

A Kind of Mending: restorative justice in the Pacific Islands, edited by Sinclair Dinnen, with Anita Jowitt and Tess Newton Cain, Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 2003. xii + 308 pp., 220 x 140 mm, maps, reference list, index. ISBN 1-74076-015-8 (pbk). (Within Australia AUD34.95; International AUD31.78, postage free)

This work is primarily a collection of papers from a three-day conference on restorative justice and conflict management in the Pacific Islands, which took place in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in June 2000. 'Pacific Islands' is perhaps too broad a label for both the conference and the book, the geographical area covered being, in the main, Melanesia.

The expressed objective of the publication is 'to bring some of the more innovative and lesser known approaches to conflict to the attention of a wider audience' (3). The 300-odd pages of the book are divided into 19 'chapters'. The first of these is an introduction by the main editor, Sinclair Dinnen. This commences with a section, 'About the Conference', which explains the history behind the book, including a short summary of the conflict in Melanesia that, on some agendas, has given a higher priority to conflict resolution. After some theoretical discussion about law and order and a short summary of dispute resolution options during the colonial era, Dinnen discusses post-independence law and order. There is a minor inaccuracy in the references to the Fiji Islands Constitution, when it is stated that '*kastom* [not a Fijian word or usage but the sentence also refers to other, Melanesian Pidgin-speaking, areas] was not only recognised as a source of law but was also accorded a high ranking in the constitutional hierarchy of national laws' (14). In fact, the independence Constitution contained no such provision, although customary law was recognised in this way by a later Constitution, which was in force between 1990 and 1998. It might also have been pertinent to draw attention, either here or in one of the chapters relating to Fiji, to s. 186 of Fiji's 1997 Constitution, which directs parliament to make provision for 'dispute resolution in accordance with Fijian processes', a mandate that has not, to date, been fulfilled. The introduction contains a useful summary of 'What the Chapters Say'. It concludes by highlighting the spirit of optimism in the accounts given at the conference

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and by passing on a message from the conference and the book that “cultures” can be an important part of the solution to current problems’ (31). Dinnen considers that the development of restorative approaches should not be seen as an alternative to strengthening state institutions; rather, he sees the promotion of restorative strategies as a way of enhancing the institutions’ effectiveness.

The second chapter is an explanation of the fundamentals of restorative justice, by a leading scholar in the field, John Braithwaite. Whilst a chapter on process might seem out of place in a book intended to highlight regional approaches, it is a useful component in a work that is likely to be read, not only by the initiated, keen to extend their knowledge of the South Pacific, but also by newcomers to the idea of restorative justice. Further, it does more than the chapter title suggests, arguing for a normatively minimalist approach to restorative justice, in order to accommodate a diversity of cultural practices, and cross-referencing some of the regional material in the book. The book ends with an ‘epilogue’ by Margaret Jolly, entitled, ‘Some Thoughts on Restorative Justice and Gender’. This is in fact Jolly’s keynote address from the conference. Jolly confesses to have barely known ‘the words and very little of the concept or practice of restorative justice’ until a few weeks before the conference, but her chapter demonstrates that she is a very quick learner! This chapter articulates some vital questions and expresses some interesting ideas. It discusses some of the wider themes from the conference in an Australian context.

Between the ‘book ends’ described in the previous paragraphs is the substance of the book: sixteen chapters on various aspects of restorative justice in Melanesia. Some of these include fascinating accounts of traditional practices. Others discuss recent initiatives. A number of authors suggest that the search for ‘justice’ should concentrate on finding a way to succeed in melding traditional and modern restorative practices. The authors may be broadly divided into academics, law officers, and practitioners of peace. Geographically, Papua New Guinea dominates, with seven chapters set within its boundaries, three of which are concerned with Bougainville. There are five chapters relating

to Vanuatu and three to Fiji Islands. Surprisingly, given that it has been dominated by conflict for the past five years, there is only one chapter given to Solomon Islands. The Papua New Guinea contributions include three accounts of local practices: Michael Goddard and John Ivoro both look at areas of Port Moresby, whilst Alan Rumsey discusses the Ku Waru region. Rumsey's chapter throws out an interesting challenge to the assumption that all people see conflict as a threat to their community, which must be avoided. Ruby Zarriga discusses the link between restorative justice and community development in Papua New Guinea. Ruth Saovan-Spriggs examines the role of women in conflict resolution in the Bougainville peace process and, more particularly, the difficulties and problems of restorative justice from the cultural and human rights context. Father Pat Howley and John Tombot both share their experiences, case studies and stories from Bougainville, the former as an experienced conflict resolution trainer and the latter as a traditional Chief and mediator.

