Custom, Governance and Westminster in Solomon Islands:

Charting a Course Out of the Political Quagmire

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates whether the people of Solomon Islands would be better served by a form of governance that is politically hybrid than through the current Westminster unitary-state model.

In remote provinces such as Choiseul, the reach of the state is limited. Here, notions of citizenship and national identity have gained little traction because kin group relations underpin society and form the basis for peoples' identity. In such societies customary institutions, in the form of chiefs, and the church provide order. In these self-governing rural communities governance is distinctly parochial in its application and often hybrid in form.

This study examines whether the hybrid polities of such communities have an application within the proposed Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands. The thesis, first, examines the international concepts of governance that have shaped and provided a framework within which the state of Solomon Islands, and its systems of governance, have evolved. State governance today, is very much a product of historical antecedents. However, an analysis of these antecedents demonstrates that Solomon Islanders have been particularly adept at appropriating introduced systems for their own purposes, and matters of governance are no exception.

Using semi-structured interviews, the fieldwork component of this thesis examines the hybrid form of governance that exists in a Choiseulese village to determine whether such models have an application within the proposed Federal Constitution, thus providing a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current Westminster system. Three tiers of government are proposed in the Federal Constitution – Federal, State and Community Governments. Of these, Community Governments provide a particularly suitable political arena where hybridised forms of village governance, which locally have a considerable degree of political legitimacy, can be combined with such functions of state as are necessary to achieve good governance. This, it is argued, will allow the development of forms of governance that are much more suited to local conditions than is possible under the current constitution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The airfield at Taro had not long been rebuilt when, in January 2012 I returned to Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands, after an absence of six years. In addition to a very attractive, small, cream terminal building the runway had been resurfaced with crushed coral. Glaringly white and hot under the intense tropical sun, it was a place to be avoided in the heat of the day. The guest house where I stayed was adjacent to the airport terminal building so was very convenient for arrival or departure by air. Here, one could sit and watch the arrival and departure of planes – three times a week!

On the day the plane was due people would begin to congregate at the airport terminal building an hour or more before arrival. The airline agent, behind his counter, would be busy weighing both luggage and people and checking them against the passenger list. The small building would fill with people and luggage would be piled all around. The plane would arrive, an equally small de Havilland Twin Otter in the blue and white livery of Solomon Airlines. As soon as the engines shut down the waiting crowd would surge forward to the plane as it disgorged its nineteen passengers and luggage. Outward bound luggage would be stowed and departing passengers would board. The plane would taxi out to the airstrip, test its engines, and then disappear into the hot tropical sky, a diminishing speck amongst the towering white cumulus clouds. Newly arrived passengers, and those who had come to witness the tri-weekly event, would drift away and the terminal would return to its slumber to await the next arrival, several days hence. From the guest house the view returned to normal – a hot, empty, and seldom used airport runway shimmering in the tropical heat.

The purpose of this thesis

The anecdote described above provides insight into some of the issues facing an isolated province such as Choiseul. Being far from the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara, the separation is not only geographic and that of tenuous transport links, it is also social as well as political. In remote places like Choiseul (see Map 1) the

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reach of the state is limited and here notions of citizenship and national identity have gained little traction because it is kin group relations that underpin society and form the basis for peoples' identity (Naitoro, 2002). In these self-governing rural communities governance is distinctly parochial in its application, often hybrid in form and quite separate from state governance (see Fukuyama, 2007; Kabutaulaka, 1997). In short, with eighty percent of the population rurally based (S.I.G., 2009b), governance by the state of Solomon Islands has little legitimacy at village level.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine the political disconnect that exists between the state and rural communities in Solomon Islands and find ways in which this can be overcome. It does this by drawing together an historical account of the evolution of governance in Solomon Islands, new conceptual tools from the literature on hybrid political orders, and from my own experience as a researcher, project adviser, and development programme manager in Solomon Islands over a 25 year period.   It is this experience that has, to a large extent, framed the issues considered in this research.

Map 1   Solomon Islands
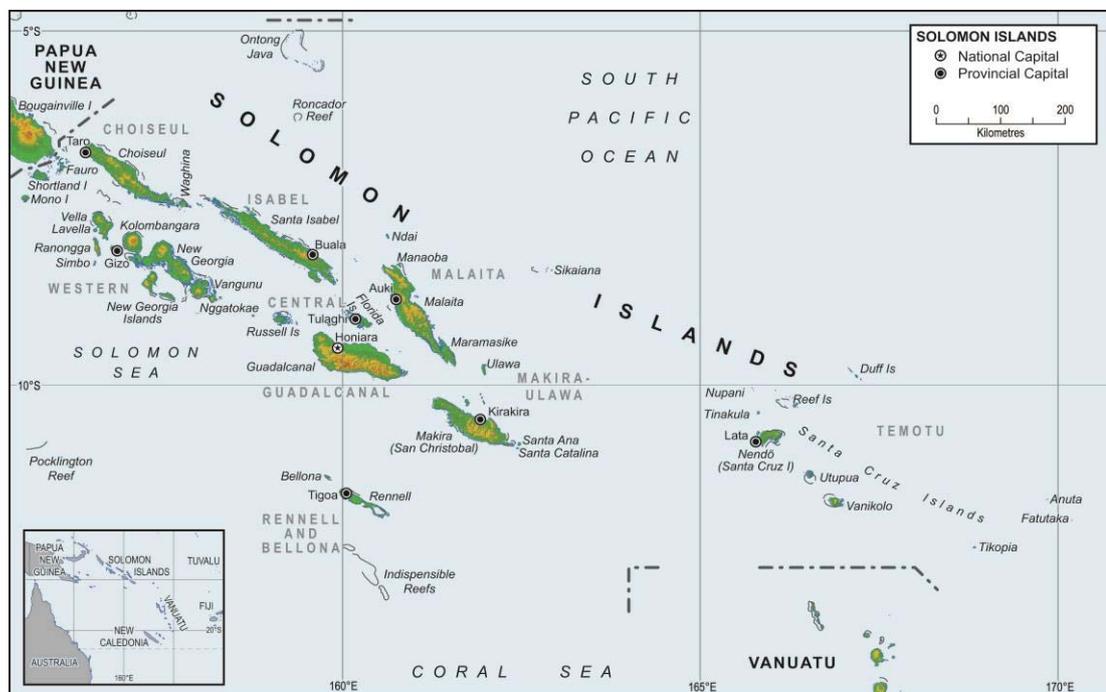
(Source: NZDF, 2007)

Questioning state governance

Having previously spent four months undertaking research on Choiseul in 1991, I then worked as an adviser on the New Zealand funded Customary Land Reforestation Project from 1992 to 1995. This project involved working with the Forestry Extension section of the Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation who, in turn, trained villagers how to establish timber trees, primarily to generate cash, on former garden sites on customary land. Although Forestry Division extension officers were located in, and operated from, provincially based offices I was not aware, at the time, of any relationship between these officers and the provincial governments to which they had been assigned. Forestry officers reported directly to their line manager who, in this case, was in charge of the Forestry Extension Section and was based in Honiara. He, in turn, answered to the Commissioner of Forests, also Honiara-based.

In later years (2002 - 2008), when I was responsible for the Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) Solomon Islands volunteer programme, the significance of this 'disconnect' between seconded national government officers (e.g. forestry) and the provincial governments to which they had been assigned, became apparent. Although, technically, national government officers seconded to provincial governments are answerable to the Provincial Secretary who has administrative responsibility for the province, in practice the two tended to operate quite independently. Forestry officers, as already noted, answered directly to the Commissioner of Forests whereas the Provincial Secretary appeared to be more involved with administrative matters directly related to the provincial government (UNDP., SIG., & UNCDF., 2012).

The VSA programme in Solomon Islands was largely directed at strengthening the functional capacity of provincial governments. As such, it was funded by NZAID, the former development assistance arm of New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. By 2007 a major focus of the NZAID programme in Solomon Islands was to promote 'good governance' and to this extent VSA's role at provincial government level was that of a comprador insofar as it supported the NZAID objective of improving public accountability, financial management and economic growth at the national level (NZAID, 2007).

The VSA effort to promote good governance was directed primarily at the administrative arm of provincial governments. However, in the four provincial governments VSA had partnerships with, the success, or otherwise, of these organisations largely depended on the personal ability of the elected provincial members rather than the administrative capacity of the administrative arm of the government. The capacity of the administrators to perform the basic functions required of a provincial government was, in fact, very limited. Furthermore, the administrators were largely directed by the elected members who had ministerial responsibilities. Most provincial assembly members, however, did not understand how the Westminster parliamentary system operated even though it had provided the basis for governance when Solomon Islands became independent from Britain in 1978 (Larmour, 2001). As a result, many provincial government politicians did not comprehend the distinction between the legislative and administrative arms of government nor were they able to resolve the tension between representing their own constituency interests and their responsibility to deliver services for the development of the province as a whole (Cox & Morrison, 2004). Provincial governance, therefore, could be a fractious affair and there was little in the way of established systems to ensure that it was anything but *ad hoc* in its application.

As well as not being fully understood, the Westminster system did not sit comfortably with customary forms of governance. In many respects it was seen as an adversarial system with its emphasis on the individual and their vote, rather than on networks, connections, and reciprocal obligations which tend to characterise the kin group societies of Solomon Islands. The provincial governments VSA was working with also tended to operate in isolation from the people they were supposed to represent. This was not helped by the abolition of Area Councils, sub-units of the provinces which had originally been established to make decisions on development activities within their localities (Peter Larmour, 1985; Moore, 2004; White, 2004b). Area Councils were a body that could have been closely accountable to the rural population but were not fully utilised by the provincial government system (Nanau, 1997). This was of major concern as much of the NZAID good governance programme in Solomon Islands, which VSA was supporting, was supposed to ensure that "political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of resources" (NZAID, 2007, p. 3).

This led to much thought on my part and propelled me to consider more deeply why western forms of governance did not work very well in the Solomon Islands context. What was it that had provided legitimacy to local, customary forms of governance such as I had witnessed earlier in Nukiki village in 1991, yet did not bestow the same level of recognition upon the provincial governance systems I had been associated with through VSA? And more fundamentally, it raised the underlying question that if the introduced Westminster form of unitary governance does not sit comfortably with Solomon Islanders what, in fact, would?

In a wider sense, this also posed further questions: Was it really appropriate to try and replicate western forms of state governance in Solomon Islands (see Dinnen, Porter, & Sage, 2010; Wesley-Smith, 2006)? Or, were there local institutions, elements of village-based governance that could be harnessed, extrapolated, and applied on a larger geographic scale? Could such elements be applied to aspects of provincial or state government, for instance, in a style of politics that is more attuned to the Solomon Islands way of doing things (see V. Boege, A. Brown, K. Clements, & A. Nolan, 2009a; Clements, Boege, Brown, Foley, & Nolan, 2007; Dinnen et al., 2010)? And, if so, could this create a system in which Solomon Islanders are participants in the political process, rather than mere bystanders? In an attempt to explore possible answers to these questions it has been necessary to examine issues concerning the Westminster system, poor governance, and state failure.

The issues - Westminster, poor governance and state failure

In countries such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, where there are a large number of ethnic groups, no one group can dominate politically and coalitions have to be formed. In both Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands the key act in forming a government is the selection of a Prime Minister and it is the decision to appoint a Prime Minister that determines who is to govern (Fry, 1983). In this situation political alliances are sustained by reciprocal and personal relations with the result that the parliamentary process fails to transcend parochial political interests. Consequently, localism in national politics prevails. In this political environment it is possible for those who are politically astute to gain access to power through the Westminster system but in anticipation of this the British ensured

that the constitutions they devised for Pacific Island nations at independence were sufficiently robust to guarantee an orderly succession of power (i.e. leadership) when it was warranted.

In the intervening years since Solomon Islands became independent in 1978, the Westminster parliamentary system has often been criticised as being inappropriate (see Corrin, 2007b; Kabutaulaka, 2008). In many respects, however, it has been captured, or colonised, by traditional Melanesian politics where, unlike the colonial state, the post-colonial state has become a porous entity where the differentiation between state and society has been progressively blurred (Dinnen, 2009). This development has not served Solomon Islands well for while it demonstrates a capacity to conscript and adapt a foreign, introduced form of governance for their own purposes, it allowed a system where there are virtually no checks on the executive authority of parliamentarians (Frazer, 1997). The resulting decline in political morality was to be a contributing factor to the complete breakdown of the national economic system that occurred in 2000 and the ethnic tensions that engulfed Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003 (Moore, 2004). In effect, the state failed and as with the earlier violent separatist conflict that had occurred on nearby Bougainville, this had serious ramifications for security in the Pacific (Wainwright, 2003b). This created considerable concern amongst its neighbours and culminated in military and police forces from Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific Island nations entering Solomon Islands in July 2003 to restore law and order (Fraenkel, 2004). Once this had been restored, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI as it was called, set about rebuilding the 'machinery of government' in order to allow the state of Solomon Islands to function again. Within Solomon Islands itself, the crisis precipitated further calls for a constitution that is more suitable for the nation than that provided by Westminster (see Corrin, 2007b).

In attempting to rebuild the state, RAMSI and other bilateral agencies such as NZAID, pursued standard World Bank governance objectives and processes (see Braithwaite, Dinnen, Allen, Braithwaite, & Charlesworth, 2010; Gore, 2000). This approach involved re-establishing what was termed 'the pillars of state' - law and justice, economic governance, and the functions of government. Unfortunately, however, such an approach failed to recognise the strengths inherent in Solomon Islands society; traditional village institutions, churches, women's networks and other organisations that delivered security to most villages, even at the height of the tensions (Braithwaite et al., 2010).

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Commentators such as Wesley-Smith (2006) maintain that while it is easy for organisations such as RAMSI to design institutional structures to 'fix' problems of governance and state, this is tantamount to trying to reform the central values and practices of Oceanic societies to fit the mould of western-style administration. Dinnen, Porter and Sage (2010) are more explicit and state that ambitious western organisational models are not appropriate for a country like Solomon Islands which does not have the capacity to deliver a level of service in the way envisaged by RAMSI. Others, such as Fraenkel (2004), Fry and Kabutaulaka (2008), maintain that there are compelling reasons to re-think the conventional form of state-building that has been promoted by bilateral and international development agencies in Solomon Islands. The tensions of 1998 – 2003 had provided a salutary lesson that western models of state governance had not worked well and led to a realisation that "to have any measure of success state building activities will have to work with existing institutions and ideologies of governance" (Wesley-Smith, 2006, p. 126). All this, in essence, pointed to the need for hybrid forms of government that could incorporate elements of customary governance as well as elements of state governance.

Hybrid political orders – a way of including custom in governance

In a study of peace and state-building efforts in neighbouring, post-conflict Bougainville, Boege (2006) described the emergence of hybrid political systems as existing local customary forms of governance mixed and overlapped with modern state patterns of governance. This concept was developed further by Clements, Boege, Brown, Foley and Nolan (2007) who argued that the modern model of state had not evolved as predicted in most countries of Melanesia, and that the state-building efforts of bilateral, regional and multilateral development agencies were challenged in their efforts to do justice to indigenous cultures, facilitate high levels of democratic participation, and ensure effective delivery of government services. As an alternative to the statist approach to governance they advocated what they called hybrid political orders, a system broad enough, they maintained, to include a variety of non-state customary forms of order and governance that functioned, with varying degrees of compatibility, alongside state forms of governance.

The system of political hybridity reflected what I had observed at village level in Solomon Islands in 1991, where governance was the joint responsibility of the chief and the church. It also seemed to offer an alternative to the statist form of governance which had failed to resonate with Solomon Islanders I had worked with. Political hybridity, therefore, seemed to reflect current political practices in village level governance.

At the time this research was undertaken a process of constitutional reform was well under way in Solomon Islands. Concepts of political hybridity are, therefore, considered in relation to this. Solomon Islanders had been deeply shocked by what had occurred during the tensions of 1998 – 2003. Disillusioned with the political process, many, according to Roughan (2001, as cited in Moore, 2004), realised that they needed to reclaim their political future from an 'educated elite' group of politicians who had led the country to the point of collapse. Out of this crisis came calls for constitutional reform which, by the time this research was undertaken, had resulted in a Draft Federal Constitution. In this three tiers of government were proposed: Federal; State, and; Community Government. Of these, Community Governments are the most relevant to this study because they effectively reincarnate the former Area Councils and, thus, provide opportunities for hybrid village polities to engage more meaningfully with the state.

Thesis objectives

In order to examine whether hybrid political orders have an application within the proposed Federal Constitution it has, first, been necessary to examine the international concepts of governance that have shaped and provided a framework within which the state of Solomon Islands, and its systems of governance, have evolved.

State governance, as it exists in Solomon Islands today, is very much a product of historical antecedents. An analysis of these antecedents, therefore, constitutes a second aspect of this study which will demonstrate that Solomon Islanders have been particularly adept at appropriating introduced systems, methods and technology for their own purposes. Matters of governance, this thesis will argue, are no exception.

Precedents for political appropriation exist in the politically hybrid forms of governance found in villages such as Nukiki, on the island of Choiseul. Using semi-structured interviews, the fieldwork component of this thesis examines the hybrid form of governance that exists in Nukiki village to determine whether such forms could have an application within the proposed Federal Constitution, as well as providing a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current Westminster-based unitary state system. This is necessary because if state building is to have any possibility of success in Solomon Islands it must recognise and be embedded within the societal structures of these communities.

Research questions

Two specific research questions guide the structure and argument of this thesis:

1. What forms of political hybridity have evolved previously, and exist currently, at local levels in Solomon Islands?

2. Within the context of the proposed Federal Constitution, do models of political hybridity have the potential to offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current constitution?

Thesis structure

This introductory chapter has briefly explored the issues that challenge effective governance in Solomon Islands and outlined the principal research questions and objective of this study.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on concepts of governance that relate to Solomon Islands. Commencing with a review of Westminster forms of governance as applied in the South Pacific, the chapter then examines the phenomena of governance and critiques the manner in which it, and decentralisation, have been applied in the developing nations of Melanesia. The appropriateness of the good governance agenda is also considered as well as the applicability of the state-

building measures that were imposed in Solomon Islands by major regional donors following state failure. The second half of the chapter introduces literature on hybrid political orders and begins to build a case for their application as an alternative model to the statist approach to governance in Solomon Islands.

Chapter 3 provides contextual background to this thesis by examining historical elements of Solomon Islands society and the way in which it changed through exposure to influences from an outside world. Externally imposed influences, such as the overseas labour trade, the plantation economy, colonial rule, missions and World War II, all wrought considerable change in Solomon Islands societies but, more importantly in terms of this thesis, was the way in which Solomon Islanders responded to these powerful outside influences. It will be argued that Solomon Islanders' ability to appropriate these powerful external influences for their own purposes demonstrates that a level of hybridisation was already occurring throughout this period.

