

Law and Order in a Weak State: Crime and Politics in Papua New Guinea. Sinclair Dinnen. (Pacific Island Monograph series 17). University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2001. xvi + 248 pp. maps, tables, photographs, index. ISBN 0 8248 2280 3 (cloth).

The problem of law and order in Papua New Guinea is one that has long exercised the minds of officials and academics. Numerous reviews of the issue have been published since the early 1970s. The author of the current book has had long experience of the country and the law and order issue. He taught in the Law Faculty of the University of Papua New Guinea for four years from 1984, returning to Papua New Guinea in 1991 to do eight months' fieldwork for his doctoral studies at the Australian National University. He then spent three and a half years in the Crime Studies Division of the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute. *Law and Order in a Weak State: Crime and Politics in Papua New Guinea* is a revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation.

The book is structured around three case studies: urban raskolism, mining security, and election-related violence. Each case study comprises an empirical description followed by a theoretical analysis based on three sets of perspectives—materialist, culturalist, and institutionalist. The materialist perspectives focus on the economic context of individual and group behaviour, seeing crime, at the micro-level, as the outcome of individual choices, and, at the macro-level, as the consequence of processes of economic change. The culturalist perspective highlights the continuing influence of indigenous social relations—such as those of leadership and gift exchange—on individual and group behaviour in the modern setting. The institutional perspective focuses on the institutional capacity of state law-and-order agencies in relation to social control. A valuable feature of the book is how in each of these case studies, the three sets of perspectives are combined to highlight the interactions between the material, cultural and institutional dimensions of the law and order problem in Papua New Guinea.

In the first case study the rise of urban raskolism is explained as a response to economic marginalisation—the lack of employment and other economic opportunities. It is argued, however, that a materialist explanation is not sufficient to account for the full range of raskol activities. There is a cultural dimension to raskol activities that explains their organisational aspects, their relationships of leadership and

prestige, and their integration into residential communities. Insights from the materialist and culturalist perspectives are combined to produce a critique of the militarised and punitive measures used by state law enforcement agencies. The latter are criticised as being partly responsible for the reproduction of raskolism by fuelling resentment and cementing raskol solidarity. An argument is mounted for a more culturally appropriate crime control strategy capable of linking economically marginalised youth with legitimate opportunity structures.

The second case study, 'the politics of mining security', tells the story of two government initiatives aimed at improving security at mining and petroleum projects in the Highlands. The case study documents the shifting alliances and power relations between politicians, the mining and petroleum industry, the police, an international security firm, and a major Australian aid project. From a materialist perspective attention is drawn to the strategic significance of mining to Papua New Guinea's national economy and to charges of privileged access by the mining industry to the provision of security measures. But any suggestion that the mineral industry is capable of asserting its dominance over a weak and dependent state is countered by insights from the institutionalist and culturalist perspectives. These demonstrate how the very weakness of the state in Papua New Guinea has created the opportunities for local politicians to appropriate security measures resourced by the industry to enhance their own local electoral strategies. Clearly there is no one-way relationship of dependence. The mining industry is as dependent upon local politicians operating in culturally constrained ways as the politicians are upon the industry.

The third case study of 'violence, security and elections' examines reported incidents of violence during the 1992 national elections. From a materialist perspective, the realm of politics in Papua New Guinea is described as the primary repository and distributor of resources, and the primary means of individual upward social mobility, the latter being more readily achievable through the purchase of votes than through education or business success. Added to this view of Papua New Guinean politics are insights from the culturalist and institutionalist perspectives that highlight the continuing tradition of competition through violence in Papua New Guinea, and a lack of institutional constraints on ruthless electoral competition. Together, these insights produce a picture of a volatile and violence prone electoral process.

One of the principal themes of the book, as is implied in the title, is that of the *weak state*. This term is usually used to refer to a serious lack of administrative or institutional capacity on the part of the state, and there is ample evidence in the three case studies to support this view of the state in Papua New Guinea. But the core argument of the book is that the weakness of the state in Papua New Guinea should not be seen solely as a matter of institutional incapacity. Rather, it can better be understood in terms of the permeation of the state by indigenous social forces, the dispersal of social power among local-level organisations, and the institutionalisation of the personal nexus between individual leaders and their local followers. This is a vision of the state in Papua New Guinea that takes full account of the resilience of indigenous practices, and it is used to refute exaggerated claims of institutional disintegration. It is also used to promote a positive vision of state–society interactions in Papua New Guinea, one that might be conducive to more constructive and sustainable outcomes in the arena of crime control. In articulating this possibility, the author gives considerable weight to the example of the ‘mass surrender’ of raskol gangs, whereby gifts of amnesty and material resources are given in return for the handing over of weapons and a commitment to legitimate occupations. This procedure is presented as a model of non-retributive, restorative and re-integrative justice that might point the way to a more constructive approach to the problem of law and order in Papua New Guinea.

There are areas of the law and order problem in Papua New Guinea that are not discussed in this book, such as clan warfare, domestic violence and corruption by politicians and government officials. But no one book can be expected to cover the whole of this important subject. There is an extensive literature on the problem of law and order in Papua New Guinea, such that what is needed now are new insights from new analytical perspectives. The areas of the problem that are discussed in this book have been chosen for their importance in developing the thesis of the *weak state* in relation to Papua New Guinea. It is in providing this new focus on the problem and in its constructive use of divergent theoretical perspectives that the value of this book lies.

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