

State Society and Governance in Melanesia

DISCUSSION PAPER

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LEADERSHIP MODELS IN THE PACIFIC

INTRODUCTION

Social order in the states of the Pacific is characterised as much by change as continuity. In recent years, providers of overseas development assistance to the region have become increasingly concerned with the ways in which social order – a key determinant of development – is maintained. Attention has been focussed upon how people govern, and the ways in which these practices intersect with notions of good governance. The concept of leadership is central to the diverse practices of governance identifiable in the Pacific Islands, and is the primary focus of this discussion paper.

This discussion paper seeks to provide an overview of the anthropological and other relevant literature on leadership in the Pacific. It also examines the ways in which cultural understandings of leadership penetrate contemporary institutions and considers the intersections between local leadership practices and the requirements of good governance.

The review is presented in four main sections. Section one examines the key concepts of culture, leadership and good governance. Section two outlines the ways in which these concepts are employed in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia, and section three demonstrates the intersections between local practices of leadership and the requirements of good governance. In conclusion, section four suggests practical measures for the development of Pacific leadership programs. The author draws upon her first hand knowledge of the Pacific, particularly Melanesia, in order to contextualise the literature and highlight key issues.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE, LEADERSHIP & GOOD GOVERNANCE

In order to understand the ways in which Pacific leaders navigate their contemporary world, including institutions, it is important to explore ideas about culture, leadership

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and good governance. Drawing upon anthropological, political science and policy literatures, these concepts are outlined below.

Culture – learned, cohesive and adaptable

The term culture has long been debated by anthropologists, being first defined by Taylor in 1871 as that “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [sic] as a member of society” (Barfield 1997:98). Since Taylor, there have been countless attempts to define culture, with Kroeber and Kluckhohn noting 156 definitions in their 1952 work *Culture*. Needless to say, over half a century later, a universally agreed definition of culture remains elusive.

Intra disciplinary divisions aside (e.g. symbolic, cultural, material, functionalist etc.), there is broad consensus among anthropologists that culture is characterised by two key features. First, culture is learned - that is, culture is a social rather than biological construct. Second, culture is a complex or integrated whole, in which various elements (for example language, behaviours etc.) achieve coherence only when taken together. Building upon these fundamental characteristics, working or baseline definitions of culture abound, including the following basic definition:

Culture comprises “the ideals, values, and beliefs members of a society share to interpret experience and generate behaviour” (Haviland 1999:36).

In addition to this basic definition, the notion that culture is not static, but rather that it is constantly changing, is central to understandings of leadership in the contemporary Pacific.

Pacific Islanders often use the word culture to explain ideas, values and behaviours that they believe differ from those of the West, as they see it. In this sense, Pacific Islanders may use the term culture interchangeably with the terms custom and tradition, which are essentially employed to connote “what we’ve

always done” as opposed to “what we’ve done since missionisation/colonisation”. That is, aspects of culture are designated as traditions in order to infuse them with meaning and historicity, thus institutionalising them and distinguishing them from less “authentic” practices (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Thus, while there is acknowledgement of change, Pacific Islanders frequently represent culture as something that is static and, concomitantly, something to be protected. Anthropologists, however, clearly distinguish between the concept of culture on the one hand, and tradition and custom on the other. This has resulted in lengthy discussion about the constructive process and the authenticity of claims regarding tradition (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Jolly 1992; Jolly and Thomas 1992). The existence of these different discursive frameworks has clear implications for discussions of culture (and tradition and custom) between donor representatives and Pacific islanders.

Leadership

The topic of leadership has commanded the attention of academics from a variety of disciplines, including political science, organisational psychology, management studies, education, sociology and anthropology. Definitions of leadership are bountiful, varying greatly between and within disciplines, and offering varied potential for donor operationalisation.

Writing from a management perspective, Jago (1982:315) offers a useful definition of leadership, which may be employed cross-culturally. According to Jago:

Leadership is both a process and a property. The process of leadership is the use of noncoercive influence to direct and coordinate the activities of the members of an organised group toward the accomplishment of group objectives. As a property, leadership is the set of qualities or characteristics attributed to those who are perceived to successfully employ such influence (1982:315).

Whilst it is important to recognise that notions of leadership are context specific

(Kesar 2000:724), Jago's definition provides us with a basic starting point for discussions of leadership in diverse cultural and institutional settings. However, it must be noted that in various cultural contexts – including some areas of the Pacific – the use of coercion is deemed to be a legitimate method of maintaining social order.

In summarising various theoretical approaches to leadership, Jago highlights two key perspectives of relevance to the development of Pacific leadership programs, namely:

- 1) That leadership is universal, that is, "...that what constitutes successful or effective leadership does not depend on the characteristics of the situation in which the leader operates." Thus, what constitutes effective leadership for the politician differs little from that of the clergyman, NGO leader etc (1982:316).
- 2) Conversely, that leadership is contingent. That is, that effective leadership depends on specific features of the leader's situation, such as the nature of the tasks in which the leader engages, the nature of followers etc (1982:316).

Jago's work concentrates upon leadership within the Western realm. Thus, in distinguishing between universal and contingent approaches to leadership it is not suggested that these parameters frame cross-cultural comparisons, but rather, it is suggested that operationally, those engaged in the development of a Pacific Leadership Program will need to consider which approach to leadership will be taken. Ultimately, a combination of these perspectives may be deemed the most appropriate route.

