spurned in the Highlands for high-powered automatic weapons.

Unfortunately, the stories of Southern Highlands, Enga, Port Moresby and Lae have come to mean the whole of Papua New Guinea and diplomatic warnings about travel to Papua New Guinea do not differentiate between centres. Largely, the rest of the country is peaceful and there would be no more chance of encountering a gun in a crime than anywhere else in the world.

The book does not try to analyse the reasons for the concentration of guns in two cities and one region of the country, nor does it come up with many practical suggestions for the reduction and control of weapons in Papua New Guinea hot spots. It encourages the further restriction of ammunition, it mentions Australian Army attempts to secure military armouries but does not think that amnesties and voluntary surrender schemes are enough on their own. In the Southern Highlands, the success of PEACE Foundation Melanesia in promoting mediation and restorative justice is one attempt to persuade people that there is an alternative to the gun culture. Eventually, the community has to reject the use of violence as a way of life and dispute resolution, which means trusting the rule of law.

Mike Manning

Apem Moa: Solomon Islands leadership

Solomon Islanders have a thing about leadership, about those people who are truly ‘big’—the ‘bottom man’; the one with the spark of efficacy, the common touch. Chiefs are in meetings, politicians are in airplanes, churches are full of workshops on leadership. This is not a country, at least as far as I have seen, where work on group process ever appears to be very prominent. It is a country that wants to build leaders, not methods. But then, after all that, nobody seems particularly inclined to follow. Well, as they say, that’s Solomon.

Apem Moa (Pijin for ‘raise the bar’, say the authors) has been written by two education faculty academics, one a Solomon Islander now living in New Zealand and the other a Canadian. Sanga, a former director of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, recently completed his PhD under Walker, a leadership specialist. Their book is a leadership education course text suited to group training or self-teaching. Its chapters run through a comprehensive range of leadership topics: current challenges, authority and influence, ethical principals and constraints, conscience, convictions, leadership development and responsibilities. The book’s introduction points to a crisis in leadership as a root cause of the Solomons crisis of 1998–2003 and frames the book as a practical answer to ‘the need to mobilise leadership at all levels’. The brief preamble to each chapter gives some insight to the realities of leadership in Solomon Islands. Each chapter then moves on to main points from modern leadership theory and ends with questions for discussion.

In tune with Solomon Islands’ strongly religious public life, the book makes a number of appeals for divine guidance in leadership. The book’s underlying theory sees social action in terms of a tension between conscience and material self-interest, an approach based here on the idea of the moral individual in liberal Protestantism. Recent research elsewhere on corruption shows that while this individual battle between the poles of conscience and self-interest is a popular idea, it is actually overestimated in its importance. A large
study by Miller (2006) of interactions between the public and street level officials reaches the conclusion that ‘[r]ather than wishing for “more honest” officials, or prioritising stricter controls and penalties (as do the public) or higher salaries (as do officials) as solutions to the problem of corruption—the analytic findings point to the importance of reducing the situations in which corruptibility is most likely to be translated into corruption’. This fits in with an accompanying game-theory analysis by Mishra (2006) that indicates if the system is already rotten (endemic corruption as an equilibrium outcome), attempting reform by introducing ‘good’ behaviour by a few individuals cannot help: the ‘good’ suffer too high a cost. This supports my own bleak view that social environments can, stochastically and inexorably, grind down Sanga and Walker’s ‘just say no’ moral individual. Miller suggests that changing the setting in which action occurs is more important. In relevance to his topic of street-level officials, his suggestions include alternative access points for services, better appeals procedures, and ‘a more public setting for client–official interactions’. We can think of other reforms that might affect the footing of power relationships in Solomon Islands. The point here is that there are strong reasons why working on the organisational and institutional settings to action is more effective than concentrating on personal values of leadership. I would like to have seen the book at least guide the reader toward the ‘next step’, shall we say, of strengthening these social aspects to decision making.