The chapter then analyses how the Westminster parliamentary system was appropriated and succumbed to Melanesian political practises after independence, further evidence of Solomon Islanders' ability to bend externally introduced influences to their own purposes. The chapter concludes by pointing to the existence of hybrid political and social orders as a means by which Solomon Islanders already govern themselves at village level and asserts that such hybrid polities can offer opportunities for more meaningful, stable and viable models of state governance than currently exist.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology used in the fieldwork component of the research. Using semi-structured interviews, the purpose of the fieldwork has been to assess the various levels of governance that exist in the Choiseul Bay area of Choiseul Province, in order to determine what levels of political hybridisation occur between them. Once analysed, these findings were used in Chapter 9 to support the argument that hybrid political orders have the potential to offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than currently occurs under the existing constitution.

Chapter 5 provides the background information on Choiseul Province and Nukiki village, which is necessary in order to appreciate the issues and questions of governance this thesis is addressing. After describing Choiseul Province, and its governance, a detailed description of Nukiki village is then provided. The tribal

structure of the community is explained, as is the role chiefs and the church play in village governance. The chapter then analyses the challenges Nukiki village faces – that of population growth, land shortage, inadequate sanitation and water supply, sea-level rise and development challenges such as those caused by logging and education. The implications these challenges may have for village governance in the future are considered.

As a means of investigation local hybrid political orders, Chapter 6 examines contemporary Solomon Islands village governance as represented by chiefly authority on Choiseul today. It commences by discussing the manner in which traditional leadership is defined and, in doing so, challenges the view that pre-colonial Melanesian leadership was populated with big-men and not chiefs. Following this, a description of Nukiki village leadership, as represented by the Siropodoko tribe, is given. The manner in which tribal chiefly leadership is practised, and shared with church leadership in a form that is hybrid in nature, is also discussed.

Chapter 7 commences by examining the early years of European contact and discusses the arrival of the Methodist Mission in Western Solomon Islands and the part it played in effecting the significant social transformation that has occurred since that time. While conversion to Christianity was widespread on Choiseul, varying degrees of syncretism and appropriation occurred, once again demonstrating historical precedents for hybridisation. After discussing the manner by which the indigenous church on Choiseul has evolved, the present-day United Church, which had its origins in the Methodist Mission, is discussed. Particular attention is paid to the manner in which the church is governed and the influence this has on the political life of Nukiki village today. Further consideration is given to the comfortable form of political hybridity that has evolved between chiefly leadership and church leadership in Nukiki.

Chapter 8 discusses the role of the state in terms of its ability to provide services and adequate political representation for its constituents at provincial level. The chapter then discusses opportunities that the proposed Federal Constitution offers for politically hybrid forms of governance in contemporary Solomon Islands. Of the three tiers of government proposed in the Federal Constitution, State and Community Governments are the most relevant in the context of this thesis. This chapter argues that Community Governments in particular provide a suitable

political arena where hybridised forms of village governance, which have a considerable degree political legitimacy at the local level, can be combined with the functions of state necessary for good governance.

Chapter 9 examines the Solomon Islands justice system, which is hybrid in form, and provides lessons that can be applied to Community Governments. The chapter suggests that a tripartite hybrid political order would be an effective way of facilitating articulation between custom, the church and the state in Community Governments. It also considers the challenges that Community Governments are likely to be encounter.

The chapter concludes the thesis by considering the contribution this thesis makes to the discourse on hybrid political orders and opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER 2

GOVERNANCE

State governance in Solomon Islands is very much a product of historical antecedents. This chapter, therefore, reviews literature on concepts of governance that have shaped and provided the framework within which the state of Solomon Islands is governed.

Beginning with a review of Westminster forms of governance as applied in the South Pacific, this chapter then examines the phenomena of governance and the evolving manner in which it, and the associated concepts of good governance and decentralisation, have been applied in developing nations such as those of Melanesia. The appropriateness of good governance agendas, as espoused by the donor community and as applied in the social context of Melanesia, is considered before moving on to analyse the applicability of the state-building measures that were imposed in Solomon Islands by major regional donors following state failure.

The last section of this chapter examines and builds a case for hybrid political orders as an alternative model to the statist approach to governance in Solomon Islands. A schema for examining aspects of political hybridity is discussed and put forward as an appropriate methodology for examining data collected in the field component of this research.

Westminster constitutions

The Westminster form of government evolved, and had its origins in, the democratic parliamentary system of Britain. As Britain decolonised, the Westminster model of governance was transferred to its former colonies at independence (Larmour, 2002) with the expectation that its "constitutional provisions might control political behaviour" (Fry, 1983, p. 48). Larmour (2002, p. 3), however, observed that the Westminster model "was often said to be inappropriate for the countries upon which it was foisted at independence" and, in contrast to political institutions that are 'rooted' in a local context, likened the democratic model which Westminster introduced to a 'foreign flower' which was unable to survive in the local soil

(Larmour, 2005). Westminster, as was applied in the former British colonies, had many variations and its application evolved as the process of granting independence to colonies progressed. Larmour (2002) describes the Westminster model of governance as a 'moving target' which, according to Moore (2010) was capable of infinite variation to meet the diverse circumstances found in what were fragments of the British Empire. Nevertheless, a defining characteristic that is common to the Westminster system in general is that ministers are selected from the legislature and it is to the legislature whom they are responsible (Larmour, 2002).[1]

The colonies of the Pacific and, in particular Melanesia, were among the last to gain independence from Britain and the Westminster-based constitutions that Britain developed for these territories benefitted from lessons learned in the former British colonies of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The South Pacific constitutions that were drafted in the 1970s were, however, particularly influenced by experience gained with the Westminster succession mechanisms of the former British territories in Africa. According to Fry (1983) an important factor that needed to be considered in the development of South Pacific constitutions was the general absence of organised political parties that could form a government under the Westminster system in many of these countries. These factors, therefore, influenced British constitutional advisers who developed a range of constitutions that incorporated what has become known as the 'South Pacific Model of Succession' (Fry, 1983).

A feature of these South Pacific constitutions is that the power to appoint governments rests with parliament and the head of state has no discretionary role on questions of succession. As such, it is mandatory for a Prime Minister to resign following the passing of a no-confidence motion. In countries such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands where there are a large number of ethnic groups, no one ethnic group can dominate politically and coalitions have to be formed. In both

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[1] Westminster forms of government vary considerably from state to state but what they do have in common is that the administration requires the support of the individual members of parliament to function. Essential elements of a Westminster government will, therefore, include the following:

- a ceremonial head of state who is different from the head of government
- a head of government who is the leader of the party(s) which form the government
- an executive branch drawn from and answerable to the legislature
- a legislature comprising democratically elected representatives

(see Pettit, 2009; Rhodes, Wanna, & Weller, 2009)

Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands the key act in forming a government is the selection of a Prime Minister "and it is the decision to appoint a Prime Minister that is crucial in determining who is to govern" (Fry, 1983, p. 50). A lack of political ideology and policy differences mean that there is little to differentiate political parties and in this situation political alliances are sustained by reciprocal and personal relations and it is this that determines who will become Prime Minister and, thus, who will govern. As a result, the parliamentary process fails to transcend parochial political interests and localism in national politics prevails. Furthermore, it is quite possible for those who are politically astute to gain access to power through the Westminster system and that is why it was deemed essential, by the British, to have robust elements within the constitutions that facilitated an orderly form of succession when it was needed.

The emergence of governance

Within a few years of the Melanesian colonies gaining independence, the idea of governance began to emerge in policy debates that arose from the liberalising market reforms of the 1980s. At this time both the United Kingdom, under Margaret Thatcher, and the USA under Ronald Reagan, began to reorganise society and government around the principles and values associated with markets and private property. Almost exclusively technocratic in its approach, the intention of these reforms was to reduce the role of the state and end problems of economic inefficiency (Sundaram & Chowdhury, 2012). In this context governance gained currency at the expense of the concept of government, or control by the state (Hirst, 2000). Although widely used by bankers and economists, the concept of governance was relatively imprecise in sofar as it had multiple meanings and consequently there was considerable ambiguity as to how it was used. The concept of governance, for example, took root in the fields of economic development, international institutions and regimes, corporate governance, new public management, and network governance (Hirst, 2000). Of these, however, the field of economic development tended to be all-encompassing and, according to Jenkins (2008, p. 516), it drew "promiscuously on ideas contained in each of the other four fields."

Of most relevance to this thesis is the emergence of governance in the context of international development. Initially the application of governance was apolitical in

its approach and it addressed development issues such as social capital, civil society, and participation – all deemed to be 'problems' that were rooted in differences of power and class relations and that could be resolved outside the political arena (Harriss, 2002). It was not long, however, before the neo-liberal ideology encapsulated in concepts of governance began to be promulgated by international development agencies. This precipitated a shift in thinking, which occurred in the 1980s, and led to the widespread adoption of an approach to development known as the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1993). In essence, the Washington Consensus was a term coined by Williamson to describe a convergence of ideas by scholars and practitioners concerned with addressing economic crises which prevailed in many developing countries. Implemented through economic stabilisation and structural adjustment policies this became the dominant approach to economic development from the 1980s (Gore, 2000).

By the mid-1990s the neo-liberal economic policies of the Washington Consensus were being seriously challenged (Onis & Senses, 2005). The structural adjustment policies inherent in the fundamentalist market approach had, in many respects, failed to spark sustained growth and social development and there was a growing realisation that "issues other than market dynamisation are more important for economic development" (Hout, 2009, p. 29). Known as the Post-Washington Consensus (PWC), this phase has tended to dominate the development discourse since the mid-1990s. The PWC phase concentrates on mechanisms for accountability and transparency as well as technical instruments such as public finance management and public sector reform. At the same time, the PWC phase has also precipitated a change in the conception of governance and this has created tensions amongst the international development community as to the need for a greater "political understanding of governance, and the reform programmes aimed at enhancing governance quality" (Hout, 2009, p. 30).

Good governance

Good governance, in many ways, represents an evolution of the concept of governance and often the two terms are conflated. Defined as the "sound management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (Desai & Potter, 2008, p. 499) good governance had no single point of origin. The World Bank, however, did much to promote it. Concerned over the high failure rate of

projects and attempts at economic restructuring in Sub-Sahara Africa (Macdonald, 1997), the Bank began to see governance as the key to development effectiveness (Swaroop & Rajkumar, 2002). In the view of the World Bank (1998) "merely allocating public resources for the right goods and services may not lead to desirable outcomes if budget institutions – involving planning, management, and execution – are malfunctioning" (cited in Swaroop & Rajkumar, 2002). As a consequence the World Bank endorsed good governance as a core element of its development strategy. Conceptually, governance was seen as a way of capturing the "manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (Santiso, 2001, p. 62).

Transparency and accountability came to be seen as essential elements of good governance (Mac Ginty, 2013), the characteristics of which having been identified in a series of World Bank reports and OECD policy statements as:

- the legitimacy of government as reflected in a multi-party participatory democracy
- the rule of law
- protection of human rights
- transparency and accountability of government process
- The expansion of civil society, and effective and efficient public sector management

(Macdonald, 1997, p. 23)

The assumption underlying these themes is that the democratic political process is the key to good governance, and in turn, to economic development and social justice (Desai & Potter, 2008; Macdonald, 1997). The construction of good governance, according to Williams and Young (1994, p. 99), "is based on three levels of societal transformation: at the institutional level the creation of a neutral state; at the social level the creation of a liberal public sphere or civil society; and at the personal level the corresponding creation of a liberal self and modern patterns of behaviour." Linked with "stability, the centrality of the state and the smooth running of bureaucracy" (Mac Ginty, 2013, p. 445), this rationale has a strong cultural bias and "takes little account of cultural diversity and lacks subtlety to cope

with mechanisms for participation and transparency that may not meet strict democratic criteria but may work in a specific cultural context" (Macdonald, 1997, p. 28). In the application of good governance, Larmour (2005, pp. 105-6) wryly observed that it was "hard to find local indigenous alternatives to the reform programs promoted by donors and international agencies in the 1990s. The reform programs filled the policy space, and opposition or independent politicians offered no alternatives."

Decentralising governance

In tandem with the evolution of thinking about governance, concepts of decentralisation have evolved considerably over the last quarter century (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). During this period decentralisation has taken on a diverse variety of meanings but despite this there has been a concensus within the donor community that "democratic decentralisation is an essential part of good governance and a key aspect of political and administrative reform" (B. C. Smith, 2007, p. 101). In this respect it was believed that decentralisation would achieve greater efficiency and equity "by public decisions being brought closer and made more open and accountable to local populations" (Larson & Ribot, 2004, p. 3).

According to Cheema and Rondinelli (2007), three phases of decentralisation have occurred: The first phase took place in the 1970s and 1980s and focused on deconcentrating power from hierarchial government structures and bureaucracies. Deconcentration tends to shift the workload to lower tiers in an organisation but generally grants little discretion in terms of decision-making (Prinsen, 2011). In the mid-1980s, a second phase of decentralisation emerged which was closely aligned to the neo-liberal market reforms of that period. Closely associated with developing ideas on governance, decentralisation, in this phase, incorporated concepts of political power sharing, democratisation, market liberalisation and expanded scope for the private sector in decision-making. By the 1990s, a third phase had evolved whereby decentralisation came to be seen as a way of opening up governance to wider public participation through the involvement of civil society although, in reality, this was also meant to have been a fundamental principle of the earlier phases (see B. C. Smith, 2007).

In contrast to the various phases of decentralistion discussed by Cheema and Rondinelli, decentralisation in the Central and South Pacific was undertaken as a response to decolonisation (Ghai & Regan, 1992; Premdas & Steeves, 1985) but in the case of Solomon Islands, developed little beyond this (insofar as the second and third phases described by Cheema and Rondinelli were absent - see Chapter 8). There were, however, demands for secession or decentralisation in all of the Melanesian nations and this "undoubtedly complicated the process of decolonisation in the Pacific" (Ghai & Regan, 1992, p. 2). Secession movements had arisen in Papua and Bougainville prior to Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975 (Dorney, 1993), and a similar movement occurred in the Western District of Solomon Islands, also prior to independence in 1978 (Bennett, 1987; Premdas, Steeves, & Larmour, 1984). Essentially ethno-national in character (Premdas et al., 1984), these secession movements were resolved by negotiation.[2] Notwithstanding this, the economic viability of Pacific Islands nations was weak and, in many cases, their economies were based largely on subsistence. Communities of the Pacific tended to be jealous of their own traditions, customs and territories but, at the same time, were respectful of those of other communities. This "generated a remarkable tolerance of dissent and non-conformity" (Ghai & Regan, 1992, p. 3) but made the governance of such communities challenging. In this context, the artificial boundaries that had been established by the colonial powers had little influence in defining the self-consciousness of local people (Ghai & Regan, 1992).

The dilemma facing colonial powers as they divested themselves of colonies in Melanesia, in particular, was whether to try and preserve national unity through the centralisation or decentralisation of state powers. The consensus, at the time, was that national unity was best advanced through the sharing of power rather than centralisation and to this end decentralisation was advanced as a form of governance shortly before independence in the Solomon Islands (Moore, 2010; Premdas & Steeves, 1985; Suluia, 2012), and shortly after independence in Papua New Guinea (Ghai & Regan, 1992). The rationale for this, Ghai and Regan observed, was that if people could feel secure in their own areas, and could be assured that they would be involved in the decision making in their own communities, then they would be more likely to become involved in the larger entity

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[2] A rebellion occurred on Santo, just prior to Vanuatu's independence in 1980, but this was more complex. An alliance of kastom and francophone interests, this rebellion achieved two months of effective unilateral independence before being supressed by troops shipped in from Papua New Guinea at the request of the newly formed national government (Tabani, 2008).

of the state. Unfortunately, this did not occur and the implications of this with regards to Solomon Islands are discussed in some detail in Chapter 3.

Good governance and conditionality in aid

Development assistance to Pacific Islands nations during the 1980s had, on a per capita basis, been amongst the highest in the world and largely unconditional as Western nations attempted to keep the new island leaders 'on side' during the Cold War period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 regional security became less of an issue and the imperative to maintain transfers of aid that were unconditional diminished (Wesley-Smith, 2006). An increasing alignment of aid to a 'good governance agenda' occurred and this coincided with the introduction of economic conditionality by the World Bank and other agencies as part of 'adjustment' packages that bailed out the economic disasters of the developing world" (Macdonald, 1997, p. 26; see also Smith, 2007). Small states, such as those of the Pacific Islands, were vulnerable. "Their dependence on regional or international organisations for aid or common services made them more open to influence than larger more autonomous nation-states were" (Larmour, 2005, p. 186). When times were good this was not such a problem as they were able to resist conditionality with "weapons of the weak, such as creating delays, failing to provide information, or – in Papua New Guinea – delaying a visa to a bank official" (Larmour, 2005, p. 188). However, when island governments fell upon hard times and "did recognise a financial crisis, they were vulnerable to the standard, not necessarily appropriate doctrines promoted by the international financial institutions" (Larmour, 2005, p. 188). The acceptance of such doctrines, amongst other outcomes, often led to a loss of sovereignty for island states.

At a deeper level there was also a conflict between underlying customary values and statist systems of governance (Sillitoe, 2000). Statecraft, in essence, attempts to make society more 'legible' by simplifying, rationalising, and standardising elements of it in order to be able to administer it in a format that is more convenient (Scott, 2009). The danger in this is that much of what could be termed customary values, a 'complicating' carry-over from traditional society, are ignored by donor agencies who see this as an institutional barrier to development that has become embedded in local government bureaucracies (Sillitoe, 2000). Concerned, especially, with the inefficient use of funds caused by slack accounting procedures,

administrative confusion, wasted opportunities, inappropriately trained personnel, and outright corruption and embezzlement, institutional strengthening, perhaps naturally, came to be seen by donor agencies as a means of eliminating these 'shoddy' financial practices. Such agencies were accountable to taxpayers in their own countries and needed to show that aid funds, raised through taxation, were not being wasted or, worse, siphoned off by corrupt Third World élites. Designed to improve efficiency through retraining and reorganisation, or what is commonly known as restructuring, institutional strengthening projects tended to promote good governance according to the values and standards of western democracy. Such restructuring was sometimes just one step away from social engineering and, predictably, was often resented by national staff who resisted efforts to reorganise them and impose foreign values and expectations (Sillitoe, 2000). This approach became the norm following the external response to 'state failure' in Solomon Islands from 2003.