Pacific Leadership – big men and chiefs

The concept of leadership is most extensively explored in the anthropological literature in the context of political organisation. Anthropologists have long examined the ways in which social groups achieve social cohesion in the absence of a centralised state. Historically, early studies (see, for example, Reay 1959, Berndt 1962) investigated how group (be it a tribe, band, clan etc) leaders

obtained and exercised power, typically within the confines of a specific ethnographic locale. In this early literature, typologies of leaders were developed upon the basis of recurring characteristics to refer to those in positions of power obtained and demonstrated in particular ways. In the contemporary context, while the use of such typologies is retained, anthropologists acknowledge that leadership is fluid, changing and contested, defying clear categorisation and overlapping various scholarly typologies (Marcus 1989:90; Mosko 1991). These anthropological typologies, however, have entered the common parlance of English speaking Pacific islanders, with the terms chief and big man being employed widely.

While the terms chief and *big men* had long been used by anthropologists working in the Pacific, Sahlins' (1963) influential essay *Poor man, rich man, big man, chief: Political types in Melanesia and Polynesia* cemented the distinction between the two, emphasising the cleavages between Melanesia and Polynesia and positing the latter as more evolutionarily advanced. Sahlins characterised *big men* and chiefs as "distinct sociological types", with different powers, privileges, rights, duties and obligations (1963:288). In summarising the characteristics of these different sociological types, Sahlins (1963:290-396) outlined the *big man*/chief distinction as follows:

Big Man

- Personal power
- Status gained through the demonstration of skills (e.g. magic, oratory, bravery)
- Status gained and maintained via generosity in the distribution of wealth
- Influence over fluctuating factions

Chief

- Power resides in the position, not the person
- Authority over permanent groups
- Status inherited, not achieved
- Authority to call upon the support of others without inducement

Chiefdoms, Sahlins posits, are inherently more stable than *big man* societies, on account of the fact that chiefs possess power over unfluctuating hierarchically organised political units, whereas *big men* rely upon the

fluctuating support of followers belonging to small segmentary groups.

While the work of Sahlins has been of enduring influence, it is not immune from criticism. In her reassessment of these models, Douglas (1979) challenges the crass dichotomisation of Melanesian *big men* and Polynesian chiefs, arguing that ethnographic data points to significant nuances in leadership practices that are obfuscated by the Sahlins model. Similarly, Lindstrom (1981:903) points to the inability of the *big man* model to encapsulate the ethnographic realities of Melanesia, highlighting the fact that most Melanesians employ the term chief more frequently (e.g. in Vanuatu, the National Council of Chiefs) than they do *big man*.

There is little doubt that the criticisms of Douglas (1979), Lindstrom (1981) and others (Sillitoe 1979, Hallpike 1977) are valid. Certainly, the Pacific is a region characterised by enormous social diversity which one could not hope to understand via the application of two basic typologies. If one applies these typologies with qualification, however, they do assist us to understand some of the basic variations in leadership patterns throughout the Pacific, which are clearly manifest in contemporary institutions.

While the aforementioned typologies of leadership refer primarily to power exercised over groups of kin or shared residence, leadership is not confined to the exercise of authority or influence over social and territorial groups. Indeed, the common saying “*mipela olgeta lida man*” (we are all leader men) amongst Papua New Guinea highlanders demonstrates the multiplicity of leadership roles that are present in contemporary Melanesia and, indeed, throughout the Pacific. In most states, political leadership alone occurs at the national, provincial and local level (White 2006). This point is emphasised by Lindstrom (1997:213), who notes that “Ni-Vanuatu currently possess village *jifs*, area *jifs*, island *jifs*, town *jifs*, and paramount *jifs*, among others.” To complicate matters, the English term leader, or the Melanesian pidgin term *lida*, is often used to describe someone who is a specialist, rather than an actual leader (for example, a sorcerer). Hence, in the Pacific one may hear reference to leaders not only in the context of social

group leadership, but also in relation to the following:

- Warfare
- Gang activity
- Church
- Non government organisations (including women’s groups)
- Youth
- Formal politics
- Cargo cults

Leadership, gender and youth

While the term *man* in the English speaking world has in many contexts been deemed gender inclusive, the term *big man* is unreservedly male. Throughout the Pacific, as elsewhere in the world, leadership – particularly political leadership – rests predominantly in the hands of men. Women’s participation in decision making, however, varies widely, being largely dependent upon social organisation. Women in *some* matrilineal societies appear to have a greater hand in decision making than do women in *most* patrilineal societies.

The status of women in traditional leadership roles has a direct correlation with the status of women in institutionalised leadership roles. For example, in Fiji and Tonga, where women are able to hold chiefly title, women’s participation in both politics and government significantly outstrips the participation of Melanesian women in public life, where status is primarily achieved via the accumulation and distribution of resources to which they have limited access.

In the Pacific context, where gender roles are tightly prescribed (albeit changing), women continue to be associated primarily with the domestic realm, impacting heavily upon their participation in public leadership, which typically requires skills that many women do not possess (such as oratorical prowess, economic resources, education). Most contemporary scholarship on women’s leadership has focussed upon women’s formal political participation. Studies (Sepoe 1996, 1998; Donald et al. 2002) have

highlighted the limited participation of women in national legislatures (most dramatically in Melanesia, where women representatives number two in Vanuatu, one in Papua New Guinea and none in Solomon Islands) and in senior government decision making positions (Molisa 2002, McLeod 2004).

