onslaught of loggers, transmigrants, and oil-palm planters, as a pristine, featureless forest inhabited by a few foragers and traditional communities of slash-and-burners and fishers.

My quibbles with the volume are very few. Even though the authors attempt an explanation, it is not altogether clear why Borneo and the eastern Malay peninsula were combined as a focus. The book is, in any case, very largely about Borneo and presumably will be more useful to those interested in the island than in the peninsula. The authors’ skilled combination of the particular and general, past and present, continues into their concluding chapter that attempts to foresee the future. They do not shy away from making generalizations about environmental and social trends in the focus area sites, and they cautiously suggest what prospects are likely. They do not, however, predict an unstoppable, unidirectional trajectory of environmental degradation. Their complex predictions for the future reflect a profound appreciation of the great diversity and complexity of the past and present of the region, its people, and its environments.

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This book is a wonderful exposition of the art of French ethnogeography, one of the contemporary manifestations of the rich regional tradition in geography in France. In that tradition the region is seen as both a symbolic appropriation of a portion of space by a group and a constituting element in its identity, and as the analysis of territoriality, defined by the network of relationships by which information—knowledge and practice—is transmitted and reproduced. For this very readable book, credit must also go to the translator and the series’ manuscript editor, not only for their effort and care, but for their collaboration with the author to produce an engaging English-language account of a vision of time and space in a resilient and adaptive society, that of Tanna in Vanuatu, where the author carried out field research between 1978 and 1980. To produce this type of understanding of places necessarily involves an emotional attachment to place and people, and an ability to become more of an inside participant than an outside observer, especially in terms of frames of intellectual reference. The outcome, this book, reflects this more than most
scholarly writing about nonwestern societies.

The book consists of three major parts, each of six chapters, plus a conclusion. Part 1, “The Invaded Archipelago” sets the stage, by taking us from the first Spanish descriptions of Melanesian society and its landscapes (“On the Path to Myth: Quiros’s Great Voyage”) to the eighteenth-century accounts of Bougainville and Cook (“Happy ‘Savages’?”). Bonnemaison outlines nineteenth-century contact through a series of vignettes in a chapter entitled “Wild Contact.” He suggests that the sandalwood and labor trade, European attempts at settlement, and general lawlessness so traumatized Melanesian society, that Islanders were at least willing to consider the missionary message, dealt with in two chapters (“The Gospel and the Kingdom” and “Catholic Peasant Missionaries and Marginal Churches”). The final chapter of Part 1, “Gone with the Wind,” deals with the events of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries—the beginnings of joint political control by France and Britain, the establishment of the Anglo-French Condominium, the establishment of plantations and towns, and the events leading up to independence.

Part 2, “Tanna: Stones within Canoes,” moves from an archipelagic overview to the island of Tanna, and from the outsiders’ perspective to that of the Islanders. Following a brief introductory chapter (“Isle of Resilience”), two chapters (“Enchanted Space” and “Society of the Stones”) describe how the Tannese see their island as the center of the universe, an island of foundation, a magical space enchanted by gods and heroes, where space is present before the inception of linear time, territory precedes the social order, and the social order finds its meaning in territory. Three chapters (“Society of Hawks,” “At War,” and “The Return of Magic”) demonstrate how Tannese customs and traditional way of life (kastom) are affected by, and in turn directly affect, the island’s spatial attributes. Throughout this part of the book lengthy excerpts from Tannese myths permit glimpses of the Tannese world of representation, sensations, imagination, and dreams. Bonnemaison argues that the proof of Tanna’s myths is geographical: one may challenge a man’s words, but who can question the genuine tangibility of a place and the magic associated with it? Much of this mythical, yet material, landscape is mappable, and there are three excellent and informative maps in the chapter on “Enchanted Space” and two in that on the “Society of the Stones.”

Part 3, “Fighting on the Island,” chronicles Tanna’s tumultuous recent history. It begins with an examination of the influences of Christianity, including the era known as “Tanna Law” when Christian chiefs asserted themselves as political leaders over all, and documents the nature of pagan resistance, as well as the beginnings of the John Frum millennial movement. Although these two traditions differ, they had a common purpose of standing in the way of Christian power and of reestablishing kastom. Chapters entitled “The Pagans’ Resistance,” “John Frum People,” “The Bible Revisited,” “Kastom and Nation,”
“The Revolt,” and “The Meaning of Tanna’s Kastom” document not only the resilience of kastom, but the way in which the Tannese reexamined and reinvented kastom. To them, the arrival of different waves of Europeans represented just one moment in a series of even more essential moments in time, and relying on their extensive memory, the Tannese integrated these splinters without having to change their own image of the world. According to Bonnemaison, the Tannese notion of reticulated space with multiple nodes linked by ethnoculturally based principles of alliance, their nostalgia for the past, their quest for deeper relationships with nature, their awareness of spatial and ecological limitations, their mistrust for politicized religions, their distrust of the concept of statehood, and even their ideas concerning “war by consent” seem remarkably modern, and may offer lessons for humankind.

Bonnemaison demonstrates that among Tannese, cultural identity is a geographical identity that flows from the memories and values attached to places, both in the past and at present. Overall, the book is a fine example of how a concern for space and place can inform scholarship, something that much Anglo-American social science is finally acknowledging in contemporary social theory. The book also illustrates how a concern with individual and group experience, with real subjects and their lives, with practice, rather than abstractions and structures, can enrich a study and bring a place and its people to life in the printed page. Bonnemaison very successfully articulates the different ways of knowing, the different epistemologies and ontologies of knowledge, extant in his sources, Tannese oral tradition. An important vehicle he uses to achieve this is the identification of the metaphors the Tannese use to characterize their society. “Great Space,” is a metaphor for the “inner space” of the mind; “stones,” which take root, and “trees” are metaphors for men; the “bird” is the metaphor for women; and the “canoe” is the metaphor for the community. This fascination with the metaphors of tree, canoe, and road, Bonnemaison conjectures, helps explain why Tannese society is not a mosaic of groups but a network of groups that see space—the space of their island and that of the world—primarily as a nexus of places and connecting roads, including today the United States, John Frum’s homeland, which is seen as the privileged partner with whom Tannese can carry on a dialogue about the future of the world and the significance of modernity.

This is a fascinating book, even a magic book. It is a story that can tell us much about ourselves as it informs us of how the Tannese have grappled with modernity. This book is an imperative for those social scientists and historians who wish to understand the crucial theoretical role of space in interpreting society, and for everyone interested in the contemporary Pacific.

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