The papers from Vanuatu include Joemela Simeon's account of a particular project on juvenile justice run by the Cultural Centre. Rita Naviti's paper highlights, as do some of the other contributions, the failure of traditional systems to provide justice for women. Paul Vuhu describes the work of the Lakalakabulu Area Council of Chiefs in North Ambae. Short papers are provided by Police Commissioner Bong on community policing and Chief Justice Lunabek on diversion of cases from the formal courts to alternative dispute resolution forums.

The first inclusion from Fiji is Peni Moore's description of the innovative scheme by the group Women's Action for Change, which aimed to utilise dramatic approaches to set people on the path to for rehabilitation in the Fiji prison system. The second, coming from Steven Ratuva, discusses inter-ethnic conflict in Fiji Islands and explores new possibilities for conflict resolution. As this new approach involves 'mobilising aspects of local culture' by drawing on traditional Fijian practices, it might have been interesting to have an indo-Fijian perspective on this. In particular, an account of any restorative processes in the *panchayat*, which still operates in some areas of Fiji, would make a fascinating comparison. Alumita Durutalo also looks at Fiji and expresses

concern that neither the introduced nor the traditional system of justice is capable of supporting the rule of law in Fiji Islands.

From Solomon Islands, Father Arkwright uses anecdotes to illustrate his views on a variety of points relating to custom, the current conflict, and compensation and reconciliation.

Whilst some authors in this collection sound a note of caution regarding restorative justice in the region, the overwhelming message seems to be an optimistic one. The intended relationship between the academic and theoretical strands of the book and the practical, descriptive chapters or how they might be used to inform each other is not entirely clear. Further, although the introduction contains a 'What the Chapters Say' section, the commonalities and divergences between the various authors' themes, theories and practical approaches have been highlighted only in very general terms. However, Dinnen points out that, '[t]he assessments offered are tentative rather than conclusive' and that 'there is no single restorative justice approach and . . . restorative strategies can be adapted to particular circumstances' (3). In the light of this, perhaps the chapters were advisedly left to speak for themselves.

One problem that arises from the publication of a selection of papers from a conference is that references to presented papers that are not chosen for publication do not make sense to the reader. Thus, for example, Margaret Jolly refers to the presentation by Edwina Kotoisuva of Fiji and that by Hannington Alatoa of Vanuatu. For readers who were not at the conference, this may be a little frustrating and an editorial note giving Edwina and Hannington's topics or, even better, a brief summary of their presentations might have been helpful. Alternatively, presentations referred to but not included in the book might have been summarised in the 'About the Conference' section in the introductory chapter.

The book includes nine maps. Map 1, which sensibly appears at the beginning of the book for easy reference, covers Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, Australia and South-East Asia. Unfortunately, the area delineated as 'Polynesian Outliers' is incorrect. The outliers are, however, correctly identified on the map of Melanesia (Map 5). Maps 2 and 3 appear within chapter 4, as an aid to understanding the narrative. Maps

4 to 9 appear at the end of the book. Map 4 appears to be superfluous, as it is another map of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, but without the delineation of the boundaries between the three (or perhaps it is preferable because it is not rigid about the boundaries of these colonially constructed culture areas).

Unlike many edited collections, this book includes an index, which is very useful for readers dipping into it for information on some specific topic. It also includes a list of abbreviations.

This collection obtains its expressed objective and provides valuable material for those who were unable to attend the conference and those who were previously unaware of the rich and diverse traditions surrounding conflict resolution in Melanesia. The book highlights the issues relating to restorative justice and the wider debate concerning the relationship between formal and informal justice. Understanding of these issues is a critical prerequisite in the search for solutions to conflict in Melanesia and may also be instructive in other societies.

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