The multiple challenges faced by women seeking to enter the realm of formal politics - particularly in Melanesia - are well documented, including local perceptions about women's roles, the pervasiveness of masculine political cultures, violence against women, the lesser social mobility of women and the limited economic independence of women (McLeod 2002:43; Billy 2002:58; Strachan & Dalesa 2004:10). In addition to these gender specific impediments, women - like male political candidates - face the challenges of mobilising block votes and funding expensive and lengthy campaigns.

In attempts to increase the chances of women aspiring to political office, a variety of programs have been implemented by both multilateral and bilateral donors, most notably UNIFEM's Women in Politics (WIP) Program, which involves a number of activities including leadership training, campaign strategy training and data collection. Evidence suggests that women candidates - both successful and unsuccessful - have found the training offered by UNIFEM incredibly useful (Donald et al. 2002:56). However, while training female candidates has clearly empowered some women, UNIFEM's objective of strengthening institutional support for Pacific women's political participation at all levels of governance continues to be hampered by existing gender relations in the region.

While an emphasis has been placed upon women's limited political leadership, others have suggested the need for broader and more locally relevant conceptions of women's political participation (McLeod 2002). In addition to the literature on women's participation in politics, there has been a simultaneous focus upon women's significant involvement in and leadership of civil society initiatives - frequently associated with the church (Sepoe 2000). While the rhetoric of Christianity is often used by men to justify the subordination of women, Christianity has also opened up public spaces for women's action.

Similarly, male violence against women has created great unity amongst women, who are collectively fighting for their human rights, as have conflicts in Bougainville, Solomon Islands and the highlands of Papua New Guinea, where women have played a leading role in brokering peace (see, for example, Rumsey 2000, Pollard 2000, Hakena 2000).

For the donor wishing to support such initiatives, it is necessary to proceed with caution. Particularly when a leadership role is perceived by men to be within the male domain, there is potential backlash against women who seek to transgress this realm. This has been most keenly demonstrated by the violence enacted against Melanesian women seeking political office (Garap 2004); although, at a less visible level, it has occurred in donor funded programs that have sought to implement affirmative action activities. Moreover, as highlighted by Douglas (2003: 18), given their already overburdened lives, "[i]n Melanesia, as elsewhere, many women evidently avoid public leadership as a further burden...". This does not negate the fact that throughout the Pacific, women seek to challenge existing gender relations by seeking political leadership roles. It does, however, suggest the need for donors to allow women the opportunity to proceed on their own terms.

Like women, youth are underrepresented in leadership roles throughout the Pacific, particularly political leadership. This is by no means unique to the Pacific: leaders must display characteristics that many youth have not yet developed, and few people are willing to follow a person not yet of mature age. The dominant cultural value of respecting one's elders - and in some instances the need to totally submit to the rule of elders - further impedes the participation of youth in certain leadership roles, although this does not preclude youth from leadership altogether. Youth demonstrate leadership in sport, education, the arts and community awareness programs (e.g. HIV/AIDS prevention), as well in less palatable activities such as gang crime. Despite the emphasis placed upon respect for elders, it is widely recognised in the Pacific - particularly amongst the educated elite - that youth are the future, hence conversations about violence, corruption etc. frequently centre upon the need to educate

youth, both in the family home and in schools and universities.

What is good governance and how is it measured?

The term good governance has come to the fore in recent years in the development literature, yet the notion of governance itself has long been studied by social theorists, particularly sociologists and political scientists. The World Bank is largely responsible for the popularisation of good governance – the antithesis of bad governance, characterised by the personalisation of power, lack of human rights, corruption and unaccountable government. In recent years, public debate has linked good governance and donor assistance, the latter being conditional upon the former.

Defining governance as “the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised”, Kaufman et al. (1999: 4) demonstrate a strong correlation between governance and development. Expanding upon this definition, governance comprises the component parts of:

- the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced,
- the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, and
- the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

For the purposes of evaluation, Kaufman et al. (1999) further compartmentalise these components into six key clusters, each of which boasts multiple indicators. While this framework provides a useful tool for the evaluation of state governance performance, for the purposes of evaluating the degree of fit between Pacific Island notions of leadership and the requirements of good governance, the framework developed by the British based Overseas Development Institute is particularly useful.

Importantly, as noted in the ODI briefing paper, *Governance, Development and Aid*

Effectiveness: A Quick Guide to Complex Relationships (2006), while universal concepts and principles of governance can be elucidated, governance is contextual. This useful briefing paper provides a practical framework for the analysis of governance, noting six key arenas of governance (civil, political and economic society, government, bureaucracy and the judiciary) and outlining six core principles of governance that purportedly transcend national boundaries, namely:

- Participation
- Fairness
- Decency
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Efficiency

In order to assess governance practices in a given country, one examines each of these principles within each key governance arena – a useful tool for rapidly acquiring a relatively holistic view of governance within the multiple spheres of life.