State failure and reconstruction

Pacific Island societies, such as is found in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, are politically complex and this has continued to influence how power and authority is exercised at the national level. Several decades after independence, effective power has become concentrated in small national elites whose "government practices do not always provide efficient diffusion of public resources to outer areas, islands and villages where most people live" (Graham, 2008, p. 11). As linkages between village governance and national and provincial governments languished, Solomon Islanders sometimes lamented the strong relationship they saw developing with 'shadow governments' of foreigners who seemed, at times, to make puppets of the members they had elected. These shadow governments, in the form of business leaders with investments in logging, hotels, casinos, prostitution and fishing, provided largess to favoured politicians who represented their interests, effectively disenfranchising most citizens in the process (Braithwaite et al., 2010). In the time-honoured Melanesian custom of reciprocity, favoured politicians used this largess to reward those who voted for them. However, only a small proportion of the electorate were rewarded in this process because, under the first past the post electoral system, they had been elected from a relatively small ethnic power base which was not necessarily

representative of the electorate as a whole (Interview #31).[3] Thus, a system developed where there was a "government of the few, by the few, for the few foreign shadows" (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p. 141). This caused one commentator to observe that the state system in Solomon Islands had effectively been colonised by Melanesian customs and traditions (Dinnen, 2009).

As a result of this poor form of governance, economic crises occurred regularly in the nations of Melanesia. By 1999 the situation in Solomon Islands had deteriorated to the point of collapse and the country was plunged into a crisis of ethnic tension, and economic and political collapse, from which it was powerless to escape. Like the earlier deeply divisive and violent separatist conflict that had occurred on nearby Bougainville from 1988 to 1997 (Regan, 2010), the conflict in Solomon Islands had ramifications for security in the Pacific and created considerable concern amongst its neighbours. Those most able to address the problem and with, arguably, the strongest geo-political incentive to do so, Australia and New Zealand, were to the fore in efforts to assist Solomon Islands to return to a position where law and order could be restored. To this end military and police forces from Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific Island Forum nations began entering Solomon Islands on 24 July 2003 (Fraenkel, 2004). The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) had commenced and, once peace was secured, it set about improving 'the machinery of government' of Solomon Islands.

Although RAMSI was very successful in securing law and order and enjoyed the support of most Solomon Islanders (see Allen, 2006; Oxfam, 2006), very little had changed under the surface. Protected by RAMSI the government was able to function again but the danger was that it may not not take long for the previously dominant 'sectarian' forces, both within and without government, to reassert themselves once this protection was removed. This, of course, created a conundrum for practitioners of good governance and for those who advocated the statist approach. A failed state creates only misery and poverty for its citizens, destabilises the region, and creates a power vacuum that could be dangerous (see Wainwright, 2003b) yet recreating a state, which had every chance of failing again once the intervention ceased, seemed a risky and costly exercise where success was not necessarily guaranteed (see also Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

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[3] See Appendix 5 for a schedule of interviews.

The assumption RAMSI made was that the state of Solomon Islands had failed and thus it set about trying to rebuild what it called the 'fundamental pillars of state' – law and justice, economic governance, and the machinery of government. In this RAMSI followed fairly standard World Bank good governance objectives and practices (Braithwaite et al., 2010). The weakness, however, in this assumption was "that it was blind to the strengths of Solomon Islands state and society as manifest in village institutions, churches, women's networks, sporting organisations and much more that delivered security to most villages even at the height of the conflict" (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p. 163). According to Wesley-Smith (2006) the challenge RAMSI faced was not really the availability of resources or administrative expertise. It is relatively easy to design institutional structures but "what is much more difficult for outsiders (or insiders for that matter) to change is the wider political culture in which western style state institutions must operate over the longer term" (Wesley-Smith, 2006, p. 126). In most Pacific places considered likely candidates for state failure, traditional economic formations, ideologies and identities, however, remain resilient. Moreover, Wesley-Smith (2006, p. 126) considers "the idea of somehow engineering the transformation of the central values and practices of Oceanic societies to fit the mould of western style administration" deeply troubling and may even have helped create these unstable conditions in the first place. To have any measure of success, Wesley-Smith (2006, p.126), maintains that state building activities will have to "work with existing institutions and ideologies of governance. They will also require much time, modest expectations, and perhaps even a willingness to redraw political boundaries. Above all these tasks can only be accomplished by islanders themselves."

In many respects international agencies, such as RAMSI, failed to recognise and engage with local context in Melanesia. Melanesians themselves "commonly remark that 'foreigners' miss their diversity" (Dinnen et al., 2010, p. 20), meaning foreigners fail to appreciate local institutional strengths and nuances in their society. Quoting from Scott (1998), Dinnen et al (2010, p. 20) consider that external actors, as well as domestic elites, 'see like a state' "and are less able to recognise, or be sensitive to, the possibilities of other ways of ordering the world and managing social relations." The dysfunctional nature of many state institutions in Melanesia means that their shortcomings are very obvious to outside observers when measured against ideal state models. Seen as deficient, fragile, or lacking capacity, it is very easy for external agencies to conclude there is a need for wholesale reform to revitalise these institutions. Yet this creates what Dinnen et al

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(2010) call parallel modalities, duplicate or shadow institutions which are used to deliver security and other essential services alongside, or through, inefficient or dysfunctional local institutions (see also Braithwaite et al., 2010). Once in place it is hard to return from these parallel modalities to more effective and durable local solutions which, in the view of external agencies, "tend to undermine efforts to create more coherent public finance management" (Dinnen et al., 2010, p 21). Shadow programmes are thus created which further exacerbate fragmentation of local politics.

In his thought-provoking analysis of societies that exist beyond the realm of the state, James C. Scott (2009, p. 30) maintained that "Ethnicity and tribe began, by definition, where sovereignty and taxes ended." As such the so called "ethnic zone was feared and stigmatised by state rhetoric precisely because it was beyond its grasp and therefore an example of defiance and ever-present temptation to those who might wish to evade the state." While this suggests a strong state that is surrounded by a peripheral 'ethnic zone,' tribes that refuse to be governed, the sentiment expressed by Scott could well be applied to Solomon Islands. Here kin group associations, not so much through any act of will on their part but because the underlying cultural and social mores are so different, simply cannot be governed in a manner espoused by the Westminster system. Often seen as ungoverned spaces, they are, in reality, simply governed differently (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). Solomon Islands is not unique in this respect. Migdal (1988, p. 31), in his discussion on strong societies and weak states, more generally notes that the major struggles in many societies, especially new states, "are over who has the right and ability to make the countless rules that guide peoples' social behaviour." These struggles, he observed, are fundamentally over whether the state can displace or harness local organisations "which make the rules against the wishes and goals of state leaders."

Scott (2009) discusses what he calls elementary units of political order in an historical view of pre-state mainland Southeast Asia. Prior to the imposition of state control elementary units of political order had formed. These ranged "from nuclear families to segmentary lineages, bilateral kindreds, hamlets, larger villages, towns and their immediate hinterlands, and confederations of such towns." Such alliances although common, "were usually short-lived and their constituent members rarely surrendered their freedom of action" (Scott, 2009, p. 36). Assembling such alliances, short-lived as they were, required a miracle of statecraft and when they

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did disintegrate they tended to fragment into their constituent units such as petty statelets, small villages, hamlets and lineages. The larger the political alliance the more unstable they tended to be. A fluidity existed, with the constituent units almost always in "constant motion: dissolving, splitting, relocating, merging and reconstituting" (Scott, 2009, p. 37). For all their fluidity, Scott maintains that these units were a relatively constant feature of the political landscape and that it is possible to create an intelligible history regarding them. However, to do this the idea of 'state' must be redefined. In this situation it is not a unity but rather a complex web of contractual mutualities or, as defined in terms of this study, hybrid political orders. When it splintered the "component parts of the system tended to split off in order to save their own lives" (Scott, 2009, p. 38). This, of course, posed considerable problems for the would-be state builder who probably found it well-nigh impossible to install an effective form of sovereignty over such people.

There is a compelling need to rethink conventional state-building in nations such as Solomon Islands. Ambitious western organisational models are not necessarily appropriate and tend to create 'programmatic over-reach,' or what is sometimes called the 'state expectations dilemma' (Dinnen et al., 2010). In reality, nations such as Solomon Islands do not have the capacity to deliver a level of service in the way envisaged in donor model programmes. A challenging geography represented by numerous scattered islands, a varied demographic profile, limited economic prospects, and a projected long term decline in aid flows all work against this and were they to be maintained would create what Dinnen et al (2010) describe as fiscal overload. Put simply, such programmes are financially unaffordable in the Solomon Islands context.   An alternative, non-state-centric approach to governance, therefore, needs to be developed which has a wider perspective and takes into account the strengths of local societies. Such a model would "focus more attention on models of governance that draw on the strengths of social order and resilience embedded in community life of the societies in question and work with the grain of actual existing institutions on the ground" (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p.14). Social reality, for a large part of the population, is not determined by the state but rather by customary law and indigenous knowledge, as well as traditional societal structures (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009).

Poor state performance can have other ramifications as well. Boege, et al (2009) maintain that people will turn to other entities for support where state agencies are incapable of, or unwilling to, deliver security and other public goods. Some of these

social entities are such that they further weaken the power of the state, particularly if they have the capacity to exert violence and seize power.

> Under such conditions, there are often combinations of forces from the customary sphere – like chiefs, traditional kings, religious authorities, and their constituencies – and forces from the sphere of the new formations – like warlords and their militias, ethnic of millenarian movements or organised crime. The new formations are often linked to traditional societal entities and attempt to instrumentalise them for their own goals, such as new forms of power and profit. Customary checks to corruption, misuse of power, and violence then often become seriously undermined

> (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 16).

Hybrid political orders

Boege, et al (2009, p. 17) offer an alternative to the statist approach to governance and advocate what they call hybrid political orders:

> In hybrid political orders, diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, interact, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics, with further influences exerted by the forces of globalisation and societal fragmentation (in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious).[4] In this environment, the state has no privileged monopolistic position as the only agency providing security, welfare, and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other institutions.

According to Boege et al (2009), hybrid political orders are broad enough to include a variety of non-state customary forms of order and governance. They focus on the combination of elements that have their origins in the 'different societal sources that

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[4] In contrast to the interaction, intertwining and combination of different elements of governance described by Boege et al (2009), Naitoro (2002) and Allen et al (2013) use the term 'articulation' to describe the manner in which the relationship between customary, church, and state forms of governance are determined.

follow different logics.' These "spheres do not exist in isolation from each other, but permeate each other and, consequently, give rise to different and genuine political orders that are characterised by the closely interwoven texture of their separate sources of origin" (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 17). Recognising the interaction between state and non-state actors, such as customary institutions, research on hybrid political orders has sought to transcend the 'fragile' and 'weak' state discourses. Here, the emphasis is on "the fusion of new political formations" (state-building, or externally introduces systems of governance) "with customary institutions and practices" (Mac Ginty, 2013, p. 447).

Political hybridity, in its various forms is not, however, new in Melanesia and in many respects is simply a new way of analysing a process of continuous change and adaptation that has been underway since first European contact and probably earlier. This can be discerned in terms of the economic, religious and political transformations that have taken place. Bennett (1987) also discusses how Solomon Islanders were quick to recognise the technological superiority of the Europeans' iron goods and their early adoption of this technology significantly changed the face of subsistence agriculture in the islands. "Iron was sought avidly because it had distinct economic advantages over stone and shell." … "Aside from its durability, the use of iron could reduce the Melanesian males' working day for subsistence, shelter and ceremony by 30 to 40 percent." (Bennett, 1987, p. 34). This created new-found leisure time, for males at least, and Salisbury (1962), in his study of the consequences of technological change in New Guinea, concluded that this, in turn, created more time for politicking as well as ceremony, legal disputes and fighting.

Christianity, coupled with colonialism, was also to affect a major transformation in Melanesian societies and significantly alter what is now loosely termed custom, or traditional ways of life. In his study of tradition and Christianity amongst the Kwara'ae people of Malaita, Burt (1994, p. 1) observed:

> Kwara'ae history during the last hundred years has been dominated by their confrontation with the Europeans who colonised their country and introduced from the opposite side of the world a new cultural tradition which was probably as alien to Kwara'ae as another culture could be. The tribal social order and religious world view which Kwara'ae inherited from their ancestors informed their attempts first to resist and later to compromise with

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this colonial domination. In a long and continuing struggle for self-determination, they have reorganised their society, their spiritual as well as their human relationships, by becoming Christians and creating a new social order through which they now participate in the wider social systems of the Solomon Islands and the world.

Gegeo (1998, p. 1) also discussed the ability of the Kwara'ae, his own people, to adopt and modify practices and knowledge from the outside "and integrate traditional knowledge with introduced knowledge." Recognising that they struggle, as a people and as individuals, between two 'opposing discourses' there has been an increasing awareness by the Kwara'ae that, in order for development to succeed, they must take an idea that is an abstraction and give it 'life' through the work of their own hands (Gegeo, 1998). The recognition of indigenous knowledge is seen as critically important for this process because when people start to think about and articulate development in their own terms a process of ownership, or dehegemonisation, occurs (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Gegeo, 1998). "Dehegemonisation starts to take root once anchored in people's epistemology, because it is when they create truth about something that they form a discursive framework on the basis of which they act" (Gegeo, 1998, p. 8).

Compared with the Western, Weberian[5] based model of state based on rational-legal authority, hybrid political orders differ considerably in the way they operate. As discussed earlier, they already exist in practice, if not in an easily recognised or defined form. Order and peace in local communities, for example, are often provided by local chiefs or clan elders who deal with disturbances in a local context by applying customary law. The police may only play a marginal role, becoming active only upon the invitation of chiefs and elders (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 18). Rather than the state having a monopoly, a hybrid form of law enforcement exists in a situation such as this. Referring to the application of justice at local levels in contemporary Solomon Islands, for instance, Goddard (2010) refers to the pragmatism and pluralism of local actors and, in fact, goes on to advocate a hybrid court system at the local level. The precedent that this provides

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[5] The term Weberian state is often used to portray secular-rational models of state as described by Max Weber in many of his writings (Giddens, 1994). The rationalisation of law, politics and capital enterprise has permeated all spheres of western society (see Giddens, 1994; Schluchter, 1996) leading, at times, to such societies being described as western-style Weberian states (Boege, Brown, et al., 2009a).

has application in hybrid forms of governance and is discussed in some detail in Chapter 9.

Political representation is another area where there are competing forms of leadership, authority and legitimacy. Although liberal forms of representation may be well established in the Constitution (H.M.G., 1978), the real process of leadership selection and representation may be quite different. Here leaders may be selected on kin group affiliation or patronage, a process often accompanied by allegations of vote buying and corruption (see Allen, 2007). Traditional, charismatic authority may be more important, or have more legitimacy, than the legal-rational form of authority recognised by the formal process of the state system. Also, office holders within the state system may only enjoy authority if they hold status under the customary system, or are endorsed by traditional authorities (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009). Traditional organisations and structures, such as that represented by chiefs or big-men, have a legitimacy that state organisations have not been able to attain (Dinnen et al., 2010) "and to ignore them is to overlook some of the basic causes of disconnection between governmental institutions and local realities" (Goddard, 2010, p. 24).

In terms of providing welfare or social services, state institutions in developing countries are generally weak and: "The most fundamental and reliable safety net is often provided by kin groups who operate on customary norms of reciprocity and sharing" (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 19). Such was often the case in Solomon Islands during the ethnic tension of 1998-2003. Many of those who lost their jobs in the formal sector returned to their villages where they relied on subsistence gardening and kin group reciprocity for their support.[6] In reality, the ability to move between western and customary domains permeates the very fabric of society and allows Solomon Islanders to transact change across difference (Harrison, 2007). Consequently, attempts to form a functioning, effective and legitimate system of governance that ignores, or fights against this are likely to experience considerable difficulty (see Clements et al., 2007).

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[6] Some returnees had, however, been absent from their villages of origin for a considerable period of time and the land, to which they had rights, had been claimed by other members of the kin group. This created tensions and meant that the returnees were not always welcomed back by their own people (see Kwaiga, 2009).

Incorporating and legitimising political hybridity

How then can the concept of hybridity be utilised as a means of achieving political legitimacy and fostering a sense of citizenship? Clements et al (2007) argue that it would be much more beneficial to emphasise the positive potential rather than the negative features of the current socio-political situation. Rather than emphasising the weakness or the fragility of the state and its propensity to fail or collapse, the positive aspects of hybridity should be recognised. Innovative adaptation, ingenuity, opportunity and generative processes are all evident in local communities who have displayed a remarkable level of resilience in the face of the statist model of governance. This community resilience and the customary institutions that underpin it should be seen as "assets that can be drawn upon to forge constructive relationships between communities and government" (Clements et al., 2007, p. 51). The main problem facing nations such as Solomon Islands, Clements et al (2007) maintain, is not so much the fragility of state institutions but the lack of constructive linkages between institutions of the state and society. The state, if it is to be strong and effective, needs to be organically rooted in society.

There are, however, risks associated with formalising linkages between the state and customary institutions. White (2007) describes the risks of changing the nature of traditional leadership and its legitimacy in local communities if chiefs are incorporated in structures of government. 'Formalising the informal,' and legislating custom may diminish indigenous authority which has an intrinsic fluidity not found in the more prescribed and codified structures of the state. Nevertheless, legitimacy is vitally important if state stability is to be achieved, and the development of a sense of citizenship, in a national sense, is an essential component of state-building. As already discussed, a sense of citizenship is lacking in Solomon Islands because people have no real ownership of the institutions of governance. According to Clement et al (2007, p. 51) "citizenship and the interface between state and society, rather than the quality of state institutions in themselves, are therefore critically important to enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions in emerging states." Unfortunately, in Solomon Islands building citizenship has received little attention compared with the effort put into building, then rebuilding, central government institutions.

At a personal level there can be friction between people's customary, or kin group identity and their identity as a citizen of the state. Clements et al (2007, p. 51),

however, maintain that "a broadly constructive interaction of these identities is essential for building citizenship and state under conditions of hybrid political order. Engagement with, not rejection of, customary community-based identities is a necessary part of citizenship formation." Defining citizenship in a Solomon Islands context, however, presents some interesting conundrums. In Melanesia "selfhood is less bounded and separate than with westerners" (Brigg, 2009, p. 150). "Concepts of person in Pacific cultures tend to be highly relational, with notions of relatedness elaborated in a great variety of ways in social life" (White & Watson-Gegeo, 1990, p. 8). Personal identity is embedded in group identity (Brigg, 2009) which is quite different from the individualised 'liberal self' (Williams & Young, 1994) inherent in the tenets of citizenship. Nevertheless, Solomon Islanders have a long history of establishing and transacting exchanges across difference (Harrison, 2007) which points to a resilience and adaptability - all preconditions necessary for 'hybridity' to flourish.

As a means of engaging with community-based identities in order to foster citizenship formation, Clements et al (2007, p. 51) "consider that agencies working on enhancing state effectiveness should focus not only on the core functions of the state but on the fundamental community sources of legitimacy as well." The functions of state, Clements et al (2007) maintain, are not an end in themselves but a means to provide its citizens with development, peace and security. Under conditions of hybrid political order these goals may be better served by accommodating community and customary institutions rather than by concentrating solely on the institutions of state. In effect, this recognises "alternative modes of governance which do not fit neatly into dominant state-centred models" (Mallet, 2010, p. 82).

