different strategies for pursuing nation-making discourse. Kaplan, for example, argues persuasively for the role of rituals “that enshrine particular narratives as the real or true ones” (116). She then explores for Fiji the manner in which particular narratives become routinized or institutionalized, thus obtaining legitimacy and authority. Foster finds narrative coherence in print-mediated advertising, pursuing tropes of commodification and consumption through the landscape of popular media. His interest in the role of advertising as a site of national identity formation is reflected in the concerns of several contributors who attempt to trace connections between state institutions, exchange practices, and conceptions of the person.

The substantial literature on the invention of tradition in the Pacific has noted repeatedly the relevance of national economic policies for local, cultural identities. Insofar as states regulate the flow of people and goods across regional and national boundaries, they exert significant influences over the contexts and purposes of identity formation. Several authors note that concepts of modern individualism are tied up with the establishment of market economies that give new meanings to objects and land and to the social relations they define. Citing Hirsch’s chapter on the Fuyuge, LiPuma characterizes the penetration of global capital into local exchange economies as a kind of war: “Should local cultures surrender to the forces of capitalism and take advantage of state-fostered opportunities for economic advancement, then they also must surrender their cultural image of what it is to be a person” (59).

There is much in this volume for a range of interests. It is destined to be a standard reading in the literature on Melanesia as a cultural and political region. But it also merits a wider reading among audiences concerned with productions of national identities generally, particularly in small nonwestern communities enmeshed in larger nation-making projects. Michigan Press would do well to make the volume available in paperback so that it can reach the wide readership it deserves.

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This review is written at the end of 1996, a year in which democratic assumptions and values came under further scrutiny in the Pacific: there were pressures on the press (and some parliamentarians) in Tonga; the committee reviewing Fiji’s postcoup constitution presented its findings; and, as is now customary, Western Samoa’s parliamentary elections suggested differences between Samoan traditions and western views about appropriate campaign practices. At a time when island leaders and peoples are reasserting the vitality and relevance of their own cus-
toms and cultures, Stephanie Lawson (of the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies) "takes a critical approach to contemporary assertions of tradition in the political sphere," in particular "the manipulation of cultural traditions for political purposes" (viii). Her analysis, at times probing and effective, emphasizes that "the people who suffer most from the 'romantic approach' to tradition are the ordinary people of the region" (4), and she quotes from Epeli Hau'ofa, to assert that "it is the privileged who can afford to tell the poor to preserve their traditions...in the final analysis it is the poor who have to live out the traditional culture; the privileged can merely talk about it" (4–5).

A study that asserts the relevance for Pacific Island polities of western democratic values, Lawson admits, "does entail some value judgements." She argues, however, that "the true worth of study in the humanities or the social sciences is that it equips people to make value judgements, not to avoid them. This is neither a popular nor a 'safe' position, but it will be defended not simply from the perspective of an 'external' supporter of democratic values, but also from the perspective of those in Fiji, Tonga and Western Sāmoa who do not necessarily accept the eternal legitimacy of so-called natural indigenous hierarchies and who have provided the major internal impetus for movements promoting democratization" (6). Lawson's defense of her own perspective questions the sacrosanct status of some of the existing published material on Pacific Islands politics: "some may grant a privileged status to 'insider' accounts of these issues, [but] there is no reason to believe that these should be immune from external critiques, or that there is only one 'inside' view" (5).

Although by no means an apologist for all things western, and still less for what might be called the customs and traditions of the colonial period, Lawson frankly maintains that many of the western-derived "practices and institutions which attempt to provide for a measure of self-government as well as for the protection of human and civil rights are worth defending" (27). In fact, Pacific Island states do assert the value and relevance of democracy—"all of the island states claim to be democratic"—but while "the word 'democracy' has received almost universal acclamation, neither its institutions nor the values that sustain it have achieved the same level of esteem" (29). Is Fiji a democracy? "Adam may have named the tiger because it looked like a tiger, but it is hardly adequate to name something a democracy simply because it looks like one on the surface" (35).

Apart from some broader theoretical comment, Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific is essentially a set of case studies. Those unfamiliar with Fiji, Tonga, and Western Sāmoa will find the accounts of their political and historical experience reasonably succinct and useful. The review of Fiji's independence and postcoup constitutions, for instance, leads to some particularly sharp conclusions: "it remains highly unlikely that any significant constitutional reform will take place" (74); Fiji's Indian community is likely
to remain “a marginal political force in parliament,” its place in the scheme of things determined by the gravitational pull of “intra-Fijian struggles for political control” (74); “the 1990 constitution rested largely on claims which were self-servingly false (with respect to threats to Fijian rights), while at the same time disguising the real motivation for the new constitution, namely, the attempted consolidation of chiefly authority” (75).