Within the context of good governance, leadership ought to be participatory, fair, decent, accountable, transparent and efficient. Using Jago’s (1982) bipartite definition – e.g. leadership as process and property – this would entail the attribution of such qualities to both leaders themselves and to the processes and structures through which they operate. A recent proxy for this suite of characteristics is the notion of “ethical leadership”, which according to scholars such as Cuilla (2007: 5) entails doing “the right thing, the right way, for the right reason.”

The notion of ethical leadership is difficult to operationalise cross-culturally. For example, a politician from the highlands of Papua New Guinea who distributes material benefits only to his immediate kin (there are no female politicians from the highlands) is “doing the right thing, the right way, for the right reasons” within the context of a cultural logic that prescribes reciprocity amongst kinsfolk – kin vote for the member of parliament, the member of parliament

reciprocates with material reward. This dilemma exists throughout the region, for as noted by Bhim (2005), the coexistence of conflicting systems of law and authority render leaders' actions simultaneously ethical and unethical, depending upon which cultural logic one employs in the assessment of their behaviour. Similarly, Huffer (2005) argues that it is necessary to understand what she calls "Pacific political ethics", positing that ethics are culturally specific. These observations highlight the need for caution when considering ethics training in the region.

LEADERSHIP IN THE PACIFIC - 'TRADITIONAL' MODELS IN THE CONTEMPORARY STATE

There are broad differences between the ways in which leadership is exercised in the various sub-regions of the Pacific, namely Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. This is particularly complex in the postcolonial era, in which traditional notions of leadership intersect within modern institutions. Before outlining these differences, it is important to emphasise the foreign derivation of these designations, which do not represent clearly bounded culture areas, but rather groupings of states with generally similar cultural and historical characteristics. Consequently, while one may speak about Melanesia, there are multiple differences both between and within the Melanesian states.

Melanesia

For this review, Melanesia is taken to include Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji. As an overseas territory of France, New Caledonia is not included for the purposes of analysis. The states of Melanesia are characterised by great social and linguistic diversity, small scale political units (often clans and tribes) and attendant social fragmentation. As previously noted, the conglomerate areas of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia are not clear cut, and cultural characteristics more commonly associated with Polynesia may be found throughout Melanesia, most notably in Fiji, but also in the Polynesian outliers of Papua New Guinea (e.g. Mortlock Islands), in areas of Vanuatu (such as Futuna) and in

parts of Solomon Islands (including Rennell and Bellona).

Contemporary Melanesian leadership is commonly viewed by outsiders to be in a state of crisis. Being frequently associated with the term "arc of instability", the Melanesian states are rendered perpetually unstable, on account of their often volatile political systems, poor economic performance, and low human development indicators (Maher 2000; Reilly 2000), despite the fairly high degree of stability experienced by countries such as Papua New Guinea (May 2006:151). Against a backdrop of increasing attention to governance issues such as transparency and accountability, Melanesian leaders – most popularly politicians – are deemed corrupt and self interested by both external observers and Melanesians themselves (Ketan 2000). In addition to the poor performance of political leaders, it is widely claimed that amidst the changes wrought by modernisation, traditional or, more practically, rural leaders, are losing the authority they once possessed. Simultaneously, others claim that the picture is not one of an absence of authority, but rather that there is an excess of authority (Dinnen 2000:12).

Clearly, the introduction of Western systems of government in Melanesia did not herald the demise of indigenous notions of governance, although the record of attempts to integrate the two varies across the region. For example, in Vanuatu the National Council of Chiefs, or the *Malvatumauri*, has a "... general competence to discuss all matters relating to custom and tradition and may make recommendations for the preservation and promotion of New Hebridean culture and languages" (*Vanuatu Constitution*, Chapter 5, Article 28). The Council may be consulted on any question (particularly in relation to tradition and custom) related to bills before Parliament, but Parliament is only officially required to consult council members in relation to questions of land tenure (Chapter 12, Article 74). The *Malvatumauri* transcends traditional leadership patterns, whereby influence was confined to relatively small territorial groups, with national chiefs being a colonial construct (Lindstrom 1997:214). Consequently, members of the *Malvatumauri* simultaneously draw impetus from both their position of leadership in the village and the state constitution (Lindstrom 1997:218).

The Great Council of Chiefs in Fiji is similarly a colonial construct, created for an area which hitherto lacked nationwide political organisation. Members of the Great Council possess veto powers over all parliamentary law that affects Fijian interests and are empowered to elect two members of the legislative council.

Indigenous leadership is not formally recognised by the state in Papua New Guinea, nor nationally in Solomon Islands, although the Isabel Provincial Assembly recognises the existence and role of a Council of Chiefs in that province (White 1997:241). The existence of leadership codes throughout the region demonstrates awareness of the difficulties involved in the combining of local notions of political organisation and leadership with imported governance structures and values.

The absence of formal recognition of indigenous leadership, however, does not mean that indigenous leaders and notions of leadership do not permeate state institutions. Indeed, Melanesian leaders (particularly in PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands) are renowned for employing *big man* tactics while holding formal office (particularly the dispersing of wealth to immediate supporters) (May 2001; Standish 1992; Morgan 2005; Ketan 2004). Simultaneously, the voting public perpetuate *big man* politics by supporting those who promise immediate material gains and re-electing only those who deliver on such promises, hence mirroring the ways in which traditional *big men* garner, maintain and lose support.

