a pessimistic note concerning the poor prospects for independence in the near future. Jean-Marc Philibert examines attitudes toward social change in Vanuatu, offering a typology of open versus closed strategies. Vijay Naidu employs a mode of production analysis in his historical survey of Fiji that includes especially useful discussions about labor relations and religious movements.

The section on Micronesia contains four chapters on the Marshall Islands, Guam, the Northern Marianas, and Kiribati. The chapters offer historical overviews with attention to the impact of colonial rule and subsequent related developments. Samuel McPhetres refers to the present as a “period of confusion” (263) for the Chamorros of the Northern Marianas in the face of a pervasive “strike it rich” attitude fostered by the form of economic relations with the outside world. Roger Lawrence’s chapter provides a good summary of the economic issues that have faced Kiribati over the years.

The section on Polynesia is much less coherent. It begins with a chapter by Robert Franco on education of Samoans in Hawai’i that points out the extent to which low levels of education in the Samoan community mean that people have few skills to participate in the state’s modern economy. Christine Ward Gailey offers an overview of chiefly rule, state formation, and class formation in Tonga. She draws attention to the very serious problems facing Tonga today in light of the changing nature of the state and class relations, including questions concerning the fate of both well-to-do and impoverished commoners. Ben Finney highlights the impact of nuclear testing on French Polynesia and the related dependent economy, linking this artificial econ-
omy to French strategic interests. It would have been interesting if he had explored the prospects for French Polynesia in the context of a more unified Europe.

Then there is Robillard’s chapter on aloha shirts (or the chapter in which Robillard seeks to locate his discourse about aloha shirts). The chapter begins with a rather tortured discussion in which the author asks why the Cooper and Daws book, *Land and Power in Hawaii*, which detailed business ties to politicians, failed to find much of an audience. (Despite its length [518 pages] and its being published by a relatively small press, the book went through a number of printings and, for such a book, seems to have been read fairly widely.) Robillard uses this question to draw us into the heart of the chapter, a rather simplistic look at the sociocultural role of aloha shirts and the preppy Reyn’s aloha shirt in particular (reminding us that the book and the shirt are “two kinds of objects”). His analysis is not a very good example of current writing on the sociology and meaning of clothing. We then wander off into a brief discussion about the Filipino community in Hawai’i, where we are treated to the fact that there are “two discourses” among Filipinos, one emphasizing communalism and the other individualism (387). The chapter concludes with an assurance that the Reyn’s aloha shirt is no trivial matter, but rather is “an indicator of a production system, if not a cosmology of hyper-individualism and concomitant social change” (391). Moreover, to return to the poor Filipinos, we are told that because of their Catholicism and communalism they are “largely unaware of the Reyn’s shirt code.”

Leaving such ethereal discourse and coming back down to earth following Robillard’s chapter are two thematic chapters that do not focus on a single country or state. The first is a survey of language and social change in the Pacific by Donald Topping. It is a useful overview that toward the end draws attention to the growing pervasiveness of European languages in the region and the relative ineffectiveness of efforts to preserve indigenous languages. The second is a very good chapter about infant health problems by George Kent. Kent uses Nauru as an example of the extent to which modernization has not helped to improve the health of many Pacific Islanders and links the serious problems of alcoholism, drug use, and the like to a sense of powerlessness in the context of such modernization.

The book ends with a conclusion by Cluny Macpherson. Marred by the occasional unnecessary quotation from the introduction, the chapter raises a number of issues that could be fruitfully discussed and debated. Macpherson does not advocate throwing out the political economy approach, but urges caution, and provides examples of the need for such caution in determining units of analysis and in trying to reconstruct precontact societies. Unfortunately, the chapter appears to be primarily an effort to salvage the job done by the introduction, and we are left without an essay that really does justice to the bulk of the chapters in this book.

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