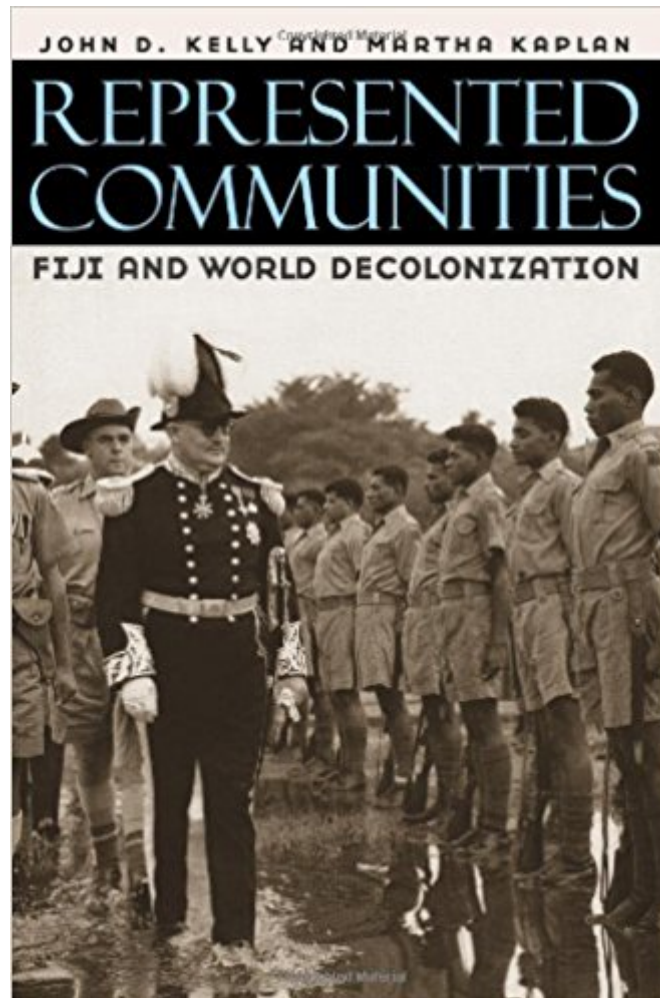




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Represented Communities: Fiji And World Decolonization



Synopsis

In 1983 Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* revolutionized the anthropology of nationalism. Anderson argued that "print capitalism" fostered nations as imagined communities in a modular form that became the culture of modernity. Now, in *Represented Communities*, John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan offer an extensive and devastating critique of Anderson's depictions of colonial history, his comparative method, and his political anthropology. The authors build a forceful argument around events in Fiji from World War II to the 2000 coups, showing how focus on "imagined communities" underestimates colonial history and obscures the struggle over legal rights and political representation in postcolonial nation-states. They show that the "self-determining" nation-state actually emerged with the postwar construction of the United Nations, fundamentally changing the politics of representation. Sophisticated and impassioned, this book will further anthropology's contribution to the understanding of contemporary nationalisms.

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Customer Reviews

In the year 2000, Fiji was the site of chaos: a coup d'État; martial law; near civil war; local takeovers of police stations, factories, resorts, even military bases. Why has the social contract of the nation-state been unsustainable there? What is this social contract in real history, especially since World War II? This book reconfigures the issues for the anthropology of nations and nationalism, away from nationalism as the culture of modernity, toward the nation-state as an artifact of American power. Benedict Anderson's vastly influential *Imagined Communities* led a

generation of scholars to study national imaginaries, print capitalism, shared memories and identities. Now, *Represented Communities* offers an extensive and devastating critique of Anderson's approach. The authors focus not on imagination but on legal, ritual, and electoral representation in the formation of communities. They stress not modernity, but decolonization. They track consequences of nationalist sentiments, but also of nation-state realities. Their emphasis is not on memory and identity, but on will and power. Fiji's story is one of legally entrenched racism and struggles for, against, and about democracy. Its dramatic crises reveal the force and limits of changing global political structures, empires to nation-states. Sophisticated and impassioned, this book portrays the era of decolonization not as the last wave as modern nationalism, but as the actual onset of the nation-state, with a fundamentally different politics of representation.

John D. Kelly is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago and the author of *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji*. Martha Kaplan is an associate professor of anthropology at Vassar College and the author of *Neither Cargo nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination in Fiji*.

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