Significantly, such *big man* activity is not confined to leaders belonging to groups typically characterised as *big man* societies (for example, much of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea), but is also demonstrated by leaders belonging to societies in which office is held by chiefs (for example, much of Vanuatu and in PNG the Trobriand Islands).

Wantokism

While not restricted to the dealings of *big men*, a key cultural practice impacting upon the performance of indigenous leaders is

the infamous *wantok* system. To external observers, the *wantok* system is perceived as nepotism and cronyism, both of which certainly occur in the states of Melanesia. However, the realities of the *wantok* system are infinitely more complex (Morgan and McLeod 2006).

It is well known that the *wantok* system plays an important social support function in the absence of functioning state welfare systems. What is less well known, however, is the existence of very real sanctions that people experience upon failing their social obligations. In the village context, the person who fails to support their *wantok* faces a host of possible sanctions ranging from withdrawal of future support for school fees, medical expenses, bride price etc. to sorcery and social ostracism. Fear of these sanctions does not disappear upon assuming office in either politics or the public service, rendering many decisions made in institutional settings captive to the system. This does not negate the fact that modern Melanesians, like others, pick and choose between various values. It does, however, point to the ongoing importance of kin and the attached notion of reciprocity.

While the strengthening of internal accountability systems and mechanisms of public scrutiny may assist in diminishing workplace decisions based upon personal obligations, it will not mitigate the ongoing negative sanctions that people face when they fail their *wantoks*.

Polynesia

Polynesia comprises Tonga, Western and American Samoa, Tokelau, Niue, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, Cook Islands and the islands of French Polynesia. For the purposes of this review, the focus is upon Tonga and Samoa. Polynesia is characterised by rank consciousness and large-scale political units organised around hierarchical power structures. In Tonga and Samoa, traditional leadership has been incorporated into the centralised state to a greater degree than elsewhere in the Pacific. This, alongside the comparative cultural homogeneity of these states, has often been used as an explanation for the stability and progress of Polynesia (particularly Samoa) *vis a vis* Melanesia,

although the Polynesian countries have also struggled with issues such as corruption and lack of accountability.

The historical antecedents of contemporary authority structures in Polynesia are outlined in early anthropological observations of leadership across the region. Writing in 1939, Burrows (1939:1) noted that political authority was generally similar throughout Polynesia, with power being primarily obtained through primogeniture, although personal qualities were also significant. Burrows identified sanctity as an important aspect of leadership, whereby 'chiefs' reputedly possessed more divine ancestral power than those lacking title (1939:2). Similarly commenting upon regional patterns, Goldman (1955:680) characterised "concern with social status" as a dominant Polynesian value, claiming that "Polynesian society is founded upon social inequality and, despite an aristocratic doctrine of hereditary rank, permits its members to compete for position, prestige, and for power." Marcus (1978:242) confirmed this characterisation, commenting that in Tonga there was a persistence of chiefly hierarchies, concern with rank and a prevalence of personal and group competition for social status.

Over time, Polynesian power structures have morphed into different configurations in order to accommodate the demands wrought by social change, culture contact and statehood. In the last century, the hierarchical structure of Tongan chiefs has evolved into a centralised monarchy, with a body of nobles who head the state. The royal family inherits the office of king and nobles from 33 families inherit eligibility for parliament (Lindstrom and White 1997:11). Parliament comprises 30 seats: 9 members who are elected by the 33 holders of noble titles, 9 people's representatives who speak for over 95,000 commoners and 12 members who are selected by the king (James 1994:243, Fraenkel 2006). Despite the hereditary nature of leadership in Tonga, there is wide acknowledgement that leaders require particular attributes and capabilities. As in Melanesia, Campbell (2006: 278) notes that electoral success in Tonga is largely dependent upon personal standing. Leaders are expected to be educated, but unless such leaders possess adequate rank and

title, their positions are somewhat tenuous (James 1997:66).

While submission to those of rank remains a key value in contemporary Tongan society (James 1997:50), Tongans are increasingly frustrated with ranked people lacking leadership skills and behaving in an unethical manner. One way in which this frustration has been expressed is through decades of public dissent by members of the pro-democracy movement. James (1994:245) notes that while Tongans continue to value their king and are willing to offer nobles respect in relevant social situations, they – particularly the educated middle class – are increasingly seeking a greater say in the governance of their Kingdom. In the 1980s, these demands resulted in a rise of political debate in the media and multiple court cases centred upon claims against government excess, nepotism and corruption. More recently, on November 16, 2006, rioting broke out in the capital Nuku'alofa when the Legislative Assembly adjourned for the year without passing legislation to facilitate political reforms. While proposals to increase the number of people's representatives remained modest, the riots led to the announcement that 21 of the 30 members of parliament will be popularly elected in the next election, scheduled to be held in 2008 (Fraenkel 2006).

In neighbouring Samoa, politics is similarly dominated by the elite, with political representation being in the hands of those of title – known as *matai* – although since 1991 there has been universal suffrage (Macpherson 1997:40-41). As in Tonga, historical circumstances have led to transformations in Samoan power structures, with *matai* exercising powers at both the national and local levels.