Recently developed by researchers from the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict, the concept of hybrid political orders has been based on field research undertaken in a number of South Pacific nations (Mallet, 2010). The concept of hybrid political orders, in the words of the researchers themselves, "overcomes the notion of the state as being the superior and ultimate form of political order *per se* and frees the debate from its current state-centric bias" (V. Boege, A. Brown, K. Clements, & A. Nolan, 2009b, p. 88). Given its novelty there is a limited but growing body of literature on hybrid political orders which, to date, has tended to focus on a relatively small group of countries (Mallet, 2010). In an analysis of emerging hybrid political orders in rural Moroccan villages, for example, (Bergh,

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2009, p. 52) argued "that by focussing on the 'modern' formal institutions, we miss out on an opportunity to fully understand the dynamics of customary institutions, and how the two interact to lead to the emergence of hybrid political orders." An understanding of this, Bergh (2009) noted, may make it possible to develop hybrid solutions.

Clements et al (2007) noted the difficulty of achieving an understanding of, as well as finding a constructive way to interpret, the interaction between state and customary institutions and in order to advance this thinking offered a schema (see Figure 1) to draw attention to ways in which there might be a blend between traditional and modern forms of governance. To assess the potential for new types of exchange between the state and society Clements et al suggest that it may be useful to address three core dimensions of the relationship between the state and other elements of society that exercise political influence. These core dimensions are:

> *Substitution*, i.e. the identification of the functional equivalents of the state outside state institutions. The relation between these functional equivalents and state functions needs more thorough investigation which might lead to the next category:

> *Complementarity*, i.e. the identification of areas of overlap between modern state approaches and customary approaches. This will lead to the investigation of potential for or actual articulation with state institutions; and finally:

> *Incompatibility*, i.e. the identification of customary approaches that conflict with modern state approaches.

> (Clements et al., 2007, pp. 51-52)

According to Clements et al (2007), using core dimensions such as these enables a richer and more realistic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Pacific Island states. In their view it is necessary to build new forms of state and citizenship in countries such as Solomon Islands that are based on a positive mutual

accommodation between the Weberian state and customary order. This, they maintain, "will transform hybrid political orders into emerging states that – in the long run – will generate new forms of governance beyond the model of the Western state" (Clements et al., 2007, p. 52) . In addition to reinforcing the core functions of the state it is hoped that a model of governance such as this will be more sensitive to the local multi-stranded character of political order and produce more realistic assessments of social and political resilience, as well as reduce the potential for serious violent conflict.

Figure 1   Forms of governance
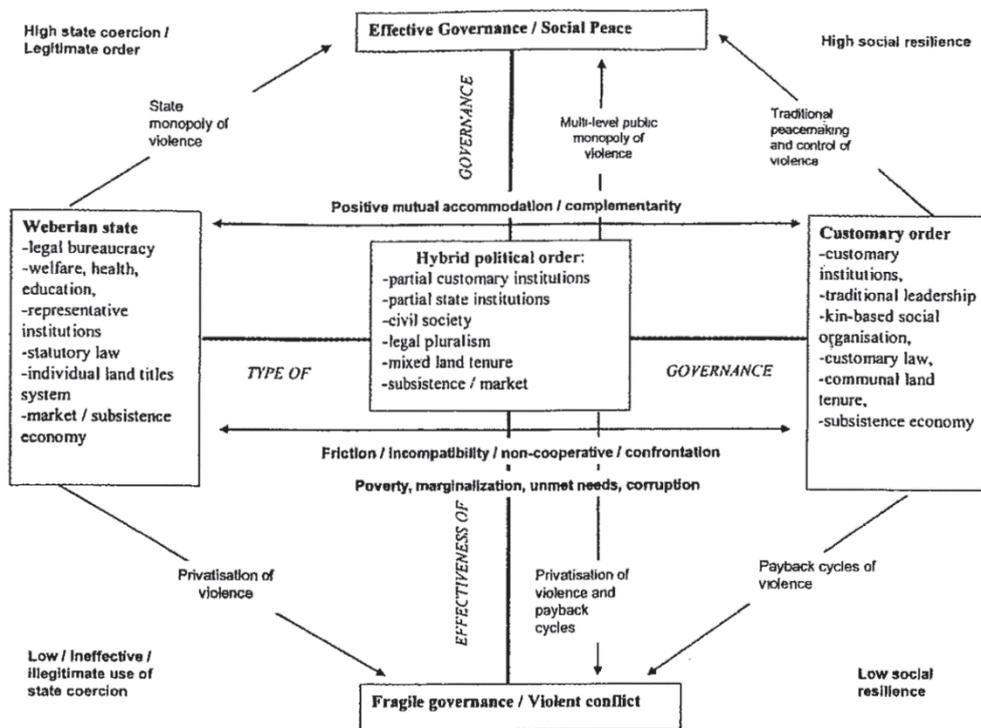
Source: (Clements et al., 2007, p. 53)

Application of schema to analyse hybrid political orders

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the focus of this research is to establish what forms of political hybridity have evolved previously, and exist currently, at the local level in Solomon Islands. Then, within the context of the proposed Federal Constitution, establish whether models of political hybridity have the potential to offer a greater degree of political hybridity than exists under the current constitution. As such, the schema proposed by Clements et al (2007), provides a useful starting point for analysing political order and governance in a specific community to try and determine whether 'legitimate' local forms of hybrid governance are present and could have an application more generally in Solomon Islands. How, for example, does community governance in a village in Choiseul Province relate to the provincial government, the local arm of the state? Multi-dimensional, this schema examines both the *type of governance*, and *effectiveness of governance*. Of particular relevance to the location of the field research undertaken for this study, is the lateral *type of governance* continuum portrayed in the schema:

- *Customary order*, as depicted in the schema, quite aptly lists so-called customary forms of governance: customary institutions; traditional leadership; kin-based social organisation; customary law; communal land tenure, and; the subsistence economy. It is these institutions and practices that underpin rural Solomon Islands societies.

- The *Weberian state*, also depicted in the schema, represents the opposite extreme on the *type of governance* continuum. Legal bureaucracy, welfare, health, education, representative institutions, statutory law, individual land titles system, and market/subsistence economy, all represent instruments of state, ideal building blocks of the western model.

- In between, the schema depicts *hybrid political orders*, the domain of partial customary institutions, partial state institutions, civil society, legal pluralism, mixed land tenure and the subsistence/market interface. It is here that the 'mother lode' of the research undertaken in this thesis was found – overlapping spheres of localised governance, institutions and practices that are hybrid in form and practice.

The vertical continuum, *effectiveness of governance*, also has application but perhaps not in the lower part of the schema axis described as *fragile governance / Violent conflict*. Fragile governance and violent conflict were, however, most certainly a feature of the Solomon Islands crisis of 1998 – 2003, but events such as these were confined largely to the island of Guadalcanal. Choiseul, the location of this study, was not directly affected by these events.

Summary

In preparing constitutions for its South Pacific colonies at independence, Britain recognised that many of these societies were ethnically and politically so diverse that it would be difficult for any one group to form a government under the Westminster system. Political coalitions would be required and so it was considered necessary to provide robust constitutions that would facilitate orderly forms of succession when it was needed.

In contrast, the good governance agendas imposed by donor organisations on many Pacific Island nations from the mid-1980s, were not tailored at all to the small diverse societies of these nations. Good governance, which was seen as a necessary precondition for the success of western style state institutions by international agencies such as World Bank, was based on societies where the state is neutral, there is strong civil society, and liberal patterns of personal behaviour exist. Such behavioural norms are, however, culturally biased and do necessarily fit comfortably with Pacific societies such as that of Melanesia.

In spite of the robust succession mechanisms contained in the post-independence constitutions of the South Pacific, power did become concentrated in the hands of a small political elite in nations such as Solomon Islands. This situation was distinctly disadvantageous to the interests of the predominantly rural-based population and led to armed conflict and eventual state failure in Solomon Islands. This, and an earlier conflict in neighbouring Bougainville, threatened security in the Pacific and in both cases led to intervention by regional powers.

Unlike Bougainville, where a mutual accommodation between state and custom has evolved (Boege, 2006), state rebuilding in Solomon Islands followed standard World Bank good governance objectives and practices which a number of

commentators consider inappropriate given that Western models of state have little relevance to Solomon Islands society. This led to calls for a non-state centric approach to governance, one that draws on the strengths of social order and resilience that is embedded in local community life. To this end hybrid political orders were advocated for in these, community resilience and the customary institutions that underpin it, are seen as assets that can be used to form constructive relationships between communities and government.

The following chapter examines historical influences on Solomon Islands society and the way it has changed through exposure to an outside world. The purpose of this is to demonstrate that the changes wrought by these external influences are evidence of successful hybridisation that has already occurred and, in fact, underpin Solomon Islands society today.

CHAPTER 3

**SEGMENTARY SOCIETIES, WESTMINSTER, AND THE EVOLUTION
OF POLITICAL HYBRIDITY IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

This chapter provides contextual background to this thesis by examining historical elements of Solomon Islands society and the way in which it has changed through exposure to influences from an outside world.

The chapter commences by explaining the importance of land and kin group identity to Solomon Islanders. It then examines the influence the overseas labour trade, the plantation economy, colonial rule, and missions had in Solomon Islands. Combined, these externally imposed forces wrought considerable change in Solomon Islands societies but, more importantly in terms of this research, was the way in which Solomon Islanders responded to these powerful outside influences. Such responses, it will be argued, point to Solomon Islanders' ability to appropriate these powerful external influences for their own purposes.

The influence World War II had in reshaping Solomon Islanders' perception of self is also considered, as well as the effect this had in the post-war period. The period leading up to independence in 1978 is also discussed in some detail, as are the political developments and early signs of political appropriation this precipitated within Solomon Islands.

The British did not consider the Westminster parliamentary system to be particularly appropriate for Solomon Islands so the reasons why it was adopted are considered. This chapter then analyses how the Westminster parliamentary system has been appropriated and has succumbed to Melanesian political practices before going on to explain how this led to state collapse and public discontent with current political processes.

Attempts by external agencies to re-establish the state are then described and the appropriateness of this is considered. The chapter concludes by pointing to the existence of hybrid political and social orders as a means by which Solomon Islanders already successfully govern themselves at the local level and asserts that such hybrid polities can offer opportunities for more meaningful, stable and viable

models of governance than currently exist under the current constitution (see Roberts, 2008).

Land, kin group identity and segmentary societies

In Solomon Islands eighty seven percent of land is still customary owned, and this ownership is protected by law. To understand why such a large proportion of the nations 'real estate' is still in customary ownership one needs to understand what land means to Solomon Islanders. It is their most valuable resource, not only in an economic sense, but also in an historical, political and religious sense as well. Traditionally, land is a source of food but is also contains burial grounds, sacrificial sites and totems "that are important to a society's history and culture" (Kabutaulaka, 1997, p. 140).

Customary land tenure in Solomon Islands is communal and rights to land are generally vested in descent groups, people who share a common ancestor or ancestor-figure (Allan, 1957; Bennett, 1987; Larmour, 1979). The right to use land by an individual, family, or group, therefore arises from their membership of that descent group (Kabutaulaka, 2001; Scheffler & Larmour, 1987) but this right tends to be usufructury rather than that of ownership *per se*. Such land-use rights are usually mediated by a big-man or chief although the degree of power they exercise may differ between areas (Kabutaulaka, 2001).

Customs regarding land-use rights also vary across groups and can be subject to complex social and religious protocols that have evolved as part of the indigenous epistemology[7] for that area (see Gegeo, 1998). Bayliss-Smith and Hviding (2012), for example, discuss the myths and historical tales that were associated with *ruta*, the irrigated cultivation of taro in the Marovo area of New Georgia. Distinct practices concerning the cultivation of taro evolved and these not only became embedded in the culture of the Hoava people but, to a large extent, defined them as well. Although *ruta* is no longer widely practised, and the Hoava people have long since migrated to the coast, the historic vocabulary associated with taro cultivation

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[7] Gegeo (1998, p. 289) defines indigenous epistemology as "a cultural group's way of thinking and of creating and reformulating knowledge using traditional discourses and media of communication (e.g. face to face interaction) and anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture" (i.e. kastom).

has been retained in the Roviana language of western New Georgia. As such, it provides a linguistic 'footprint' that alludes to the special status attributed to taro cultivation by the Hoava people and the manner in which it not only had defined their own culture, but that of the succeeding culture in that area.

Kin group[8] identity is hugely important to Solomon Islanders and before the imposition of colonial rule kin groups functioned as a 'social whole' (Naitoro, 2002) insofar as they tended to be a complete social unit in their own right. Naitoro (2002, p. 105) also maintained that "the importance of the association of kin groups within a specific territory is still widely shared throughout Solomon Islands." Within each territory the occupying kin group has the general rights of decision-making over that particular area, and has developed its own forms of, and relationships for, resource use and resource sharing, not only within that particular territory but also between adjoining territories (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012). These relationships revolve primarily around resource sharing that is conducted on a reciprocal basis. This has, over time, been codified, not only between individuals but also between groups (see also Gegeo, 1998). A kinship ideology has, therefore, evolved that provides the basis for social relations that guide exchange systems within these societies (Naitoro, 2002).

Brigg (2009), in his paper on *wantokism* and state-building in Solomon Islands, maintains that the concept of person is highly relational in Pacific cultures and notions of relatedness are elaborated in a great variety of ways in these societies. "Moreover, Melanesian understandings of group identity and relations are consistent with understandings of personal identity" (Brigg, 2009, p. 151). Strathern (1988), in her analysis of Melanesian societies, also considers that the 'plural' and the 'singular', in one sense, are homologies of one another. Notions of collective versus individual identity with respect to kin group relations is an important aspect of Solomon Islands society and something that sets it apart from many western

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[8] The terms 'kin group' and 'clan' are used, sometimes interchangeably, by various authors to describe the small communities that comprise much of Solomon Islands society. In the context of this thesis the term kin group refers to social units where a person can trace cognatic or affinal connection to others within the unit and to whom he or she may turn, at least nominally, for support (Scheffler, 1965). Clans, however, are social units related through an apical ancestor and are thus based on a cognatic connection (Bennett, 2002; Scheffler, 1965). The Siropodoko tribe of Nukiki, for example, comprised four clans which were essentially extended kin groups which had moved out from the main village to form hamlets. Population growth and the associated shortage of accessible garden land are usually the reason why such family groups leave the main village (Hviding & Bayliss-Smith, 2000).

societies where concepts of democracy and respect for individual human rights often prevail.

Bennett (2002, p. 2) states that: "In pre-European Solomon Islands, as today, kinship was the cement of each society, binding the individual to the group. It was the basis for claims to use terrestrial and maritime resources for food production and other necessities." Clans, traced their claims to land through an "apical ancestor who first cleared patches in the forest, cultivated or settled land, or fished a reef. The labour expended to domesticate the wild bound people to place, creating a history and identity. Livelihood and affection evoked attachment to home places" (Bennett, 2002, p. 2). Beyond localised movement for trade, exchange, marriage and head-hunting (see Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012; Dureau, 1998; Neich, 2006), Solomon Islanders were not highly mobile, and small groups and localised identity were characteristics of early Solomon Islands societies (Bennett, 2002).

Localised identity is still a predominant feature of Solomon Islands society today. Allegiance is primarily to the kin group and is more important than allegiance to the state (Kabutaulaka, 1997). Referring to Papua New Guinea, where similar societies exist, Fukuyama (2007) talks of extreme social fragmentation, characterised by the existence of numerous language groups and a physical geography that makes communication and national unity extraordinarily challenging. Fukuyama (2008) also describes a tendency for segmentary societies, such as found in Melanesia, to be egalitarian and non-hierarchical. "They can come together in temporary alliance of lineages, clans, or tribes for the purpose of defence or aggression, but then fall apart when the emergency passes" (Fukuyama, 2008, p. 4).[9] Bennett (2002, p. 2), in describing the pre-colonial period, stated that "there was no class of leaders across the Melanesian islands, although a powerful big-man or chief was likely to exhibit respect in dealing with his neighbouring counterparts in peace time." While

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[9] Many alliances were, in fact, long-standing particularly those concerning trade. Dureau (1998) discusses the pre-colonial regional and inter-regional exchange routes that existed throughout Solomon Islands. Examples of this are discussed by Bayliss-Smith and Hviding (2012) with respect to the trade of taro, fish and shell valuables between the 'bush' people and 'coastal' people of Marovo. Neich (2006) also describes the complex and long-standing pattern of trade that linked all of the eastern outer islands. Prestige-gaining red feather currency from Nendo was exchanged for brides from the Reef Islands, and ocean going-canoes from Taumako in the Duff Islands. Food, shell disks, fabric and red feathers for the manufacture of currency were also exchanged in a pattern of trade that incorporated the islands of Vanikoro, Utupua and Nupani as well.

some villagers may earn a degree of fame, this was often short-lived across the generations. Power was not concentrated, but dispersed and "there was no over-arching central person or place dominating large areas and islands. Shifting clusters of significance, not hierarchies, characterised Solomons' political and social geography" (Bennett, 2002, p. 3).[10]

In pre-contact times such a system of governance served the small segmentary societies of Solomon Islands relatively well. The world beyond the village could often be hostile and while trading and alliances between villages, or localities, were common, so too was warfare (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012; Dureau, 1998; Scheffler, 1965). The day-to-day focus of such communities was, therefore, inward rather than outward. This influence, in many respects, still remains and has had important ramifications for the post-independent political process in which localism often prevails and politics has largely failed to transcend parochial interests.

