Whilst there are a number of publications on politics in the Pacific, this book is the first collection that specifically focuses on political parties in the Pacific island region.

The individual chapters largely address specific countries. There is a definite Melanesian bias in the content of the book, with individual chapters focusing on Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia. The only non-Melanesian country to be the subject of a chapter is Samoa. In addition, two chapters provide a more general overview: the introductory chapter, which considers the nature of political parties from a more abstract perspective, and chapter 3, which examines how electoral laws throughout the Pacific Islands region impact upon the structure and actions of parties.

Whilst the book is groundbreaking in its subject matter, the content is not particularly pioneering. The length of each chapter means that there cannot be an in-depth analysis of the issues relating to how culture, the legal structures and the political milieu interact to affect the formation and actions of political parties and their members, and the ways in which political parties interact with electorates. Instead, each author necessarily spends considerable time setting the context by outlining the various party structures that exist.

A lot of the content of the book can be found in other sources, including conference and discussion papers. However, it is not always easy to access this material so this book has value even for those who are already familiar with the subject matter. For people who are just beginning to explore the issues of political parties in the Pacific region, this volume provides an excellent place to begin. Another strength of this book is that it easily allows for comparative analysis of different countries. In this respect chapter 3, on the political consequences of electoral laws, is particularly useful. The index also helps to track issues and themes that are found across a number of country-specific chapters.

Given the nature of edited collections the lack of depth can hardly be considered a criticism. Instead, this volume should be commended for focusing on an area that has not been the subject of much academic literature. Ideally, it will prompt more writing on the topic or even further volumes, which could concentrate on political parties in individual countries and thus allow for greater depth.

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