The *matai* system operates on the basis of both inheritance and status acclamation. While genealogical links alone do not guarantee title, they do offer opportunities for status not available to others. Simultaneously, the Samoan proverb, '*O le ala I le pule o le tautau*' – the path to power is through service – demonstrates the importance of achievement as well as heredity (Lati 2000: 72). *Matai* titles may be given to both men and women, although less than 10% of *matai*

are women (Tcherkesoff 2000:117). This, however, is gradually changing, as more Samoan women aspire to and achieve *matai* status.

At the local level, ranked *matai* possess great power, exercising decision making and social control through village and district councils, known as *fono*. *Matai* are expected to be exemplars of Samoan values such as respect for superiors and elders and the provision of welfare for families, and may be stripped of title should they fail to do so (Tcherkesoff 2000:116). At this level, *matai* continue to exert immense influence, employing local notions of right and wrong and meting out extremely harsh punishments to wrongdoers (e.g. burning, banishment) (Va'a 157-158).

At the national level, members of parliament simultaneously derive power from both their status as elected officers and their status as *matai* (MacPherson 2000:32). In attempts to enfranchise more people, Samoans have created a host of new titles and enabled a number of titles to be jointly held, thus expanding the number of *matai* and incrementally adapting the traditional hierarchical system in keeping with Westminster style political values.

As elsewhere in the Pacific, attempts to articulate traditional notions of leadership with democratic state institutions have led to both a distillation of the concept of *matai* and concerns about the loss of local leadership values. For example, when interviewing Samoans about contemporary governance, Huffer and Schuster (2000:52) found that 18 out of 26 respondents claimed that contemporary leaders demonstrated inappropriate behaviours ranging from selfishness to lack of transparency. While not statistically significant, Huffer and Schuster's (2000) research confirms region-wide dissatisfaction with contemporary leaders operating in the state realm. Furthermore, the tension between traditional and democratic values increasingly plays out in the ongoing divide between the central government and local semi-autonomous polities, which continue to live primarily under the guidance of the *fono*.

Micronesia

Micronesia comprises eight political entities, namely the Federated States of Micronesia (Kosrae, Yap, Pohnpei, Chuuk), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Kiribati, Territory of Guam and the Territory of Wake Island. With the exceptions of Guam, the Wake Islands (which are US territories) and the Northern Mariana Islands (which are a US Commonwealth), the territories of Micronesia are independent states.

Scholarly research into politics and leadership in Micronesia is limited, concentrating primarily upon the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of Palau. Whether or not this suggests that leadership is not an issue of contemporary importance, as in Polynesia and Melanesia, is open to interpretation. In a survey of good governance activities in Micronesia undertaken by the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSPI), when asked the question "What do you think are the main good governance issues in your country?", many organisations neglected to respond to the specific inquiry. The most popular responses by those who did respond were accountability, transparency and over governance (FSPI 2003). Despite a seeming lack of attention to issues of governance, however, existing research is greatly informative in terms of understanding the ways in which people combine and juxtapose traditional leadership values and practices with official or institutional leadership roles.

Prior to the colonisation of the Micronesian islands there was no collective sense of Micronesia as a political entity. Consequently, the region is characterised by great diversity. In both FSM and Palau, social organisation is hierarchical, with chiefs presiding over variously sized groups such as kingdoms and sections in Pohnpei (Hughes 1966:36), and federations and districts in Palau (Umseem 1948:23). In each of these areas, chiefs are drawn from an elite class, which stands in contrast to commoners (Umseem 1950:143, Hughes 1966:36). While most groups are matrilineal and some women yield considerable power (Umseem 1950:144), women rarely hold leadership positions, and

in the event that they do, they often appoint male surrogates (Haglegam 1998). Despite the hierarchical nature of social organisation, in both Palau and Yap the power of chiefs is kept in check by the need to consult others of high ranking status prior to decision making (Umseem 1950: 143, Pinsker 1997:159). While chieftainship is theoretically inherited, in practice personal attributes and local politics impact upon the assumption of title.

Important similarities in political organisation clearly exist within and between the Micronesian states. In summarising these similarities, Petersen (1997:188) notes that chieftainship is rooted in principles of matrilineal descent, genealogical seniority within descent groups, and the relative seniority of matrigroups. However, Umseem (1948:24) rightly cautions against the reduction of institutional forms to common denominators, noting that a host of social and personal factors impact upon the actual roles played by chiefs, rendering the term chief an inadequate descriptor of leadership in a given society.

Of particular relevance to the current investigation, following the introduction of the Congress of Micronesia in 1965, Hughes (1966) explored people's perceptions of traditional and introduced leadership roles in Pohnpei (then Ponape) by interviewing a random sample of 300 people. Hughes sought to compare peoples' perceptions of introduced leadership roles that sat alongside existing leadership roles (e.g. chief magistrates and council men) with peoples' perceptions of the new positions of legislator and congressman. He found that "...people will apply introduced principles and norms of authority more quickly to new leadership roles with no traditional counterparts than to new leadership roles with traditional counterparts" (1966:42). Hughes found that Ponapean people valued the same personal qualities (love of people, foster cooperation, patience, capable administrator, intelligence) in chief magistrates, councilmen (substituting leadership roles) and traditional leaders, whereas when selecting legislators and congressmen (added leadership roles), they valued personal qualities stressed by introduced norms of authority, such as education and capability in administration (38-39).