Overseas labour trade, the plantation economy and missions

Knowledge of the outside world began to infiltrate Solomon Islands society in the 1800s and this served to challenge the parochial localism that was inherent in the segmentary societies of the archipelago. Contact began with the arrival of transient whalers, a handful of resident traders and then increased from the 1860s as labour ships came looking for people to work on the plantations of Fiji, Queensland, Samoa, as well as on the farms and in the mines of New Caledonia (Bennett, 2002; Corris, 1973). Many of the indentured labourers recruited in the western Pacific region came from the mountains of Malaita and were destined for the sugar fields of Queensland and Fiji (Keesing & Corris, 1980)

One account of the Queensland labour trade was written by William T. Wawn (1893), a labour trade captain who operated in the South Pacific from 1875 to 1891. Accompanied on each voyage by a Government Agent who ensured that labour recruiting was conducted within the agreed laws of the trade, Wawn's recruiting

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[10] In their study of irrigated taro, malaria and the expansion of chiefdoms in New Georgia, Bayliss-Smith and Hviding (2012, p 24) describe three factors which discouraged political expansion: 1) the diverse cultural geography which consisted of a mosaic of non-Austronesian and intrusive post-Lapita peoples and cultures; 2) epidemiological constraints, especially endemic malaria, which caused population growth and mobility to be problematic, and; 3) unstable politics in a social landscape of persistent inter- and intra-island warfare.

voyages in the South Pacific included a number to Solomon Islands. Wawn was an apologist for the labour trade and maintained that while the trade was essential for the development of the rich tropical land of Northern Queensland, South Sea Islanders were not treated simply as labouring animals whereby no attention was paid to their mental and moral education. "Private missions," he said, "have been established in every district with good success" (Wawn, 1893, p. 439). Through experiences with these missions many Solomon Islanders became Christians during their time in indentured labour (see Moore, 2007b) and this was to be instrumental in precipitating change in Solomon Islands society. Some converts, in fact, facilitated the establishment of the Methodist Mission in the Western District of Solomon Islands in the early 1900s (McDonald, 2009), a factor that was to transform society and shift the balance of power away from traditional leaders towards the church (see Burt, 1994). This is discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

The labour trade was also to have a significant impact on Solomon Islands society as a whole. It was particularly attractive to young single men who were essentially free from any significant social responsibilities until they married. The main incentives for recruits were trade goods and cash which were "brought home to be distributed to parents, uncles, older brothers, and other clan elders whom the returner could ask to contribute shell valuables for his bride payment when he wished to marry" (Bennett, 1987, p. 168; see also Moore, 2007). However, the benefits the returnees brought home were wider than just trade goods and cash. The experience away had broadened their horizons, given them prestige in their communities and, for some, provided the opportunity to become a big-man, a headman or a policemen. It also enabled thousands of Solomon Islanders to mix with fellow labourers, many of whom would have been considered enemies. Although these interactions were not always peaceful they did provide opportunities for a shared experience that otherwise would not have been available and a chance to learn about one another. These experiences also provided the means to communicate together in a common language, that of pidgin - "the *lingua franca* of the plantation" (Bennett, 1987, p. 136). Bennett (1987, p. 191) also considered that such encounters "were important preconditions to any development of a group, regional, or even national consciousness" underpinning, in fact, the rudiments of nationhood.

Colonial rule

In 1893 Britain reluctantly declared a Protectorate over Solomon Islands primarily "to regulate the labour and arms trade and to appease the Australian colonies that feared the ambitions of other imperial nations" (Bennett, 2002, p. 3). At the time, rivalry among European powers for territory and labour in the Pacific was strong. By 1896 a colonial administration had been established under Resident Commissioner Charles Woodford. Assisted by a Guadalcanal sergeant and five Fijian policemen, Woodford had the onerous task of controlling an archipelago comprising some 100,000 people who, as was the case in neighbouring Papua, would have seen little reason to cease "fighting their enemies and abandon their cannibalism, sorcery and headhunting" (Kituai, 1998, p. 40).

Determined and harsh by today's standards, but no more so than local sanction at the time, the British gradually brought coastal areas and smaller islands under their control (Bennett, 2002). In order to consolidate economic and political control over the territories they had annexed, the colonial powers of the Pacific, and elsewhere, created institutions to impose their authority on the indigenous peoples now under their jurisdiction (Kituai, 1998). At the time, Solomon Islanders were considered to be "ferocious savages" by their European observers (Scheffler, 1965, p. 15) and, thus, for the newly instituted colonial authorities pacification was considered a necessary priority. The British colonial governments asserted their authority using paternal methods but backed this up with force where it was necessary to subdue bellicose villagers (see Bennett, 1993; Kituai, 1998). Lieutenant-Govenor Sir William MacGregor, in his administration of neighbouring Papua, noted: "That the paternal form is the most suitable for a native population in the act of stepping out of savagery and barbarism into civilisation, I entertain no manner of doubt" (William MacGregor quoted in Joyce, 1971, p. 120). Toward the end of his career MacGregor was to write: "We never fight with them at all if we can possibly avoid it until we are in a position to make it a final and decisive move. We hardly ever have to fight twice in the same district. If we do fight, I always insist on fighting it out, and never leave it in doubt as to who is the master" (William MacGregor quoted in Sinclair, 1990, p. 18).

Resident Commissioner Charles Woodford "was an able naturalist and scholar who at least knew the Solomons and was committed to his task" (Keesing & Corris, 1980, p. 29). From 1915, Woodford's assistant, F.J. Barnett, took an active lead in

the administration of Solomon Islands. According to Keesing and Corris (1980, p. 29), he and many of his successors "lived in a world of colonialist fantasy with little knowledge of, or commitment to, the realities of the Solomons. A concern with the niceties of status and protocol, the properties of despatches and the rituals of Empire, was more important than the pacification and administration of the still-uncontrolled island interiors." After the First World War the colonial administration in Solomon Islands had become saturated with retired military officers who brought with them notions of fading military glory, batmen, regimental silver and parades. It was all very *pukka*, according to an anthropology student who visited Tulagi in the 1920s (H.G. Hogbin, personal communication, cited in Keesing & Corris, 1980, p. 30). However, underneath this seemingly absurd world of colonial rule was a serious commercial intent. The Protectorate was ruled for profit: "And that meant a supply of cheap, if not willing, labour" for the development of domestic plantations (Keesing & Corris, 1980, p. 31).

In many respects the advent of the British colonial administration in Solomon Islands served to formalise a process that had already commenced, that of incorporating small isolated kin group communities of Solomon Islands into a wider global context and, in particular, the developing political economy of copra (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012). Although not immediately apparent, the declaration of a protectorate in 1893 commenced a process of change insofar as the territory of Solomon Islands now became a 'property' of the colonial power. Quite apart from facilitating the establishment of 'capitalism and capitalist enterprises,' the establishment of the colonial administration also served to displace indigenous leadership structures and weaken indigenous control of land and resources. This, of course, brought law and order in the western sense but, according to Naitoro (2002) had the effect of displacing, or reducing, the sense of identity and purpose of kin groups.

By 1910 the availability of labour was adversely affecting the growth of the plantation economy. Several factors contributed towards restricting labour supply. Most seriously, depopulation was occurring, largely due to the spread of introduced diseases. As well, plantation acreage was increasing (Bennett, 2014). Solomon Islanders had also become more shrewd in their bargaining with labour recruiters (see Bennett, 1993) and this placed further pressure on labour supply. Reflecting back on those days, one leading planter spokesman of the time was quoted as saying:

> We could grow anything … in the Solomons … and most of us tried our hands at growing different tropical products – rubber, para-rubber, vanilla, sisal, cocoa … practically anything. We could grow the bloody lot. But … we had a chronic cancer, and that was … labour. We never had all the labour we wanted, we were always short of labour. And as copra is the least labour intensive of all the tropical products, that was why we were forced willy-nilly into copra production.
>
> (Leslie A. Gill, personal communication cited in Keesing & Corris, 1980, p. 32)

Combined, the labour shortages created considerable difficulties for planters who constantly pressured the colonial administration for ways to solve this problem. One such measure, introduced in the early 1920s, was to force, or entice, more Malaitans into plantation labour through the imposition of a native male head tax (Keesing & Corris, 1980; see also Moore, 2007). The head tax imposed by the British was very unpopular, particularly insofar as it represented a power struggle between two opposing ways of life, the traditional social and religious order of the Kwaio people, and the new socio-religious order that was being imposed by the colonial authorities and missions. Precipitated by the government intention to confiscate rifles the Kwaio had purchased through the labour trade and plantation work, a routine visit by District Officer William Bell to collect taxes in Sinalaqu on 4 October 1927 provided a pretext and location for his murder which had been carefully planned by Kwaio 'strongman' Basiana and his kin groups (Keesing & Corris, 1980).

The attack on Bell's tax collecting expedition was a bloody affair and resulted in the murder of Bell, K.C. Lillies - Bell's understudy, and a number of local constables. British retaliation was not long in coming and what followed was an act of destruction more wanton and complete than the Kwaio could ever have imagined. The random slaughter, the raping of women, the destruction of shrines and the desecration of their consecrated objects resulted in such severe dislocation of the Kwaio way of life that they never recovered (Keesing & Corris, 1980).

The retaliation for the murder of Bell and his associates was the last of a number of massacres and punitive strikes that had been undertaken by the colonial government in Solomon Islands and from this time it appeared that the new socio-

religious order imposed by the colonial authorities, and the missions, had prevailed (see Burt, 1994). However, although they had been overwhelmed by the superior force of the colonial government, the subjugation of the Kwaio was not as complete as it appeared for the resentment of colonial rule amongst Malaitans remained. Their "refusal to be dominated and dictated to" by the colonial government (Akin, 2013, p. 327) was to resurface once again in the early 1950s in the form of Maasina Rule (see later this chapter). It was also indicative of a resilience inherent within Solomon Islands culture that resists external influences that are not compatible with local interests or which cannot be appropriated (see Gegeo, 1998).

The British colonial administration maintained law and order in Solomon Islands through a Resident Commissioner who was based in Tulagi prior to World War II. Answering to the Resident Commissioner were four District Commissioners, and below them were a series of District Officers. All of these positions were held by expatriates. A local District Headman would provide support to the expatriate District Officer, and below the Headmen a series of local Village Headmen would act as colonial agents at village level (Naitoro, 2002). This simple system, introduced by the British in the 1920s, was quite effective. Combined with the pacifying influence of the missions (see Burt, 1994), and backed by the use of force, the colonial administration was able to quell the almost constant conflict and bring a sense of stability to Solomon Islands societies. The administration also kept an eye on the plantations to ensure the local labour force was fairly treated and relatively well looked after. The plantations were, in fact, of much benefit to Solomon Islanders and many of "the planters and traders of those days were not the base fellows some people have supposed them to be" but provided Solomon Islanders with regular work, food and medical help (Fox, 1967, p. 48). In the words of one Solomon Islander "they brought us what we wanted and did not interfere with our customs as other Europeans did" (Fox, 1967, p. 48).

Beyond keeping law and order and, in the 1920s, imposing the very unpopular head tax which people did not see a need for, the colonial administration did not have the resources to do much else (Fox, 1967). The colonial method of indirect rule, the 'headman system,' did, however, displace kin group leadership structures (Naitoro, 2002). In the early years the District Officers had little training and, because they were moved from island to island, often did not learn the local language, although most spoke pijin, the *lingua franca*. The system was such that local chiefs were usurped by the District Officer, and to make matters worse the Headmen often

knew little English and were not real or locally recognised chiefs (Fox, 1967). Fox (1967) also maintains that in the period up until World War II villages were ruled 'much worse' than they had been in pre-colonial times although what this actually meant is not specified. It may, however, be more accurate to say that the British introduced an alternative form of leadership that operated in parallel with traditional leadership because traditional leadership did not disappear. Rather, it adapted to changing circumstances as the balance of power shifted in favour of the British (see also Chapters 6 and 7) and this is significant, insofar as this thesis is concerned, in that it demonstrates a level of hybridisation that was occurring at that time.

While underpinned by the intermittent use of force to establish and maintain its authority, the British colonial administration in Solomon Islands was, nevertheless, relatively light-handed in the way it actually administered the protectorate. Because the administration was expected to be self-funding it was more disposed towards creating conditions favourable to European traders and plantation owners. Plantations, at the time, represented the cutting edge of world capitalism and provided an opportunity for economic self-sufficiency. Thus, in order to facilitate the establishment of plantations in Solomon Islands, the Colonial Government played a key role in bringing together the elements of capital, land and labour necessary for plantations to succeed (Bennett, 1993). Consequently, by World War I, copra had become the economic mainstay of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. The Depression of the 1930s was, however, to have a severe impact on the plantation economy of Solomon Islands with the result that the economic circumstances of private planters and small trading companies, whose members comprised the bulk of the expatriate commercial community, became desperate. Not having the capital reserves to weather the economic storm, most fell into debt to the large trading companies based in Tulagi and this, in turn, led to their foreclosure and bankruptcy. As a consequence of the Depression the copra industry in Solomon Islands came to be dominated by a number of large trading companies, such as Lever Pacific Plantations, Burns Philp, and Carpenters (Bennett, 1987).

At this time the role of Solomon Islanders in the plantation economy was primarily as a source of labour, usually indentured for a period of two years (Bennett, 1987). For the Solomon Islands recruits, however, plantation life required a considerable degree of social adjustment. Not only did they have to learn pidgin, the *lingua franca*, in order to communicate with their overseer as well as other Solomon Islanders, they often found themselves working alongside their traditional enemies.

Facilitated at times by Christianity, friendships sometimes developed between people from different regions (Bennett, 1993).

The social interactions Solomon Islanders were exposed to through plantation life and overseers experiences gained on the labour trade were very influential in reshaping Solomon Islands society. The experience of young Malaitans, for example, "as labourers outside their island changed their place in the power structure" (Moore, 2007b, p. 220). As with all other introduced influences, Solomon Islanders were adept at appropriating that which was useful to their purposes and resisting that which was not. Early signs of resistance to some of the injustices inherent in the plantation system were demonstrated when Solomon Islands labourers "refused to be cowed into submitting to the unregulated appropriation of both their labour and sometimes their lives on the plantation," and to taxes at home (Bennett, 1993, p. 166).

While Solomon Islanders had been engaged in the political economy of copra since the early 1900s (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012), direct involvement by Solomon Islanders in the copra trade increased after 1932. Prior to this, shipping, which was essential to the plantation industry, was also dominated by the large trading companies. High shipping costs were common throughout the Solomon Islands but this was to change in 1932 when a German Company, Norddeutscher Lloyd (NDL) commenced a six-weekly service to Solomon Islands (Bennett, 1987). This much needed competition had the effect of lowering shipping costs and also forced the likes of Burns Philps and Carpenters to accept any shipping available in order to compete. Related to this was another development which was to benefit Solomon Islanders themselves. As competition from NDL began to take effect the trading business of both Carpenters and Burns Philps declined, thus reducing their profits. This forced them to look elsewhere for business and they had no alternative but to commence "direct trading with Solomon Islands growers for the same cash prices as the white traders and planters received" (Bennett, 1987, p. 230). This new policy proved to be very successful for business but, more importantly, it encouraged the establishment of further village-based coconut plantations, a 'fixture' common to most Solomon Islands villages today.[11]

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[11] The proliferation of village-based coconut plantations is a tangible demonstration that Solomon Islanders have been quick to capitalise on opportunities when it is in their interests to do so.

Given the economic constraints that the colonial administration faced, it was left primarily to the missions to equip Solomon Islanders with a 'western' education and, apart from a government hospital at Tulagi, provide help for the sick. The influence of the missions was considerable and, as a result, Christianity has become very much part of the fabric of Solomon Islands society today. However, the introduction of Christianity caused considerable division amongst Solomon Islanders insofar as the way in which each denomination addressed matters of spirituality and custom, which lie at the very heart of Solomon Islands culture (Fox, 1967). It also undermined the authority of traditional leaders reliant as they were on access to 'assistance' from the spirit world that is, or was, so much part of Solomon Islands custom (Burt, 1994). That missions were ultimately relatively successful in introducing Christainity cannot be denied. Despite their differences and interdenominational rivalry they, like the colonial administration they worked alongside, as well as the labour trade (external and internal), laid a foundation for what was to follow in the post-World War II, post-colonial era.

World War II – reformulating the narrative of 'self'

World War II was a pivotal event in the history of the Pacific, none more so than in Solomon Islands where it was to leave "deep and enduring marks" on the postwar history and culture of the Protectorate (Lindstrom & White, 1989, p. 4). Hitherto an isolated outpost of the British colonial empire, Solomon Islands was to be engulfed by some of the most prolonged and ferocious fighting of the Pacific War as Japanese and American led forces waged their military campaigns on and around various islands of the Solomons group. Not only did the Americans and Japanese pour "hundreds of thousands of troops and millions of tons of material" into the islands (Lindstrom & White, 1989, p. 4), they also created opportunities for Solomon Islanders to encounter people who were quite different from the planters, traders, missionaries and colonial officers with whom they had interacted before the war (Lindstrom & White, 1989).

In an attempt to isolate and neutralise Australia and New Zealand following the attack on Pearl Harbour, Japan developed a strategy to seize island bases in the Pacific that would block the lines of communication with United States of America. The first stage of this plan was to secure Port Moresby and Solomon Islands and then, once achieved, move on to seize New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa (Crawford,

1992). The Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, however, frustrated the Japanese plan to seize Port Moresby and led to the hurried construction of an airfield on Guadalcanal. With this the Japanese hoped to regain air superiority over the Coral Sea and thereby control the sea approaches to Eastern Australia as well as threaten Fiji and New Caledonia (Costello, 2009). This, in turn, led to the revision of American plans to establish a forward base in the Santa Cruz islands and precipitated the invasion of both Tulagi and Guadalcanal by the First United States Marine Division in August 1942 (Costello, 2009; Crawford, 1992). Fighting on and around Guadalcanal was intense but by February 1943 the Japanese abandoned Guadalcanal which enabled the Americans and their Allies to advance northwards along the Solomons chain in 1943 and 1944 (Crawford, 1992).

Put to flight by the advancing Japanese, it had come as quite a shock to Solomon Islanders to see the Europeans rapidly depart in an often less than dignified manner. Following the fall of Rabaul, New Guinea, in 1942 many European civilians fled the Solomon Islands. The trading company, Burns Philp, withdrew or tied up its inter-island trading vessels after managing to repatriate local crews back to their homes. Many planters, however, left their labourers stranded, unfed and unpaid, breaking what trust had existed between white planters and their Solomon Islands labourers. This betrayal in the hour of crisis is something hundreds of Guadalcanal and Malaita men would not forget (Bennett, 1987).

Missionaries, planters and colonial officials who elected to stay withdrew into the bush and it was these people who became the backbone of the coastwatchers, an organisation that spied and reported on the Japanese enemy to the Allies and, later rescued crashed Allied pilots (Bennett, 1987). Courageous as they were, the coastwatchers would not have survived long without the support of Solomon Islanders. It was the islanders who provided them with food, scouted for them, and "carried information to and from their people who picked off small Japanese patrols and rescued downed Allied airmen" (Bennett, 1987, p. 290). For the first time, some former colonial district officers saw Solomon Islanders as capable human beings and Solomon Islanders, in turn, now "perceived their former masters simply as men – vulnerable, no longer omniscient, and now in need of them. Old images were revised" (Bennett, 1987, p. 290).

