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**Title: Reflections on Violence in Melanesia.**

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This volume is based around the papers presented at the 'Violence in Melanesia Workshop' held in Canberra during December 1997. The workshop was convened by the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project (SSGM) of the Australian National University, and represents a significant achievement on the part of SSGM in developing and promulgating research into issues of social development and governance in the countries of Melanesia.

The volume is eclectic in nature. Alongside contributions from established 'Pacific scholars' are items from both new researchers in the field and also non-academics working as activists and as members of non-government organisations. The contributions provide a cross-disciplinary approach incorporating elements of law, politics, anthropology, cultural studies and history.

The content of the volume is extensive both in terms of the topics that are addressed and the geographical scope of the contributions. Violence is examined from a number of perspectives and is discussed in a wide range of contexts including the impact of colonialism (Weir, chapter 3); struggles for independence and recognition of statehood (Chanter, chapter 5; Ondawame, chapter 20); the place of violence in the self-perception of Melanesians, particularly young Melanesian males (Mitchell, chapter 14, Monsell-Davis, chapter 15 and Ward, chapter 16); and issues of violence and gender. This last aspect of the book is dominant in terms of the proportion of the text that it occupies. Two sections of the book 'The gender of violence' (chapters 6 – 9) and 'Non-government organisations and domestic violence' (chapters 10 – 13), have been devoted to this topic. In addition the epilogue written by Margaret Jolly presents an overview of the contributions as seen through the prism of gender. The adoption of such a slant should not be considered problematic as it provides a paradigm in which many significant questions relating to the role of law, the impact of modernisation on Melanesian societies and the future of customary structures of authority may be analysed and addressed. The geographical scope of the book is comprehensive in that all of the Melanesian countries are featured, including New Caledonia (Douglas, chapter 4; Chanter, chapter 5) and West Papua (Ondawame, chapter 20). It is refreshing to be given valuable insights into the social structures of these parts of Melanesia, which are sometimes overlooked in the discourse on Melanesian peoples and societies, largely due to a paucity of information. The majority of the contributions are, not surprisingly, focused on Papua New Guinea reflecting its significance in terms of population size, law and (dis)order context and focus of academic research and NGO activity. Of course, since the publication of

this volume, other parts of Melanesia (Fiji Islands and Solomon Islands) have eclipsed Papua New Guinea (albeit probably temporarily) as the loci of social disintegration and attendant violence.

A questionable aspect of a book of this type is whether it successfully combines academic contributions with those presented by NGOs. The rationale behind the combination is laudable: to promote dialogue between researchers and those who are actively involved in the practicalities of 'violence management' on a day to day basis. However, it may be that the dramatic difference in the type of contribution made by each group means that the likelihood of cross-fertilisation (through the medium of a collection such as this) is reduced rather than enhanced. I found that a number of the contributions from NGO personnel were almost entirely descriptive. In most cases this was only to be expected, as NGOs do not necessarily have the mandate or the resources to undertake research and analysis. However, it is disappointing to learn that the Individual and Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF) of Port Moresby is mandated to carry out research (Makail, p.183) without being able to read some of the fruits of this endeavour. The contributions by Merrin Mason (chapter 8) and Sarah Garap (chapter 10) are notable exceptions to this comment. On the other hand, some of the contributions that are more academic in nature are possibly too heavy going for a book such as this. Whilst it might be hoped that a collection such as this one would provide resources from one sector for the other, I remain unconvinced that such a goal is realisable. I think the material provided by the NGOs is too scanty for the academics to take seriously and, from the lack of bibliographic references following the 'NGO' contributions, it does not appear that people from this sector are aware or see the need to be aware of academic literature in the field. Nonetheless, the approach is one that should be pursued in the future, perhaps through a 'twinning' system between NGOs and academics who can work collaboratively to produce writing constructed on a 'theory plus case study' format.

The layout of this book is clear and easy to use. The glossary and list of abbreviations provided are suitably comprehensive and helpful. The editors have made good use of maps, diagrams and plates reflecting one of the themes that is reiterated several times in the book: that of the representation of violence as well as its actual occurrence. My personal preference is for footnotes rather than endnotes. This book uses the latter but they are kept to a minimum and are located at the end of each chapter rather than at the end of the book making them easy to navigate nonetheless. Most of the chapters end with a list of references which provide a useful resource for those who wish to examine the issues further through the work of other writers. The index is accurate although it is not very extensive other than in terms of references to cited sources.

This book will be of use and interest to students, scholars and 'practitioners' (whether they are located in NGOs or elsewhere) of social change in Melanesia whether their particular perspective is that of history, anthropology, law or cultural studies.

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