More recently, like Hughes (1966), Pinsker (1997:180) has found that the people of FSM value different qualities in different types of leader. For example, youth, outspokenness and the ability to speak in a confrontational manner – all of which are undesirable attributes for traditional leaders – are valued in elected leaders, particularly at the national level, while traditional leaders gain widest acceptance when modest, humble and knowledgeable about custom. Despite these differing criteria, however, rank continues to impact upon elected leadership positions and the support of traditional leaders is crucial to winning public office (Haglegam 1998:5).

As elsewhere in the Pacific, there has been significant debate about the role of traditional leaders in contemporary Micronesian states. Despite much interest, in 1991, an amendment to introduce an official chamber of chiefs was overwhelming rejected in a Constitutional Ratifying Referendum (Petersen 1997:183). Echoing earlier findings about the consultative (albeit narrow) process of chiefly decision making, Petersen argues that Micronesians rejected the proposal on the basis of fears that chiefs' decisions would be less subject to checks and balances if made within the government system than decisions made outside of it (1997:196). At the state level, however, traditional leaders in Yap State have a significant role defined by the constitution, with the Councils of Pilung and Tamol having veto power over any legislation proposed in the state legislature (Pinsker 1997:161). Similarly, a place for chiefs is allocated in the governmental structure of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, with chiefs holding positions in the Council of Irooj – a council modelled upon the British House of Lords (Carucci 1997:199).

CAN PACIFIC LEADERS MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE?

Evaluating governance in the Pacific requires one to determine the degree of fit and misfit between externally derived notions such as good governance and democracy, with local values in given societies. Inevitably, such an exercise highlights the tensions between universal discourses such as good governance and cultural relativism, begging questions pertaining to the right of donors

to expect Pacific Islanders to comply with externally derived agendas. Pacific Islanders themselves, however, similarly demonstrate significant concern with contemporary governance, as illustrated by the actions of civil society groups and the plethora of letters to the editor in Pacific national newspapers. As highlighted in the above review of relevant literature, however, local political processes pose some challenges to the notion of good governance.

The ODI's six key principles of governance, outlined earlier, provide a useful framework for the exploration of the continuities and disjunctions between Pacific Islands' political processes and the requirements of good governance. Below, a preliminary attempt at this exploration - focussing upon the arenas of civil society, political society and the bureaucracy - is undertaken, providing a starting point for consideration of these linkages within the context of program development (see the framework incorporated below in Table 1).

Participation

Throughout the Pacific, traditional notions of leadership have limited impact upon the rights of individuals to freely associate as members of civil society; however, conservative notions of gender relations may prevent women from doing so in Melanesia.

In the arena of political society, however, local notions of leadership clearly impact upon the degree to which the legislature is representative of society. While only formalised in Samoa, Tonga, FSM, and to some degree, Fiji, rank is a key determinant

in selection for parliament, limiting the pool of potential candidates for election and skewing representation in favour of those with rank. Similarly, the gendered nature of traditional leadership has resulted in limited formal political participation by women, most notably in Melanesia.

In the Melanesian states, where competition for resources is intense, intra-governmental consultation is hampered by a lack of willingness to share information and engage in collaborative endeavours. This has in part been intensified by past donor approaches to the provision of aid via agency specific projects. In this context, government, churches and non-government organisations frequently characterise one another as opponents rather than collaborators.

Participation in the bureaucracy is also influenced by cultural context, with ranked people being legitimately able to select participants in much of Polynesia, and powerful Melanesians employing and promoting kin and friends on the basis of the *wantok* system.

Fairness

Social organisation in the various regions of the Pacific in many instances impedes fairness in the arena of civil society, with discrimination being a fundamental aspect of societies in which there is a clear division between the titled and untitled. Similarly, the strongly patriarchal basis of societies, particularly in Melanesia, renders women the constant victims of discrimination. These characteristics of social organisation cannot be separated from notions of leadership.

Table 1: Governance Fundamentals Framework - Based on Political Arenas and Key Principles

Principle / Arena	Participation	Fairness	Decency	Accountability	Transparency	Efficiency
Civil society	Freedom of association	Society free from discrimination	Freedom of expression	Respect for governing rules	Freedom of the media	Input in policy making
Political society	Legislature representative of society	Policy reflects public preferences	Peaceful competition for political power	Legislators accountable to public	Transparency of political parties	Legislative function affecting policy
Bureaucracy	Higher civil servants' part of policy making	Equal access to public services	Civil servants respectful towards citizens	Civil servants accountable for their actions	Clear decision-making processes	Merit-based system for recruitment

Source: modified from Overseas Development Institute 2006

In the political arena it cannot be said that policy reflects public preferences in societies that are stratified either by class or gender. There is limited public consultation involved in the development of government policy, although organisations such as the Consultative, Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC) in PNG are attempting to involve members of society in government process to a greater degree. Recent events in Tonga (i.e. the riots in November 2006 involving democracy advocates) demonstrate the keenness of citizens to be actively involved in government.

The bureaucracy is similarly impacted by local political organisation – men and women do not have equal access to public services, nor do nobles (in Tonga and FSM), *matai* (in Samoa) and people without rank. Social stratification, as presented in the Pacific, is at odds with the requirement of fairness, although it is debatable as to whether the concept of fairness *per se* can be deemed to transcend national boundaries.