It was the Americans, however, who most impressed the Solomon Islanders (Bennett, 1987). Unlike their British masters who had restrictively regulated the

lives of their colonial subjects (Kituai, 1998), the Americans, and for that matter servicemen from Japan and Australia, had little knowledge of colonial conventions nor any interest in protecting such symbols of inequality that had governed the lives of Solomon Islanders before the war (Lindstrom & White, 1989). Many US servicemen, for example, engaged in profligate exchange with Solomon Islanders and gave away unwanted supplies (Belshaw, 1950; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Lindstrom & White, 1989), something that would not have been condoned by the colonial government. More significantly, American troops treated members of the Solomon Islands Labour Corps as equals, inviting them into their tents where they could sit on their beds and eat with them. Given the significance of food as a traditional medium of exchange in the formation of social relationships, it is hardly surprising that these acts of kindness were to make the greatest impression on Solomon Islanders and, in the long run, influence the way they viewed themselves in relation to their colonial masters (Lindstrom & White, 1989).

Another factor that contributed to the change in the way Solomon Islanders viewed themselves in relation to the British was the presence of Black American troops. Although segregated from their European counterparts, the black US servicemen, in the view of Solomon Islanders, were people who looked "at least superficially similar to themselves: made in their own image, but already possessing the knowledge and accoutrements of Western culture" (Lindstrom & White, 1989, p.18; see also Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 1989), things they were prevented from acquiring under the restrictive colonial regulations by which they had previously been governed (Kituai, 1998; Lindstrom & White, 1989). In a similar vein, Solomon Islanders also saw hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Americans, both black and white, attending church services and this demonstrated to Solomon Islanders, for the first time, that black and white men "could live together as brothers in an orderly Christian manner" (Bennett, 1987, p. 292).

Geoffrey White (1989) maintains that, in many respects, the impact of World War II on Solomon Islanders was similar to other 'first encounters' with outsiders. Not only did World War II mark a significant moment in local cultural history, but the opportunity it created for "contacts with powerful others" posed "dilemmas for existing structures of power and meaning" (White, 1989, p. 43), namely the colonial system of governance. White, in his description of the cultural significance of wartime encounters in Santa Isabel, perhaps overstates the impact of the war by likening it to that precipitated by the arrival of missionaries and the conversion to

Christianity. He does, however, observe that the subsequent interpretation of the war by the islanders of Santa Isabel sheds "significant light on broader aspects of island culture, society and conceptions of self" (White, 1989, p. 43). Although British rule was re-imposed after World War II, the war did precipitate a distinct shift in Solomon Islanders relations with outsiders, particularly the British. But more fundamentally, the indigenous epistemology of Solomon Islanders had changed. Knowledge had been gained, and this knowledge had been reformulated to create a new form of 'truth' (Gegeo, 1998). White (1989, p. 61) maintains that the narratives of wartime encounters (with the Japanese) became a parable of selfhood which also has "continuing significance for contemporary audiences." Such stories, White explains, can be 'read' on several levels. The description of events seem, at one level, to portray Solomon Islanders' vulnerability and submission to powerful outsiders. At another level, however, the narrative establishes Solomon Islanders' "ability to impose their own definitions of social reality on (these) critical encounters" (White, 1989, p. 61). In terms of the narrative of this thesis, this demonstrates a remarkable ability on the part of Solomon Islanders to appropriating such events by anchoring the truth of this discourse in culture (kastom) (see Gegeo, 1998). "The narrative of wartime encounters confirms an indigenous (Christian) way of life and its ability to resist intrusions from seemingly powerful outsiders" (White, 1989, p. 62). World War II had, in fact, changed Solomon Islands irrevocably and the social ferment that followed provided challenges for the British as they tried to reassert colonial rule.

Assertions of regional identity

Evidence of Solomon Islanders' post-World War II conceptions of self quickly became apparent and manifested itself in the Maasina Rule (Marching Rule) movement. Arising in the aftermath of World War II, and most likely having its origins in the experiences of the former Solomon Islands Labour Corps members (Belshaw, 1950), Maasina Rule provided a significant challenge to the British colonial adminsistration. In many respects Maasina Rule was also a further manifestation of "Malaitans' refusal to be dominated and dictated to" by the Colonial Government (Akin, 2013, p. 327). Poorly documented and not well understood, by outsiders at least, Maasina Rule could be categorised as one of a range of Melanesian counter-colonial movements (Akin, 2013; Keesing, 1978). According to Bennett (1987, p. 293), this movement arose out of a desire "to create a unity on

Malaita, a brotherhood from which to derive a unified front to negotiate with the British on local matters, especially the control by Malaitans of their own island" (Bennett, 1987, p. 293). Bennett's description concurs with that of Keesing (1978, p.241) who observed that: "Despite the reported trappings of millenarianism and the tides of fantastic rumour in Maasina Rule, the goals of the new society were to be achieved through community, political and economic reorganisation and collective bargaining with the colonial masters, not through supernatural intervention."

Put down by the British, Maasina Rule achieved little in the way of its direct political and material aims, not so much because of the British efforts to curtail it, but more because there was an insufficient commercial base, nor enough trained people, to sustain an independence movement as such. What it did achieve, however, was to restore Malaitan pride. It created a pan-Malaitan entity, a social identity that encompassed a real feeling of ideological consensus, without which Malaita would have "remained a fractious conglomeration of communities, suspicious of one another and the outside world" (Bennett, 1987, p. 309). But, conversely, and as Fukuyama (2008) has more recently noted in his paper on *State Building in Solomon Islands*, these communities tended to return to their parochial state once this movement weakened.

Maasina Rule was not the only 'movement' to arise in the post World War II period that sought freedom from the constraints of European domination. In New Georgia the struggle for identity took place within the Methodist Mission, which had long been the "most potent institution in the Western Solomons" (Bennett, 1987, p. 310). Led by Silas Eto, this struggle for identity gave rise to the Christian Fellowship Church, a breakaway from the Methodist Mission. Eto had become "dissatisfied with aspects of Methodist teaching, organisation and worship and wished to assert a Melanesian presence in church leadership" (Bennett, 1987, p. 300). Eto's quest for independence from the Methodist Mission was as much a quest for power, recognition and self-expression as it was dissatisfaction over religious principles. The real political force in Western Solomons was not, as one would suppose, the colonial authority, but the "monolithic authority vested in the chairman of the Methodist Mission, based at favoured Roviana" (Bennett, 1987, p. 301). Eto was from the "isolated, mission-neglected Kusaghe region of North New Georgia" (Bennett, 1987, p. 300).

Maasina Rule, and the Christian Fellowship Church, while differing in context, shared a common goal; increased autonomy from the constraints of European-imposed institutions. In many respects these movements represented a significant departure from the small, parochial, fragmented societies of earlier times who, more often than not, had been deadly enemies. Elements of regionalism were evident in the movements as people began to organise themselves into entities beyond the confines of the village boundaries. In some respects the introduction of the European imposed institutions provided the structure for the development of this new-found unity, but "Solomon Islanders sought ways to bend the new structures to their own ends when such institutions oppressed them" (Bennett, 1987, p. 301, see also Gegeo, 1998). This characteristic, Solomon Islanders' ability to adapt and harness external forces of change to their own ends, has been a recurring theme in the history of Solomon Islands, an exemplar, in fact, for hybrid political orders (see Chapter 2).

Accelerating to independence

World War II had not only changed the political landscape of Solomon Islands, but had also severely disrupted the economy. Largely plantation based, this had collapsed as the European population fled ahead of the Japanese forces. In the decade following World War II the British were primarily concerned with restoring their administration and getting the protectorate's economy back on its feet (Bennett, 1987). Agriculture development, namely the restoration of the copra industry, was a priority (Allan, 1990) but this was initially hindered by Malaitans' refusal to work outside their island. Followers of Maasina Rule had been urged to "stay on Maliata and work for its development" (Bennett, 1987, p. 293) but by the early 1950s, as aims of Maasina Rule for social identity were largely met and the colonial government regained control, Malaitan men, who made up the bulk of the workforce, once again offered themselves for plantation work. By the mid-1950s essential reconstruction had been completed and by the early 1960s the path to gradual economic development seemed secure (Bennett, 1987).

The British interest in Solomon Islands was not just limited to economic redevelopment. Parallel constitutional developments were taking place as well. World War II had essentially bankrupted Britain and the colonial empire that had formerly sustained the British 'metropolitan centre' was no longer affordable.

Britain, however, was not alone - the bankruptcy caused by the 1939-45 war had doomed all European empires. Thus, Britain set about divesting itself of Empire, some times more willingly, sometimes less, depending on whether Labour was in power at the time and what nationalistic pressure was being brought to bear within a particular colony. India, in 1947, was the first territory to achieve independence after the war. It was followed by Burma, Palestine in 1948, Sudan in 1956, and Ghana and Malaya in 1957. Other African states, as well as Borneo, British Guiana and Trinidad and Tobago gained their independence in the 1960s. By 1970 the dissolution of the British Empire was all but complete, at least in Asia and Africa (Lapping, 1985; Laracy, 1983; McIntyre, 2014).

Decolonisation of Pacific territories, administered by Britain, Australia and New Zealand, also occurred during this period. Western Samoa gained nationhood status in 1962, Cook Islands in 1965, Nauru in 1968, Fiji and Tonga in 1970 and Niue in 1974. Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in 1978, Kiribati in 1979 and, finally, Vanuatu in 1980 (Laracy, 1983). Despite the haste with which it occurred, Britain was relatively graceful in the way it bowed out of empire, particularly during the periods in which Labour governed. But this attitude was deeper than which political party was in power at the time "because the need to grant self-determination to subject peoples was deeply etched in the Colonial Office mind" (Lapping, 1985, p. 9).

In the 1960s, Britain set about preparing the Solomon Islands for independence, in spite of earlier holding the view that minor dependencies, such as Solomon Islands, were not considered economically or socio-politically viable as nation states (Bennett, 1987). To withdraw, the British had deemed, would be 'discreditable' (McIntyre, 2014). However, there had been a shift in the balance of world power in the aftermath of World War II and, encouraged by Russian Lenninism and American liberalism, the newly formed United Nations, through its Charter, "enjoined its members to develop self-government among the people of those territories for which they were responsible" (Laracy, 1983, p. 2). Faced with a growing hostility towards colonial rule from newly independent nations, and the 1960s United Nations Declaration on Colonialism (which stated that self-government should not be withheld from any people), Britain came under considerable pressure to relinquish control of remaining territories such as Solomon Islands (McIntyre, 2014).

By the mid 1970s Britain had also come to see that its future lay with Europe rather than with its former colonies. Facing a fuel crisis and economic and social troubles of its own, it abandoned its graduated evolutionary approach to preparing Solomon Islands for independence. Britain wanted to divest itself of its interests in the Pacific as quickly as it could so political and constitutional development in Solomon Islands was increased and localisation of the public service was accelerated (Bennett, 1987). The development of the Solomon Islands constitution was not, however, undertaken in isolation from what was occurring in other Pacific territories. As discussed in the previous chapter, a common feature of the South Pacific colonies, and that of Melanesia in particular, was the general absence of organised political parties that could form a government under the Westminster system. In these territories government would need to be undertaken through political coalitions and, with this in mind, Britain considered it necessary to have robust elements within constitutions of countries such as Solomon Islands, that would allow for an orderly form of succession when it was required. The constitution developed for Solomon Islands was, therefore, one of several that followed the 'South Pacific Model of Succession' (Fry, 1983).

The rapid constitutional change introduced by the British was centralist in its approach. The colonial administration only wanted to deal with one forum of Solomon Islands opinion so a central government was their natural focus (Bennett, 1987). This, of course, was at odds with the diverse fragmented nature of Solomon Islands society. In an attempt to counter the growing local criticism that Honiara was receiving most of the infrastructural development money and still mindful of the challenge Maasina Rule had presented to British administrative dominance after the war, a special committee of the Governing Council[12] urged, in 1973, that local government be examined. Arising from this a *Plan of Operations* was subsequently prepared to implement a system of decentralised decision-making to local councils (Premdas, 1982). Amalgamated into several 'viable' ones, and strengthening the role of chiefs and traditional leaders (Nanau, 1997), local councils became the principle agencies for progress within their respective areas, "as well as partner of the central administration for the promotion of national government" (Bennett, 1987, p. 325).

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[12] See next section

The idea of devolution, in reality a form of decentralisation, seemed to the British a tidy way of satisfying local aspirations and recognising regional differences. Unfortunately, however, many of the changes were rushed. Councils had not been prepared for the complexities of the tasks that lay before them. To make matters worse, District Commissioners, the expatriate heads of the local colonial administration were, at the insistence of councils, pushed aside in favour of local council clerks. A lack of training, and divided loyalties between the council and their own people, soon compromised the service councils could offer (Bennett, 1987). Costs rose and the standard of service fell. No longer were Solomon Islanders, at district level, governed by an impartial form of government. Local kin group interests began to hold sway, a portent of things to come. Decentralisation had not provided the hoped-for panacea, within a few years it too had succumbed to Melanesian practices and had been appropriated for local purposes.

Things were little different at national level. With devolution as an official policy, local politicians seized the opportunity to assert their power with national politicians and the government in Honiara. The rapid move to self-government in Papua New Guinea had increased political awareness in Solomon Islands and raised expectations that remaining colonial officials would be replaced by ministers (McIntyre, 2014). What had begun as an administrative exercise by the British, had quickly been transformed into an exercise of political power by Solomon Islands local and national politicians. As a result, parochial interests in politics prevailed. The old colonial government, despite being "capricious and generally ignorant of its subjects" had, in contrast, been impartial in its administration of competing local interests within the country (Bennett, 1987, p. 330).

In 1974 Solomon Mamaloni, a member from Makira, became Chief Minister after an election by Legislative Assembly members and it as not long before he was pushing for self-government. Britain, however, was determined to emphasise the relationship between self-government and full independence and made it clear that it "would not accept a prolonged period of responsibility without power" (McIntyre, 2014, p. 182). Independence would need to follow soon after self-government was granted. A decisive leader (Moore, 2004), Mamaloni questioned whether this was really necessary. At the time, the parliamentary system was not well understood by Solomon Islanders. Dispersed over widely scattered islands, most "were preoccupied with local issues, and constitutional change was not the main concern" (McIntyre, 2014, p. 182). Mamaloni's ministers were not very enthusiastic about full

independence either as they had no electoral mandate for it. If independence were to occur they feared they may lose their seats (McIntyre, 2014). Britain, however, insisted that there had to be a timetable for independence and, in order to satisfy itself that Solomon Islanders really wanted independence, insisted on an election as well. Again this was opposed by members of the Legislative Assembly but eventually, after several attempts by Britain to set dates, self-government was agreed to and got under way on 2 January 1976 (McIntyre, 2014). Following the onset of self-governance, a general election was held in June 1976. It was expected that the resulting National Assembly would take the country to independence, however, Mamaloni lost power to Peter Kenilorea. It was Kenilorea, therefore, who was to lead negotiations with Britain in the run-up to independence.

The British eagerness to divest itself of responsibility for Solomon Islands constantly "came up against Melanesian delaying tactics," largely centred around financial assistance and what constituted eligibility for citizenship (McIntyre, 2014, p. 187). Eventually, however, a draft constitution, the prerequisite for independence, was prepared and independence was set for 7 July 1978. Signed by Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace on 31 May 1978 (H.M.G., 1978), the Constitution of Solomon Islands largely ignored the customs of Solomon Islanders. In fact, there were only two references to custom: one in relation to the application of customary law (which was to be given effect provided that it was not inconsistent with the Constitution or an Act of Parliament (H.M.G., 1978, Section 76, Schedule 3.2 (2)), and; the other in relation to procedures concerning the compulsory acquisition of customary land (H.M.G., 1978, Section 112). Based as it was on a system of unitary government, the Constitution of Solomon Islands was, therefore, largely foreign to Solomon Islanders (Corrin, 2007b).

The end of British rule and the adoption of the Westminster system

The end of British rule came on 7 July 1978, some 85 years since Solomon Islands was first declared a British protectorate in 1896. The handover, in reality, had been indecently rushed. Solomon Islanders were ill-prepared for independence. Until the early 1970s expatriate colonial officers had headed most government departments (Kenilorea & Moore, 2008) and it was not until 1971, a mere seven years before independence, that Britain started to train local officers for senior positions in the public service. In preparation for independence these officers were

given crash courses at the University of South Pacific and other institutions. Four years later they became Permanent Secretaries, the heads of government departments and ministries in Solomon Islands. Independence followed two years later and these officers then found themselves in the invidious position of having to shoulder responsibilities that "a few months earlier had been performed by older and more experienced officers, many of whom had up to forty years administration experience" (Devesi, 1992, p. 5). As such, the lack of institutional training provided by the departing British was inadequate and something which would prove very costly for Solomon Islanders as they increasingly stumbled as a sovereign state in the years following independence.

At the political level the situation was no better and, in fact, was probably worse. At independence, most members of the newly formed Parliament had little idea how the machinery of government worked. Few had had any experience of it before and were at a loss as to what their role might be (Gina, Bennett, & Russell, 2003). The first Speaker of Parliament, Lloyd Gina (Gina et al., 2003, p. 211), observed that "some were obviously not sure of what they were doing and saying and should not have been there at all." The fault, he maintained, "lay in the lack of education, actual organisation and work experience. They were without experience of supervisory roles in business or in government; wide experience of national and world affairs; as well as being conversant in economic, political and developmental matters" (Gina et al., 2003, p. 211).

The constitutional changes that Britain had proposed were devised for a population that was dispersed among scattered islands where communications were poor, and where low standards of law and education existed. To this end, the Westminster parliamentary system was not considered to be appropriate and Britain, in 1970, implemented a model whereby executive and legislative functions were combined in a single Governing Council (McIntyre, 2014). Consisting of elected and official members, as well as civil servants, the Governing Council provided for supervision of government departments by a series of committees (Alasia, 1997; McIntyre, 2014). The intention of this system was to allow the gradual transfer of power and, being a single entity, prevent potentially divisive political parties from emerging. It was also considered "wiser to have inexperienced elected representatives working closely with senior civil servants; and the system was more in line with Melanesian traditions of consensus" (Kabutaulaka, 2008, p. 99). The conventional Westminster system, on the other hand, "with its emphasis on government and opposition, had

the potential, in a culturally diverse Solomon Islands, of creating divisions along island, district, or linguistic lines" (Kabutaulaka, 2008, p. 99).

The Governing Council, essentially government by committee, found little favour with the "rising political stars among the newly Western-educated elite" (McIntyre, 2014, p. 181). It was said to be too cumbersome and unwieldy to operate (Kenilorea & Moore, 2008; McIntyre, 2014) but, more to the point, it robbed "aspirants to political leadership of a stage on which to star" (Bennett, 1987, p. 320). Led by Solomon Mamaloni, who was a twenty eight year old at the time, the Governing Council was rejected by members of the Council itself at the end of 1971 who opted, instead, for a return to a Westminster form of government (Bennett, 1987; Larmour, 2001). This was "in spite of widespread demand at community level for alternative forms of governance and for recognition of community leaders and traditional structures and systems of governance" (Kabutaulaka, 2008, p. 100). Having successfully disenfranchised the Governing Council, Mamaloni then demanded a system of ministerial responsibility and applied pressure for constitutional advance. In order to consider this the British dispatched a constitutional committee to tour Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Seychelles, Mauritius and Malaysia. At the end of this tour the Pacific Dependent Territories Department prepared a policy that outlined "a ministerial system where there would be a chief minister with a cabinet of five or six elected legislative councillors along with the usual three *ex-officio* members (deputy-governor, attorney-general, and financial secretary)" (McIntyre, 2014, p. 181). By 1974 a constitution for Solomon Islands had been prepared and, under this, the Governing Council became a Legislative Assembly of twenty four members. It was at this stage that Mamaloni took office as Chief Minister (McIntyre, 2014).