The chapter on Western Sāmoa is, inevitably, less dramatic. As for Tonga, where a pro-democracy movement struggles against constitutional rigidity and authoritarian traditions, Lawson demonstrates how what is in the west an often antiquarian interest—knowledge of family history—can be crucial to the demarcation of boundaries between those with political power and those without. Thus Queen Salote’s ability to be “eventually able to identify each and every one of her subjects—no mean feat when dealing with a population of around 40,000” (97)—was an important part of her power, since establishing “genealogical credentials” was critical in delineating the social and political hierarchy: “commoners were, by definition, completely irrelevant” (97). Although democratic reformers raise intelligible questions of accountability, good government, and individual rights, political change in Tonga requires not only constitutional revision—that would seem, great though the obstacles may be, the easy part—but a profound reshaping of underlying cultural perspectives.

In a larger sense, this study may be viewed as a contribution to debates on issues in societies far from the Pacific as well. Is democracy, and its norms—including respect for an irreducible set of individual human rights—universally desirable, everywhere to be preferred to alternative cultural values? Are democratic values an “introduced” idea with no resonance at all in traditional societies; and, if so, does that therefore limit their wider application and erode their legitimacy? On all these matters, and more, Lawson has something to say, yet the book’s principal achievement may lie with its intellectual courage and honesty. Lawson challenges “a new age of ‘white liberal guilt’ and ‘political correctness’ in which it has become unfashionable, in some circles, for Westerners to offer critiques of indigenous representations of their traditions” (162). But if external critics are “unwelcome interlopers,” while “internal critics who appeal to democratic norms . . . are traitors to their own cultures and traditions” (165), by whom can the policies and practices of Pacific Island politicians be criticized?

Into this genuinely frosty atmosphere comes Lawson, answering those who would argue that “democracy as a form of government is both inappropriate and illegitimate in the South Pacific because it is Western and because it is not a part of ‘our tradition’” (171). She turns again to the realities of postcoup power: “We should ask, for example, which Fijian ‘tradition’ supports the political order now in place in Fiji” (171).

Some years ago I wondered whether western academics would be prepared to take a critical stance toward Pacific Island governments under indigenous
(as opposed to colonial) rule. “Now that the Pacific is comprised principally of independent or self-governing political entities ... the tasks of political analysis and criticism become somewhat more difficult. This is especially so for the expatriate, for the non-indigenous observer, who quite rightly may feel uncomfortable with an independent intellectual/political role. . . . [W]ill political scientists question the propriety of criticizing the generation of Pacific islanders who struggled to achieve independence or self-rule for their peoples?” (“The Teaching of Pacific Island Politics: The Role of Political Science,” in Proceedings of the 1982 Politics Conference: Evolving Political Cultures in the Pacific Islands, edited by Jerry Love-land, Lā`ie, 1983, 16–17). Lawson’s forthright and comprehensive critique provides a controversial, challenging, and confident response to these at times awkward dilemmas.

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Land tenure is one of the enduring themes of studies of Pacific Island anthropology, geography, history, and sociology. Land lies at the heart of identity, custom, community, and well-being for most living in the Pacific, and much has been written on the subject, including local studies and broad surveys. It would seem difficult to add much that was new empirically or conceptually. Yet this book does so, and does so admirably.

The approach and format of Land, Custom and Practice in the South Pacific is novel. Though an edited book, comprising four detailed country case studies and three general essays all separately authored, it is very much a corporate work with coherent themes and objectives. The general essays provide the context for the book. Gerard Ward and Elizabeth Kingdon present first a wide-ranging survey of land tenure, drawing examples from as far afield as Japan, Europe, and Africa, and establish the themes of the diversity and dynamism of communal systems of land tenure, the effect of commodification of land, and the role of the state. They follow with a chapter on land tenure in the Pacific Islands—a very useful general survey of changing custom, law, and practice from the late indigenous period to the present. Antony Hooper and Ward contribute a concluding chapter that draws together the themes from the case studies, challenges the rhetoric of “tradition” in Pacific Island land tenure, and argues for the necessity of land reform.

The country case studies, which comprise the bulk of the book, present the findings of research by anthropologists and geographers with considerable experience in the respective countries. Margaret Rodman writes on Vanuatu, Tim O’Meara on Western Sāmoa, Kerry James on Tonga, and Gerard Ward on Fiji. The authors, because they have worked on a range