Decency

Civil society's freedom of expression is not severely hampered by local notions of leadership and social organisation, although people in some circumstances fear speaking out against those of higher social status. Indeed, in some places it is a direct contravention of the local social order to question those of rank.

While competition for political power is peaceful in most of Polynesia and Micronesia, elections in Papua New Guinea are notoriously violent and Fiji has endured several politically motivated coups, the most recent of which was ironically framed by several commentators as a "good governance coup".

While law and order problems do not feature largely in Polynesia, most of the Melanesian states suffer from limitations to their ability to maintain law and order within their boundaries. This severely impacts the personal security of citizens, with citizens in PNG in particular being fearful of car-jackings, home invasions and violent attack. In particular, women fear for their safety.

Accompanying the absence of national sentiment, particularly in Melanesia, civil servants demonstrate antipathy towards citizens. Indeed, the police in Papua New Guinea are violent to citizens, and throughout Melanesia police fail to take the complaints of women seriously.

Accountability

Given the disjunction between introduced state systems and local governance practices (with the exceptions of Samoa and Tonga, which integrate both), there is often lack of understanding and respect for state-based rules. In Melanesia, legislators are accountable to the people on their own terms – that is via the distribution of wealth – not in terms of delivering upon legislative, policy and party-based ideological promises. In systems where the power of leaders is considered beyond contestation, it follows that there will be less accountability to the public (e.g. Tonga). The accountability of civil servants for their actions is similarly premised.

Transparency

Freedom of the media exists throughout the Pacific. Political parties do not play an important role in Pacific politicking – particularly in Melanesia – with both rank and the willingness to distribute wealth being key factors in politics at all levels.

Decision making processes lack transparency in Melanesia, where the *wantok* system plays a key role in bureaucratic decision making, and in Polynesia chiefs need not account for their decisions. As highlighted by Peterson (1997), while traditional Micronesian chiefs were required to consult widely – rendering their decisions transparent – government decision makers do not demonstrate transparency.

Efficiency

Formal civil society input in policy making is increasing. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the CIMC provides a mechanism for this express purpose. This fits well with the egalitarian character of Melanesian societies, in which decision making is often broadly consultative and based on consensus. This is less the case in highly hierarchical societies.

Constant changes of government, in the Melanesian states in particular, have negatively impacted upon policy formation, due to the lack of continuity. This can be directly related to the character of leadership in Melanesia, whereby leaders are required to continually garner the support of unfixed and fluctuating groups. While the intervention of donors in the strengthening of government bureaucracies has resulted in the formulation of merit based recruitment policies, ties to kin continue to impact heavily upon recruitment.

Analysis

The ability of Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian states to satisfy the contemporary requirements of good governance is not only related to traditional notions of leadership, but more broadly to the entire socio-political systems that underpin them. Recalling the notion that culture is a cohesive whole, the single element of leadership cannot be distinguished from political organisation (comprising descent, alliance, kinship, group formation, leadership etc.). This has been demonstrated by the preliminary analysis of good governance requirements. For example, the notions of participation, accountability etc. are related not to ideas about leadership *per se*, but more broadly to encompassing social processes (e.g. social stratification, status acclamation, gender relations).

Any analysis of the fit between local and universal ideas about governance using Western frameworks (such as those derived from the World Bank, ODI etc.) will inevitably show that Pacific Islands fail to meet certain criteria – as these criteria are not derived from within. Sensitive analysts, however, will use this data not to judge but to understand where the holes in good governance are and to subsequently formulate a cooperative approach to the improvement of governance in the region.

BRIDGING LOCAL LEADERSHIP & THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE: SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

As highlighted earlier in this paper, culture operates in an integrated fashion. Consequently, it is difficult to isolate

leadership from the social context in which it is exercised. To address Pacific leadership in a meaningful fashion necessitates attention to the very social fabric of the Pacific: socio-political organisation, economic organisation, gender relations, and so forth.

It is necessary to acknowledge that whilst much rhetoric about good governance in the Pacific seeks to locate good governance concepts within local indigenous practices, it also unequivocally seeks to promote change. For example, the very premise of AusAID's (the Australian Agency for International Development) Pacific Leadership Program is that Pacific leaders lack leadership or that they exercise it inappropriately - an opinion held not only by external observers, but also by local people. It is therefore important that, at the design level, designers are cognisant of the fact that they are seeking nothing less than change. This has clear ramifications for the expected outcomes of such a program.

It is contended that existing research adequately explains local models of leadership and that the tensions between customary leadership practices and performance in institutions are sufficiently understood. There is ample research – by both Pacific Islanders and external observers – into the challenges of contemporary leadership. Ultimately, outsiders will never completely understand the complex nuances of Pacific leadership practices. It therefore behoves us to be honest when determining the research agenda. That is, the question that we are genuinely seeking to answer is “How do we change those aspects of Pacific leadership which do not sit comfortably alongside the requirements of good governance?”

While scholars such as Huffer (2005) argue for further research into “Pacific political ethics”, from an external policy perspective such research will only be of value if “Pacific political ethics” can be aligned with the good governance agenda. There is enough evidence to suggest that this will not be the case. Thus, the questions begging answers do not relate to leadership *per se*, but rather, they relate to the facilitation of change.

AUTHOR NOTES

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