In the absence of strong political parties a distinctly Melanesian variant of the Westminster system was to ensue (Bennett, 1987). The colonial government had quite prophetically, in 1967, outlined the reasons why it thought Westminster was unsuitable for Solomon Islands. As discussed earlier, these reasons were: the scatteredness of islands; poor communications; a shortage of qualified people; a small population; diverse cultures; a lack of national unity; and a dependence on foreign aid. Why then, in the face of an eminently plausible rationale to do otherwise, did Solomon Islands parliamentarians deliberately choose a system that did not reflect customary forms of governance and hence was, most likely, doomed to fail? In Larmour's view, the adoption of Westminster was not "an automatic

ineluctable process" (Larmour, 2001, p. 9). Rather, it was matter of deliberate choice made, not because of any arbitrary internal virtues of the Westminster system, or its appropriateness to local conditions, but simply because it was there first (Larmour, 2001) and was, thus, familiar. Expanding on this, (Larmour, 2005) coined the phrase 'foreign flowers' to describe institutional transplants such as Westminster in the Pacific. If any introduced species is to survive in a foreign environment it must adapt and this is exactly what happened to the Westminster system in Solomon Islands. As Larmour (2005) has stated, the cognitive and evaluative aspects of Westminster were transferred without necessarily bringing about much change in local behaviour.

The Westminster parliamentary system is confrontational by nature (Kabutaulaka, 2008). An almost gladiatorial style has been adopted as the *modus operandi* and each contest is resolved by putting matters to the vote. Such a system relies on a strongly disciplined party system to corral members of the party together to form a unified voting block. On this basis political battles are won or lost but such a system is an anathema to Solomon Islanders who are more used to issues being resolved by consensus. That is not to say that Solomon Islanders have not embraced the Westminster system. They have, and with such political astuteness that they have appropriated the process for their own purposes. But what is still missing is the ability to form strong parties, a legacy of the small segmentary societies from which most Solomon Islanders still derive their being. Although the foundations of Westminster still remain, "Solomon Islands has not been able to meet the demands of the Westminster model for a solid majority in parliament by one party to allow it to govern effectively" (Kabutaulaka, 2008, p. 104), a characteristic recognised by the British as being common to many South Pacific nations (see Chapter 2).

Parliamentary elections and forming a government

The democratic process that has evolved in Solomon Islands is uniquely Melanesian in style. While voting may be declared free and fair by international observers, allegations of vote buying and the financial underpinning of electoral campaigns by local and foreign interests remain (Allen, 2007). Elections are conducted using the first-past-the-post system so the candidate who gains the most votes in the electorate wins the seat. He, or occasionally she, then becomes a

member of parliament, mandated, at least in theory, to represent all the people of that electorate. It is here that the Solomon Islands version of the Westminster parliamentary system begins to unravel.

Solomon Islands is no different from other Melanesian countries insofar as elections are contested by a large number of candidates who are either independent, or represent various parties that have "weak or incoherent policy platforms" (Allen, 2007, p. 39). In this context, a member of parliament may have gained the most votes under the first-past-the-post system but these may not necessarily be representative of the whole electorate which could span a range of kin groups. The member may have been able to mobilise his particular kin group to caste their votes his way and thus sway the election. It will, therefore, be to this particular kin group that his loyalty is due under customary norms of reciprocity that are still common in Solomon Islands society (Interview #31).[13]

Commentators, such as Moore (2004), have maintained that traditional social obligations, based on kin group loyalty, still largely govern the arrangements by which power is shared and wealth is distributed in Solomon Islands. In the kin-based societies of Solomon Islands, identity is more pluralistic by nature and tends to be based on communal good (Corrin, 1992). Therefore, in this social environment an elected member of parliament, as with the big-man of old, has serious social obligations. An important aspect of leadership in Solomon Islands is that a leader's status is often acquired through achievement, his ability to organise society and distribute wealth (see Alasia, 1997; Kabutaulaka, 2001). The kin group, thus, has serious expectations of 'its' politician, their new big-man, and in order to stay in power he must meet such expectations. As a consequence, wealth accumulation and distribution of this to some kin group members is likely to be more important to some politicians than weak party loyalties and the Westminster ideology of representing their electorate as a whole[14].

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[13] See Appendix 5 for a schedule of interviews.

[14] While the view that kin group loyalty can be instrumental in the election of politicians was supported by information gained in Taro (Interview #31), there is an emerging view that politics in Solomon Islands can also be strongly clientelist and people typically vote for a candidate whom they think will most likely provide individual or local help, even if they are not 'co-ethnics' (i.e. not of the same tribal or church allegiance) (Wood, 2014). Evidence from Nukiki village lent support to this view as well (Interviews #10, and #24), suggesting that while kin-based politics is still important and influential, it is no longer the only basis on which elections are decided. This may well be evidence

After an election successful candidates from throughout the country meet in Honiara to begin the process of forming a government. This stage is the most frustrating for the electorate because it renders the election outcomes "essentially indeterminable from the voters perspective" (Allen, 2007, p. 40). In the absence of strong and disciplined party systems the allegiance of elected members to their particular party is often quite fickle. All this becomes apparent in the process leading up to the formation of the government during which elected members coalesce around various influential politicians who represent particular parties and aspire to be prime minister. Each party characteristically rents rooms in a separate hotel (Allen, 2007) and this becomes their headquarters from where they vie for political control. During this process some politicians are seen moving between party headquarters and rumours abound of large sums of money changing hands to entice 'swinging' politicians to support one party or another. It is a commonly held belief that these funds come from vested business interests, particularly local Asian businessmen (Allen, 2007), who are promoting their own agendas. Eventually the process comes to a conclusion and one prime ministerial aspirant will emerge from his hotel-based party headquarters to announce that he has a sufficient majority to form a government (see Fraenkel, 2004; Gina et al., 2003).

The decision to appoint a prime minister is crucial in determining who is to govern (Fry, 1983) and that is why the selection process is so strongly contested, albeit in a manner that draws upon all the characteristics inherent in traditional Melanesian politics. Here, there were no alternative parties but, rather, alternative individuals. When "power and authority to rule was contested, (it was) not between political parties, but between individuals" (Alasia, 1997, p. 3). Party politics, in fact, counts for very little in Solomon Islands where regionalism, personal rivalries and links to business interests are still very significant (Allen, 2007; Morgan & McLeod, 2006). In this manner, the Westminster parliamentary process has been well-and-truly appropriated, resulting in a political process that is hybrid in form, combining, as it does, elements of Westminster with those of traditional politics.

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that for some Solomon Islanders kin group identity may no longer be as important now as it was previously (see also M. F. Smith, 2013, and Chapter 5).

Political discontent, the decline in political morality and state collapse

Not surprisingly, many Solomon Islanders are not very enamoured with this process (Allen, 2007; Morgan & McLeod, 2006). Following the selection of a particularly controversial prime minister, Snyder Rini, after the 2006 elections, a riot erupted in Honiara and this resulted in the complete sacking of the Chinatown business district and various other predominantly Chinese owned businesses at Point Cruz and Ranandi (Allen, 2007). There have been various explanations for the riot. One interpretation represents the riot as a popular protest against a flawed and corrupted political process (Kabutaulaka, 2008) but, according to Morgan and McLeod (2006), this represents an incomplete picture. The electorate was, in fact, "particularly cynical about the circus-like dynamics of political camp formation and reformation" (Allen, 2007, p. 47) which was "based on the mobilisation of cash to consolidate alliances" (Morgan & McLeod, 2006, p. 421; see also Kabutaulaka, 2008). Local Chinese-owned businesses were, therefore, targeted because of a widespread belief that they had a strong influence on the selection of the prime minister (Allen, 2007; Fry & Kabutaulaka, 2008) and, thus, the outcome of the election.

The April 2006 riot took RAMSI and external observers completely by surprise. It also raised broader questions about the appropriateness of the Westminster system for Solomon Islands (Kabutaulaka, 2008). However, with little formal education and low levels of literacy Solomon Islanders' ability to interrogate the political process, or candidates for that matter, in a 'western' context at least, still remains limited (Bennett, 2002). But in spite of this, the politically adroit machinations of a big-man manoeuvring to gain power, and the corruption of the democratic process (Kabutaulaka, 2008), was recognised for what it was by many in Honiara that day and a riot ensued. Chinatown, and Chinese businesses elsewhere in Honiara were razed and, in the end, the prime minister stood down (Allen, 2007).

The events highlighted in the Chinatown riot were symptomatic of an apparent decline in political morality that had occurred, particularly since the commencement of logging on customary land from the early 1980s (Frazer, 1997). With the help of loggers, aspiring local leaders, be they chiefs, big-men, or politicians, could gather together sufficient funds to win support amongst their communities (Bennett, 2002), usually with the promise of benefits. Such an approach was, however, entirely consistent with the way in which leaders had traditionally garnered support (see

Alasia, 1997). Naturally, and also consistent with local customs of reciprocity, the logger would expect favourable treatment later (Bennett, 2002) so over a period of time logging interests and political interests began to be seen as synonymous.

As was also the case in Papua New Guinea (Scheyvens & Cassells, 1999), corruption became evident in Solomon Islands early in the first post-independence Mamaloni government of 1981-84 where the logging industry was observed offering "bribes and inducements .... to gain the support of resource owners, local community leaders and, most critical of all, politicians and other national leaders" (Frazer, 1997, p. 5). Compared with the value of their forest resource, local landowners gained very little (Cassells, 1992; Marshall, 1990) and, in an examination of the distribution of the benefits from logging, Frazer (1997) showed that after the logging companies themselves it was the state that gained the most from logging. A major contributor to government revenue, income generated from log export duties bolstered the economy and maintained high levels of government spending in the early years following independence. During this period a struggle for the control of the logging sector also developed and this saw power shift from the bureaucratic arm of the state to the political arm. As logging spread on to customary land attempts by Forestry Division (the government forestry department) to control logging companies and slow down the rate of extraction was constantly thwarted by politicians who used their power in support of logging companies (see Allen, 2011). Exacerbated by worsening economic conditions, this resulted in a "defacto shift in power and administrative authority from public servants to politicians" with the result that "long-term economic planning and resource management were abandoned in favour of short-term economic expediency" (Frazer, 1997, p. 1). Resource owners, whose forests were exploited, were left to fend for themselves.

During this period the ties between foreign capital, introduced through logging companies, and the political elite strengthened. A close alliance developed between the Solomon Islands Forest Industry Association and the ruling Solomon Islands National Unity, Reconciliation and Progressive Party to such an extent that the Association came to have far more influence over forest policy than the government's own Forestry Division (Frazer, 1997; Scheyvens & Cassells, 1999). It was clear, by the 1990s, that the Forestry Division had become a mere spectator (Qoloni, 1990) to the logging that was now occurring in Solomon Islands and that the real power had been captured by the politicians who, in turn, were under

obligation to various logging companies (see Allen, 2011). Such practises exposed serious weaknesses in the post-colonial government because without strong and disciplined political parties, and in the absence of coherent policy platforms, there were virtually no checks on the executive authority of parliamentarians and national leaders. Responsibility for introducing such accountability lay with the leaders themselves, but with little incentive to do so, no more than a symbolic effort was made (Frazer, 1997). This may not have been the case had the electorate had the education and ability to be more engaged in the political process, but for most the parliamentary process sat quite apart from the everyday experience of Solomon Islanders in spite of it having been appropriated in a distinctly Melanesian manner. But separate it remained and consequently the influence of national government politics in the day-to-day lives of Solomon Islands villagers, who comprise some eighty five percent of the population, remained minimal and often irrelevant.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Solomon Islands suffered a complete breakdown of its national political and economic system in the period from 1998 to 2003. This, according to Moore (2004), changed the nature of society forever. Variously dubbed as 'the ethnic tension' (Moore, 2004), or 'the crisis' (Fraenkel, 2004), a major conflict developed between Guadalcanal residents and settlers from Malaita. This resulted in a massive exodus of over 23,000 Malaitans back to their home province (Liloqula & Pollard, 2000), residents of Guadalcanal origin being forced to flee to the interior, and residents of other provinces having to return to their home areas. This conflict, which ultimately needed international assistance in the form of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to quell had, according to Liloqula and Pollard (2000), its origins in the constitution Solomon Islands had adopted at independence. Along with other fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual (H.M.G., 1978, Section 3), the constitution protected the right of all citizens to move freely throughout, and reside in any part of Solomon Islands (H.M.G., 1978, Section 14). Job opportunities in both Honiara and on projects such as the Commonwealth Development Corporation palm oil plantation on the Guadalcanal Plains, encouraged domestic migration to Guadalcanal. The migrants acquired land, established squatter settlements, and dominated businesses in and around Honiara. This led to resentment on the part of Guadalcanal people, particularly towards Malaitans, and it was this, according to Liloqula and Pollard (2000), that precipitated the conflict.

Brown Beau and Nokise (2009) elaborate on Liloqula and Pollard's explanation by attributing the origins of the conflict more directly to the socio-economic and political developments that had occurred on Guadalcanal since World War II. Following the movement of the capital from Tulagi to Honiara in 1952, large-scale development occurred on Guadalcanal. This resulted in an influx of migrant labour from throughout Solomon Islands, although many of the migrants were from Malaita. Over time a number of migrant settlements, Malaitan as well as other groups, developed in and around Honiara as well as in "rural areas to the west and east of Honiara" (Brown Beau & Nokise, 2009, p. 18). Legal or otherwise, these settlements often occurred without the consent of the Guadalcanal landowners who felt their birth-right was disappearing. This created tensions which, in turn, were fuelled by other incidents such as alleged killings and rapes (Brown Beau & Nokise, 2009). Many of these problems, Liloqula and Pollard (2000, p. 2) maintain, arose because "people moved outside land, blood and tribal ties, within islands, between islands and between provinces."

For communities with social networks and land tenure systems that are less defined, these issues would not necessarily have been a problem. But for the small segmentary societies of Solomon Islands, where custom and land tenure systems differ from island to island, a migratory invasion on this scale[15] was too big to assimilate. Eventually, the discontent this generated erupted in violence which saw the formation of militant fighting units, one to evict settlers from Guadalcanal, and the other to protect settlers. Honiara was besieged, the infrastructure in the surrounding countryside was destroyed, and the national government led by Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu eventually collapsed. This government was overthrown by a 'joint operation' between one of the militant fighting units, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), and the paramilitary wing of the Royal Solomon Islands Police in June 2000 (Fraenkel, 2006). Claims that Solomon Islands was a failed state abounded and, in fact, played a key role in the Australian justification for armed intervention in Solomon Islands in 2003 (see Wainwright, 2003a). Critics of this view, however, suggested that it was the government of Solomon Islands that had failed, rather than the state itself (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Fraenkel, 2006).

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[15] The 1999 Solomon Islands Census (S.I.G., 1999) showed that, of the 46,998 Solomon Islanders resident in Honiara, 18,036 were born in Honiara, 2,522 were born elsewhere on Guadalcanal, 13,841 were born on Maliata, and 12,599 were born elsewhere in Solomon Islands.

The legitimacy of the state in Solomon Islands

In an analysis of the crisis, Terence Wesley-Smith (2006, p. 123) maintains that the challenges of state-building:

> have been most acute in entities like Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu where cultural and linguistic fragmentation defy the creation of common identities, and thousands of small, vibrant, and largely autonomous societies resist the imposition of modern state institutions. The problem with these Melanesian states is not so much that they are prone to falling apart, or 'failing,' but rather that they have never really been put together.

Western ideas about society and government in these nations are unlikely to be internalised anytime soon because traditional ideologies, identities and economic formations remain resilient (Wesley-Smith, 2006).

Although not as extreme as military occupation, Wesley-Smith (2006, p. 126) considers it deeply troubling that external nations, through the mechanism of aid and development assistance, are trying to "engineer the wholesale transformation of the central values and practices of Oceanic societies to fit the mould of western style administration." These development efforts, he maintains, may even have helped create the unstable conditions confronting these nations in the first place, therefore to have any success in state-building activities it will be necessary to work with existing institutions and ideologies of governance. Time, modest expectations, perhaps even a willingness to redraw political boundaries and, above all, involvement in the process by islanders themselves, will also be a necessary prerequisite (Wesley-Smith, 2006). Critical of imported democratic processes and reforms that follow the blue-print of external agencies, Fraenkel (2006, p. 140) also states that:

> little time is spent trying to identify, understand and encourage domestic forces for change. If all one can see is unmitigated failure, heavy-handed intervention seems the only plausible response. Where, instead, forces working against collapse are identified, this opens the scope for a more resilient and longer-term approach to peace-building.

Sinclair Dinnen (2009) considers that the terms 'failed' or 'failing' states have not helped to advance an understanding of the enormous challenges faced by post-colonial states such as Solomon Islands. Here, the absence of a sense of nationhood has had significant ramifications for the development of a post-colonial state where the process of state-building and nation-building have had to be pursued simultaneously. In practise both tended to undermine each other. Nation-building would be subverted by the "overwhelming localism" of post-colonial politics which, in turn, undermined the legitimacy of the state and led to "popular disenchantment with the centralised state" (Dinnen, 2009, p. 73).

According to Dinnen (2009, p. 72):

> Little sense of shared political community existed beyond a small urban elite. Living mostly in rural villages, bonds of kinship, shared language and ties to ancestral land, along with moral frameworks drawn on *kastom* and Christianity, provided the basis for individual identities and allegiances rather than abstract notions of 'citizenship' or 'nationalism.' Localism prevailed in virtually every sphere of social, economic and political life. There was no unifying anti-colonial struggle capable of unifying disparate local populations, and independence was granted willingly by a colonial power eager to extract itself. Independence confirmed the existence of a state without a nation rather than the emergence of a nation-state.

The national government and provincial governments of Solomon Islands have, consequently, struggled to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their people and the low esteem in which they are held has been further undermined by the poor performance of successive governments since independence. But the inability of government, both national and provincial, to engage with the citizens of Solomon Islands has deeper roots. Most Solomon Islanders, according to Dinnen (2009, p. 75), "live in the interstices between subsistence and the cash economies, and between western and traditional systems of governance." Wairiu (2006) also alludes to this by describing the link between community or traditional governance bodies and provincial and national governments as weak or non-existent. This, he says, has created confusion around the interface between traditional and modern governance systems which, in turn, has weakened leadership.