That said, I would concede to the authors the obvious counterpoint to my argument, which is that it will take good leaders to implement these reforms: hence the book. *Touche*, but I maintain that Solomon Islanders are all too prone to seeing ‘leadership’ as the magic bullet to everything. Methodical ways of working together is the other side of the coin, and the book needs to have been contextualised in terms of achieving an overall balance of effort between these two facets to governance.

I noticed that, for the most part, the challenges for potential leaders who do not have the social asset of being a senior male (women and young people) are not addressed, nor are the challenges of leadership in particular contexts (customary/modern sector). Some of the discussion questions are directed to such issues, but the authors provide no insight as to how to build on the kinds of answers that may arise, nor do they really provide sufficient material to inform those sorts of answers. I noticed that the discussion format they promote is very much one of sitting down talking. Why no suggestions for visual techniques, role-plays and other formats that may suit some users of the book?

I felt uneasy about the ‘further reading’ list presented in the back of the book. All of it is managerial leadership literature from the United States and the United Kingdom. The clear implication is that this literature represents the best of modern, universally applicable ideas that just need to be transferred to Solomon Islands for all to be well. How do we know that to be true? Although a limited separate list of Solomon Islands leadership literature is presented finally, I think the book fails overall to deal with the particular cultural constructions of leadership in Solomon Islands and the wider Pacific.

Nevertheless, the book will fill a gap for material that can be used in various training workshops in the country, right through from youth life-skills courses to parliamentary leaders’ workshops. The book is solid; it is clearly and comprehensively written for what it sets out to achieve. So, *gohet apen moa olketa*.

Ian Scales
The Australian National University
Foreign Flowers: institutional transfer and good governance in the Pacific islands

Peter Larmour, 2005, University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu, 220pp. ISBN 0 8248 29336

What is good governance? Who should determine this matter in a particular country? Is there one ideal model, against which all specific national arrangements can be judged to be either good or poor approximations? Or should we recognise the need for a range of relevant and apposite models? In assessing the appropriateness of certain models, how much weight should be given to the history and culture of each nation? Would this leave us in a relativist vacuum with no firm standards by which to assess the adequacy of institutions?

These are big questions, requiring complex answers. Dr Peter Larmour offers a clear and wide-ranging account of why these have become important issues in the Pacific island nations.

In the first instance, during the period of colonialism, institutional change was largely imposed by force. In more recent decades, changes have been strongly influenced through the direct and indirect impact of foreign aid programs, in which power and coercion are not necessarily absent, and regional relationships/forums. In both periods, external prescriptions for change have been mediated through local leaders and local cultures. In exploring these issues, Larmour alludes to the diverse histories of many countries, and the different fate of many institutional experiments. He also explores how the various sponsors of reforms have evaluated their successes and failures, noting the perspectives of local leaders and reformers, aid donors, international financial institutions, and their consultants and academic advisers. He is sceptical about recipes for reform, whether from Transparency International or the World Bank.

Foreign Flowers is a sophisticated interdisciplinary work that tackles many aspects of how and why European and American ideas about good governance have been inserted into the theory and practice of institution-building in the Pacific. Larmour uses the term ‘transfer’ of policies and institutional practices, rather than the value-laden assumptions of ‘development’ and ‘evolution’. He sets out to examine the following questions.

- Where did the (new) institutions come from?
- Why did so many local institutions end up looking like those in the West?
- Why did some transfers take hold and others not?
- What were the effects of transfer?
- What has been the fate of a particular institution, the state?
- What role does culture play in the transfer and in resistance to the transfer? (p.10)

Larmour widely employs empirical examples to illustrate his general themes. Five policy areas provide the main focus of his analysis:

- the standardisation of customary land ownership and registration
- constitutionalism and the imposition of the rule of law through the state
- electoral laws and representative democracy
- public sector reform in the name of efficiency and effectiveness, but often

References


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