may encounter into kin. Thus, Pulapese kinship, a traditional adaptive strategy which maximized the network of potential resources for these atoll dwellers, is updated and extended to serve in the newer contexts they find themselves in today.

Diplomas and Thatch Houses will be a relatively rare and important Micronesian contribution to the growing literature in the fields of ethnicity, cultural identity, politics of culture, and anthropology and education. The text is very clearly written and also contains good overviews of Pulapese kinship and the history of schooling in a Micronesian society.

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The waning of colonialism and the breakup of the Soviet alliance have given rise to a plethora of new states. Many of these “emerging” nations face a political identity crisis as their citizens adapt unfamiliar governmental models to local conditions and priorities. Some Pacific Island nations have been dealing with this challenge for decades. The question addressed in this collection of essays could hardly be more timely: whether indigenous Pacific cultural forms and values facilitate or hinder the establishment of “democracy.”

Ron Crocombe and his collaborators invited a number of academics and politicians in the region to write about the relationship between culture and democracy. The resulting volume contains sixteen chapters ranging in length from 8 to 22 pages, and three poems. Introductory essays by Crocombe and Uentabo Neemia give an overview of decolonization in the Pacific and discuss the varied meanings of democracy, with Crocombe pointing out some of the internal contradictions found in modern democracies. All of the major island states are represented in the collection, Polynesia and Melanesia receiving the bulk of the coverage and only two chapters devoted to Micronesia. Of the six Melanesian essays, four are on Fiji.

As is suggested by the range in length, the essays vary widely in the depth of their treatment. The shorter pieces in particular tend to offer overly general, idealized, and unrevealing statements. “Traditional values” and “modern values” are frequently juxtaposed but seldom grounded in specifics. Some of the essays have no citations; bibliographies, where present, tend to be brief. The chapters also vary in clarity of expression and in the attention paid to the relationship between culture and democracy. Most deal with culture—primarily indigenous forms of authority—more than democracy. Culture change and the effects of colonialism are prominent themes.

The consensual points in the volume tend to be unremarkable: that Pacific
societies were communal and consensual; that Pacific cultures have adopted foreign innovations but retain their uniqueness. More interesting are the differences of opinion about whether there are indigenous precedents for democracy, and whether democracy is desirable for island nations. Most of the writers are positive on the latter point, but the authors are split on the question whether “democracy” is inherent to island political systems. Tony Deklin identifies “participation, consultation and consensus” (35) as “fundamental cultural values” that are conducive to democracy in Papua New Guinea. Ati George Sokomanu similarly equates ni-Vanuatu egalitarianism with democracy. In contrast Takiora Ingram, writing on the Cook Islands, sees democracy and Polynesian hierarchy as “the antithesis of each other” (154). The Micronesian essays—Resio Moses and Gene Ashby writing on Pohnpei, and Sam McPhetres on the Northern Marianas—chart an intermediate position: though foreign in origin, democracy has been long established in the region, and with minimal conflict.

The most controversial essays are the four chapters on Fiji, three of which take a pro-coup stance. Since the three authors—Asesela Ravuvu, Filipe N. Bole, and Isikeli Mataitoga—are all associated with the Fijian government, it is difficult not to see these essays as self-serving. Characterizations of opposing positions are mostly of the “straw man” variety, such as this statement by Ravuvu: “First, the ‘sweep it all under the carpet’ or non-racial school of thought. Protagonists of this school try to forget ethnicity and carry on as if there is no such thing” (60). Ravuvu’s argument exemplifies the “primordialist” view of ethnicity. While other chapters make frequent references to modernization and culture change, in Bole’s essay we find the assertion that “the Fijian social system, of which the chiefs are an integral part, remains today, its structure virtually unaltered” (73). Bole is to be commended for noting that “democracy” has variable meanings and institutional forms; he sees this variability, however, as evidence that democracy is “culturally rootless” (78) and an imposed idea that many nonwestern nations “can afford to do without” (70). The third author in this set, Isikeli Mataitoga, asserts that “the Westminster system of democratic idealism has failed in Fiji” (90), and that “the dictates of justice” in Fiji differ from those of western democracies because of “the special characteristics of the Fijian Society” (89).

Since the three pro-Taukei writers are offering variants of the same argument, one wonders why all three were included in the volume. The editorial imbalance conveys an impression of partisanship. The impression is strengthened in the final chapter, where the editors repeat without comment the pro-coup writers’ interpretation that the Fiji coup “was caused primarily by ethnic divisions” (254). The Indo-Fijian historian Brij Lal presents the only alternative analysis of the Fijian crisis. His argument is compelling, in part because it avoids simplistic and superficial explanations. In his view the coup was largely about securing power for an established group of chiefs.
Regrettably, only one chapter is devoted to Western Samoa, the oldest democracy in the island Pacific. Aiono Dr Fanaafi Le Tagaloa’s essay focuses on matai chiefly authority. Because family decisions are made by consensus and the matai is the family’s chosen representative, Aiono views the Samoan system as “a truly democratic system of government” (131). At the end of the chapter Aiono presents a fascinating insider’s account of Samoa’s switch to universal suffrage in 1990. Although positive about democracy as a political model, she sees the change as an unconstitutional ploy by the party in power to strengthen its position.

Another authoritative insider’s view of democratization is provided by ‘I. Futa Helu, who lucidly explains the prodemocracy movement in Tonga. “Fourth World” Pacific peoples—the Maori and the Hawaiians—are also represented in the collection. John Henderson evaluates the underrepresentation of Pacific Islanders in the New Zealand electoral system, and William Tagupa analyzes Hawai’i’s political economy. Tagupa’s candid critique of Hawai’i’s incestuous political culture will ring true to local residents. As a final point, the book is badly in need of careful proofreading and copyediting—a flaw that, in this reviewer’s experience, is unfortunately common in USP books.

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This book roams across the world of small tropical islands, encompassing a chapter on interisland shipping in Fiji and the Cook islands, a chapter on the present and prospective economic situation of the Federated States of Micronesia, other chapters concerned with various aspects of several island groups in the Indian Ocean, two chapters that deal with São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea, and still other chapters on islands in the Caribbean. Given this variety, it seemed at first glance a good idea that all nine of the book’s maps are grouped at the beginning for easy reference; however, the egregious errors on some of the maps get the book off to a bad start. To mention only some: Palau (Belau) is shown as one of the Federated States of Micronesia; Bougainville is included in Solomon Islands; the boundary between Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya is omitted; the map coordinates shown on the map of Micronesia are so grossly wrong that, for instance, rather than being in the southern hemisphere, Nauru is shown to be located at 5 degrees north and too far west by 25 degrees of longitude. On the map of the Caribbean, the cartographer followed the tradition of most tourist maps in omitting the name of the largely beachless island of Dominica, though it is mentioned several times in