Tabani’s perceived intention of appealing to a broader French readership, but to the extent that he is an anthropologist and this work is published by an academic publisher, his work falls short of the standards that one should expect from a discussion of such an intensively analyzed and critiqued subject.

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The Future of Tokelau is an important and challenging study of the recent history of Tokelau and its relationship with New Zealand as a colonial and decolonizing power. The book is important because it covers a very critical phase in Tokelau’s recent history, potentially of interest to a wide readership. It documents in great detail the consequences of increased interaction between various village institutions, the growing communities of Tokelauans living overseas (mainly in New Zealand), the New Zealand Foreign Service, and the United Nations, to mention some of the major actors in this transnational social field. The text is challenging because for the most part it unashamedly argues against any outside involvement in Tokelau affairs, despite occasional mention of pleas from Tokelau authorities to the contrary. While the book cannot, however, be said to romanticize tradition against the workings of modernity, the authors seem to view nationhood as inherently contrary to the Tokelau way of life (faka-Tokelau). The reason for this stance can be traced to the historical relationships between the three atolls Fakaofo, Nukunonu, and Atafu, which are competitive and at times antagonistic—hardly an ideal model for establishing nationhood.

Readers with an interest in the precolonial aspects of Tokelau’s past, and the dynamics of atoll politics and village life, can favorably read the present work in company with the comprehensive volume Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography by Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper (1997). Huntsman and Hooper have conducted anthropological research on and in relation to Tokelau since 1967. The seriousness and extent of their engagement with Tokelau provides an example for other scholars to follow. Their early work concentrated on traditional anthropological issues of social organization such as kinship, gender, land tenure, and subsistence economy to mention some, and used the standard method of participant observation as their tool. But the more recent publications have a decidedly historical orientation, and are based on a combination of observational data, earlier field notes, interviews, and material gained from archival studies.

Whereas this approach, called historical ethnography by Huntsman and Hooper, and continued by Huntsman with Kalolo, provides rich and very valuable information about aspects of
life in Tokelau in “the days gone by” (na aho kua teka), to place so much of the interpretative burden of a study of contemporary social processes on archival and secondary sources is at best a daring venture. It is a fundamental tenet in social anthropology that any ethnographic information should be related to the social context of its production in order to ensure the comparative validity of our interpretations—hence the common insistence on participant observation as constituting a cornerstone of anthropological practice. In parts of Huntsman and Kalolo’s work, however, strong statements about individual actors’ actions and intentions are presented on the basis of material that is of unclear origins. The resulting impression shares a good resemblance to village gossip in Tokelau, which tends to draw everyone in to engaging in (and reproducing) this kind of discourse. In particular, prescribing points for behavior to papalagi and Tokelauan participants equally is a serious weakness in an otherwise ethnographically solid publication. The book is argumentative, and clearly takes sides—for and against those central to the development of a Tokelau response to its macro-political situation. The criteria for positive or negative mention are not explicitly described, but it seems that being in touch with Tokelau values of collective participation (mao-poopo), loving generosity (alofa), and, not the least important according to Kalolo, having proficiency in bilingual translation, certainly leads to a more positive valuation.

This volume is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a preamble describing the period from 1960 to approximately 1977, with the establishment of a national meeting forum, or what came to be called the General Fono, and the beginnings of the Tokelau Public Service. This part of the book presents a very interesting picture of how international charters, governmental institutions, and intensely local practices and conceptions came into contact, and how they had to improvise and change as a result. The micro-perspective on large-scale processes of decolonization, aid programs, and the development of external relations offered by the case of Tokelau is unique. Part two discusses the establishment and the evolution of the Tokelau Public Service, including the education system and relationships to political institutions, from a predominantly New Zealand–staffed apparatus to a locally governed public service. The issues relating to localizing the public service from its base in Apia, Ūa, to Tokelau have been many and difficult, but a common wish that the administration should be placed under village authorities has prevailed. In my view, the flexibility with which this transition and devolution of powers has been carried out on all sides (New Zealand administration, the State Services Commission [SSC], and the Tokelau-staffed transitional team) is nothing short of impressive. The exercise in itself represents a politically pragmatic solution that is unprecedented.

The third and last section of the book deals with the events and issues related to the first referenda ever to be held in Tokelau concerning the issue of Tokelau’s future legal status. It focuses
on the responsibility for the political and infrastructural institutions already implemented, and on New Zealand's financial, military, and other future responsibilities for a self-governing Tokelau. Issues related to fear of a perceived loss of an established third-party appeal process (represented by New Zealand) became apparent in the communities. The seriousness of these concerns is illustrated by the proliferation of complicated cases in which village councils, especially when working in combination with the recently empowered offices of faipule (the village elected official responsible for external matters) and pulenuku (the village elected official responsible for internal matters), become powerful enough to occasionally overrule the judgments of local, and supposedly independent, representatives of the public service.

The problem of maintaining professional distance and neutrality in kinship-based communities of small population size points to very real challenges when it comes to maintaining satisfactory services in areas such as health and education, but also in the running of political and legal systems at present. The great achievement of this work is that it points out these and similar dilemmas. Solutions are not easily found, however, if pragmatism and cross-cultural cooperation are dismissed as viable ways of working.

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Doloris Cogan’s We Fought the Navy and Won explores the battles waged at the highest levels of the federal government that preceded Guam’s transition from a possession of the United States administered by the Navy to its current political status as an unincorporated, self-governing territory. Cogan focuses primarily on the period 1945–1950 when she was employed as a writer and editor for the monthly News Letter and Guam Echo at the Institute of Ethnic Affairs in Washington DC. She recounts the struggle to end military rule on Guam by both its native inhabitants and supporters on the US continent through her own experiences of chronicling and witnessing such events. Cogan concerns herself specifically with the incidents leading up to the famous Guam Congress Walkout of 1949—a central event that ultimately led to the signing of the Organic Act of Guam, which granted the island self-government and its residents US citizenship. She does so admittedly from a “Washington perspective,” providing a memoir that illustrates the ways that this pivotal event in Guam’s history continues to be interpreted through American lenses.

Cogan’s opening chapter provides a survey of Guam’s history, using the island’s first contact with the West as