Traditional leadership in Solomon Islands differs from western forms of leadership insofar as the power or authority of a traditional leader, be it big-man or chief, grows from his knowledge of, and his reputation in, his local community. Relatively egalitarian, chiefly status may be obtained through a combination of ancestry and personal accomplishment. In contrast, western forms of leadership, as found in government, churches and business, generally requires election or appointment (White, 2004a). As discussed more fully in Chapter 6, the authority of a traditional leader tends to be founded on his personal knowledge, skill and reputation and this is seen to be quite different from the kind of authority that comes from election or appointment. Western, or modern, government works through written records and documentation whereas traditional politics is rooted in an oral culture where oratory skill is highly valued. The oral basis of much indigenous knowledge, in many respects, resists written codification which, as a matter of course, underpins systems of governance in a western style state (White, 2004a). The values of the state, and the values of Solomon Islands society with embedded forms of traditional leadership are, therefore, quite different. As a consequence, there is a limited commitment to the introduced system of government by Solomon Islanders, this disenchantment being further accentuated by corruption and the deterioration of government services (Dinnen, 2009).

As noted earlier, there is an absence of political ideology, or policy differences at the national level, between political parties in Solomon Islands (Allen, 2007). Political alliances, and relations between leaders and their primary voting base are, instead, sustained by reciprocal and personal relations. This tends to maintain social fragmentation rather than transcend it. Localism in national politics, therefore, prevails (Dinnen, 2009). In contrast to the colonial state, which was quite impervious to local social forces, the post-colonial state of Solomon Islands has "become a more uniformly porous entity" (Dinnen, 2009, p. 76) as the differentiation between state and society has progressively blurred. This indigenisation of the post-colonial state "appears to invert Habermas' famous contention that the 'lifeworld' is progressively colonised by the 'system' in late industrial society. In Solomon Islands … evidence suggests that important aspects of the state (as 'system') have been colonised by the Melanesian lifeworld" (Dinnen, 2009, p. 76). This Melanesian lifeworld is, perhaps, best defined by the word 'kastom', a pijin language derivative of custom. The concept of kastom refers to the culture and traditions of Solomon Islands and, indeed, much of Melanesia. Kastom has become a symbol representing ideologies and activities framed in terms of

empowering traditions and practices, "the symbol of cultural autonomy, and of resistance to cultural, economic, or religious subjugation" (Moore, 2004, p.27). In reality, kastom does not represent the institutions of the pre-colonial past. Traditional societies, such as those of Solomon Islands, have changed as they have come under modern outside influences. Over time, a process of assimilation, articulation and transformation has occurred and there are now no clear-cut boundaries between exogenous 'modern' and endogenous 'customary' realms (Boege, 2006). Nevertheless, the terms custom and customary institutions are useful because they identify specific indigenous characteristics that differentiate them from introduced institutions that are seen to belong to the modern state and western society (Boege, 2006). But more often than not, institutions that are deemed to be customary are, in reality, only customary in form.

Solomon Islands segmentary societies – limiting state formation

An archipelago characterised by scattered islands, low population densities and small villages, Solomon Islands suffers from poor lines of communication. This invariably locates the small segmentary societies, in which much of the population reside, at the margins, or outside the reach of the state (see Chapter 2). Here swidden agriculture is the main form of livelihood, a largely self-sufficient form of existence. Social structure is also relatively flexible in that these societies are largely egalitarian and leadership arises from within kin group loyalties, rather than being imposed from the outside. It would be inaccurate to say that these particular traits are deliberate adaptations designed to evade state capture or state formation because they existed in similar form long before European contact. Nevertheless these traits, pre-existing as they were, do have the effect of inhibiting, or working against, state formation in Solomon Islands. Acccording to Bayliss-Smith and Hviding (2012), suitable preconditions did exist on New Georgia, prior to European contact, for social stratification and the emergence of centralised chiefdoms based on surplus production of irrigated taro. This, however, was prevented by three constraints: the diverse cultural and linguistic geography of the islands; "endemic and epidemic malaria which limited population growth and discouraged mobility; and unsustainable politics in a social landscape of persistent inter- and intra-island warfare" (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012, p.1).

Scheffler (1965) noted that early European observers, such as Bougainville in 1772, recorded that the most outstanding feature of Solomon Islanders was their seeming anarchy. The people were almost constantly at war with one another and, amongst later European observers, Solomon Islanders had an unenviable reputation as 'ferocious savages' whose interpersonal and intergroup relations were notable for their violence. It was, thus, in this socio-political milieu of conflict that traditional leadership was established and subsequently validated. This chiefly power, which was primarily based on the prestige gained through inter-island raiding, was oriented towards these external interactions, rather than on consolidating power in adjoining inland areas. Coupled with hyper-endemic malaria infection and fear of sorcery from neighbouring tribes (probably reinforced by infection from malaria), this acted as a brake on political expansion within the island (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012)

The ability of the present day Solomon Islands government to exert control over most of its territory is limited and, in fact, Clements et al (2007) maintain that no post-colonial government in Melanesia has ever been able to impose effective control over the peripheral outlying areas of their territory. Although states may claim that they have control "only outposts of the state can be found in large parts of the territory" (Clements et al., 2007, p. 49). The 'hinterland,' away from the outposts, remains stateless insofar as the extent to which the state has permeated the whole of society is limited. This does not mean that there are no institutions in these areas, rather "traditional non-state societal institutions are of major importance" (Clements et al., 2007, p. 49). These institutions are, in fact, the elementary units of political order that Scott (2009) describes, and the 'complex webs of contractual mutualities' by which they are bound are very similar to the hybrid political orders that Boege et al (2009) offer as an alternative to statist forms of governance. Predating the state, these traditional structures, such as village elders, headmen, clan chiefs, healers and religious leaders (see Migdal, 1988), have a legitimacy that state institutions have not been able to foster, and it is this lack of legitimacy that undermines the state and contributes to its fragility (Clements et al., 2007).

In spite of expectations that traditional leadership would be eclipsed in the process of modernisation, traditional leaders have maintained a constant presence in the political landscape of the Pacific (White & Lindstrom, 1997). This became particularly evident during times of crisis in Bougainville and Solomon Islands where

traditional leaders provided a source of stability and continuity as government services declined (White, 2004a). Traditional leadership, however, is no longer as it was in pre-colonial times. Through the influence of Christian missions and the colonial government it has been transformed, or even displaced, "sometimes forming a kind of parallel universe, intersecting at strategic points with structures of state (and church)" (White, 2004a, p. 4). Today, 'chiefs' mediate between localised rural communities and the state, often in ways that are informal and outside the "rational codifications of government bureaucracy" (White, 2004a, p. 4).

Clements et al (2007, p. 49) are more assertive in their analysis and maintain that, as well as providing order in peripheral areas, traditional actors have also infiltrated outposts of the state to such an extent that these institutions have largely been captured by local "social forces who make use of them not in the interests of the state and its citizenry, but in the interest of traditional kinship-based entities." Dinnen (2009) describes this as aspects of the state being colonised by the Melanesian 'lifeworld'. The process, however, is not just one way because state agencies have also had an impact on local societal structures such as customary systems of power which have been deconstructed and reformed as they have been incorporated into modern state structures and processes (Clements et al., 2007). Thus, a form of political hybridity exists. Governance is no longer the function of the state alone. Rather it is "carried out by an ensemble of local, national and international actors and agencies. In this environment state institutions are dependent on other actors – and at the same time are restricted by them" (Clements et al., 2007, p. 50). Based on experiences with state-building intervention in Cambodia, Roberts (2008) suggests that such hybrid polities can offer opportunities for more meaningful, stable and viable models of governance.

Summary

The transformation that occurred in Solomon Islands society as a result of powerful outside influences has been considerable and has taken place at all levels – economic, political and religious. These influences, over time, were assimilated and transformed society (see Boege, 2006) in a process whereby traditional knowledge was integrated with introduced knowledge, thus creating a new form of knowledge which Gegeo (1998) describes as indigenous knowledge. Boege (2006)

maintains that where this has occurred there are now no clear-cut boundaries between exogenous 'modern' and endogenous 'customary' realms.

White (1989), in analysing how Solomon Islanders' perceptions of self changed as a result of World War II, noted that Solomon Islanders had an ability to impose their own definitions of social reality on encounters with powerful outsiders. Gegeo (1998) maintains that such ways of creating knowledge are all aspects of indigenous epistemology which he describes as a group's ways of thinking, creating and reformulating knowledge, thus anchoring the 'truth' of this discourse in their culture, thereby creating a new form of 'truth.'

All this, it is argued in this chapter, provides clear evidence that a process of hybridisation has occurred at various levels in Solomon Islands society. Solomon Islanders have resisted external influences that are not compatible with local interests, or cannot be appropriated, and have bent new structures to their own ends when such institutions have oppressed them (see Gegeo, 1998). It is pointless, therefore, for external nations, through mechanisms of aid and development assistance, to continue trying to engineer the wholesale transformation and practices of Solomon Islands society to fit the mould of western administration (see Wesley-Smith, 2006). This, simply, is not going to be sustainable in the socio-political context of Solomon Islands. An approach whereby governance is carried out by an hybrid ensemble of local, national and international actors and agencies (see Clements et al., 2007) is much more feasible. Based on state-building experience in Bougainville (see Boege, 2006) and in Cambodia (see Roberts, 2008), hybrid political orders can offer a more viable alternative than statist approaches to governance (see Boege, Brown, et al., 2009a).

The following chapter describes the methodology used in the fieldwork component of this research. The purpose of the fieldwork has been to examine what forms of political hybridity exist locally in the Choiseul Bay area of Choiseul Province. The analysis of this material, it will be argued in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, will lend strength to the argument that local forms of political hybridity demonstrate that hybrid polities do have the potential to offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current constitution.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

This chapter focusses on the methodology used in the fieldwork component of this research. Using semi-structured interviews, the purpose of the fieldwork has been to assess the various levels of governance that exist in the Choiseul Bay area of Choiseul Province, and determine what forms of political hybridisation have occurred between them.[16]

The material obtained during the fieldwork has been analysed in Chapters 6 and 7 and then used in Chapter 9 to support the argument that hybrid political orders do have the potential to offer a great degree of political legitimacy than currently occurs under the existing constitution.[17]

In terms of its structure, this chapter commences by explaining why semi-structured interviews have been used to explore the relatively complex phenomenon of governance in Choiseul Bay and then how the semi-structured interview schedule was used to interrogate core dimensions of political hybridity, as described in Chapter 2.

Ethical issues concerning this research are discussed in some detail as are the procedures used in the collection and analysis of field data. The chapter concludes with reflections on the process of undertaking the fieldwork.

Epistemology, research methodology and methods

Epistemologically, this research has been undertaken from a constructivist perspective insofar as it recognises that political realities are socially constructed.

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[16] See Chapter 1 - thesis research question 1: What forms of political hybridity have evolved previously, and exist currently at local levels in Solomon Islands?

[17] See Chapter 1 - thesis research question 2: Within the context of the proposed Federal Constitution, do models of political hybridity have the potential to offer a degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current constitution?

As such, it seeks to reflect upon the "complex process of institutional evolution and transformation" that has evolved in Solomon Islands (Hay, 2002, p. 47). Theoretically, the analysis is interpretive in its approach and in this respect has sought to look for the "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" that exist on Choiseul with respect to village governance (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Methodologically, ethnographic research methods have been used to examine Solomon Islands culture and the relationship between this and political behaviour. The methods used here involved semi-structured interviews as well as observation (Gray, 2004).

Positionality

Undertaking research from a constructivist perspective implies that the role of the researcher in that construction is central. I was, thus, mindful of my own position which was that of both an insider and an outsider. Although a stranger to many of the younger villagers, I was known to the more senior folk from the time I had conducted earlier research in Nukiki in 1991 (see Chapter 5). I had also maintained contact with village friends and revisited Nukiki twice in the intervening years.

The insider aspect of the relationship was especially helpful as it gave me a certain degree of credibility and access to village and provincial leaders, both male and female, who were the focus on my interviews. However, for those to whom I was not known I was a senior male outsider and I can think of at least two occasions when this may have been a little daunting for the interviewees. Had I focussed my research on younger, emerging leaders for example, my 'status' as an outsider may also have been problematic and yielded research results quite different from that gained by focussing on established forms of leadership and governance.

Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative research methods offered the opportunity to explore the relatively complex social phenomena of governance in Solomon Islands (Stewart-Withers, Banks, McGregor, & Meo-Sewabu, 2014). Within the realm of qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were assessed as being an appropriate way to explore this phenomena in an orderly, partially-structured and conversational manner (Longhurst, 2010). A particular advantage of semi-structured interviews is that, while they have some degree of pre-determined order, they do have sufficient

flexibility "in the way issues are addressed by the informant" (Clifford, French, & Valentine, 2010, p. 105). In other words, semi-structured interviews also provide opportunities to pursue 'unexpected lines of enquiry' should they arise during the interview (Grix, 2004), as well as probe and explore new pathways which, while they may not have been originally considered, could help meet the research objectives (Gray, 2004). This flexibility and informality, I had learnt from previous research experience, was particularly appropriate at community level in Solomon Islands insofar as interviews could be conducted in a non-threatening, conversational and informal manner.

My intention, during the fieldwork, was to interview participants who were associated with one or more 'levels' of governance that existed in the Choiseul Bay area. These levels of governance were defined as follows:

1. Inter-clan governance (village governance within kin groups – both customary and institutional. e.g. chiefs, elders, village church, village school);

2. Local intra-clan governance (organisations that govern across kin groups (organisations that govern across kin groups. e.g. church bodies, provincial high school board, Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities, etc.);

3. Provincial government (governance across all kin groups).

In these interviews I explored the political interaction that existed between the provincial institutions of state and the customary institutions that underpin, and exercise considerable influence in Solomon Islands society. From this, forms of political hybridity were identified according to the schema devised by Clements et al (2007) (see Figure 1, Chapter 2).

The schema developed by Clements et al (2007), describes a continuum showing different types of governance possible in hybrid political orders. Using this as a foundation, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed prior to entering the field to assess village leadership and governance structures in order to determine:

1. whether particular customary institutions act as substitutes for state institutions;

2. whether there is an overlap between modern state approaches to governance and customary governance (complementarity);

3. or, whether some state approaches to governance conflict with customary approaches.

(See Appendix 4 – Village Semi-structured Interview Schedule)

The interviews were primarily with participants in local organisations involved in local governance. These participants included chiefs, village elders, church leaders, school committee members and members of women's groups, provincial government officials and elected members of the provincial government. Interviews were also conducted with provincial leaders from elsewhere in the province as well as with several leaders operating at a national level (see Appendix 5).

Research ethics

Official ethics procedures

Ethics approval is a mandatory requirement prescribed under the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct *(2015)*[18] so well prior to undertaking the fieldwork component of this thesis I submitted my research proposal for peer review by the Massey University Institute of Development Studies in-house ethics committee in order to determine whether, or not, it presented an ethical risk. As a result of this review a number of changes to the proposal were recommended, these being: a clearer and more defined procedure for obtaining informed consent; an undertaking to fully brief research assistants on the need to maintain absolute interviewee integrity; and a commitment to holding a focus group[19] with local

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[18] Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants, 2015.

[19] A focus group was not specifically held with community members but because I was living in Nukiki village itself, there was a constant dialogue between myself and the research participants as I sought to interpret the information they were providing me.

community participants to invite feedback on the research findings. These recommendations were duly incorporated in the proposal and a *Low Risk Notification* was issued by Massey University Human Ethics Committee on 31 August 2011 (see Appendix 1).

The major ethical principles applied to this research were established by the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct *(2015)*, these being:

- respect for persons;
- minimisation of harm to participants, researchers, institutions, and groups;
- informed voluntary consent;
- respect for privacy and confidentiality;
- the avoidance of unnecessary deception;
- avoidance of conflict of interests;
- social and cultural sensitivity to age, gender, culture, religion, social class of the participants;
- justice.

Well prior to the commencement of the fieldwork a senior village spokesperson in Nukiki had been approached to see whether he would act as my research assistant[20] and also whether he would assist me to gain permission to conduct research in the village. This person had assisted in facilitating my earlier 1991 research in Nukiki and was pleased with the outcomes of this. He agreed to help me and approached the chief of the Siropodoko tribe to seek consent for me to undertake further research. This was duly granted. Subsequent to this, the Premier of Choiseul Province (who I knew) was also approached through a New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad Legal Adviser who was working for the Provincial Government at the time. The Premier was very supportive and expressed an interest in the objectives of the research. Once support had been gained from key stakeholders in both the village and the provincial government a formal research application was made to the Solomon Islands Government. The resulting Research Permit was issued on 24 January 2012, one week after my arrival in Solomon Islands (see Appendix 2).

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[20] The research assistant was briefed prior to the commencement of fieldwork as to the need to maintain interviewee integrity. Maintaining this integrity was not an issue during the fieldwork as all interviews were conducted by myself alone having been arranged by the research assistant.

Informed consent and confidentiality

Once I got to Nukiki I was living amongst the people so much of what I was doing was discussed during our daily conversations. Villagers had also been made aware what I was doing through the church notices, a system whereby people were kept informed of events in the village through announcements in the church. Because Solomon Islands has an oral culture, and social transactions are conducted on this basis, it was very important to take time to *stori* (talk) with people who I met. Not only was this enjoyable and informative, it also provided the opportunity to inform people as to the intent of my research. For those who consented to be interviewed these discussions created the opportunity for interview participants to establish specific rules and boundaries regarding the use of their information. Throughout the field research only two interviewees wished to remain anonymous.[21]

The written consent forms (see Appendix 3) required by the University Ethics Committee (in 2011) were treated with a great deal of suspicion in Nukiki and there was a marked reluctance by most to sign them. Being a predominantly oral society it was far more culturally appropriate to tell people what the research was about, what I intended to do with it (which was write a 'book'), and then ask if they were happy for me to take notes of our conversation. All were very happy for me to do this.[22]

Leadership is an important issue in Solomon Islands and to become a local leader, or chief, is no small matter. In many respects, the currency of power is information and the knowledge necessary to exercise this power is guarded quite carefully. Information, for example, is not shared freely. As a consequence, I was mindful that care needed to be taken during the interview and write-up stages of this research to ensure that information gathered was not presented in a way that could compromise or disadvantage those who provided it. In short, the ethical principles described earlier were strictly applied. I was also mindful, however, that what I was being told may not always be accurate. To counter the possibility of this I used triangulation techniques to get a 'fix' on the information from two or more other

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[21] Interviews were also conducted in Taro, the provincial headquarters (see Field reflections), where the same procedure for gaining informed consent was used.

[22] Most ethics committees now recognise that it can be culturally inappropriate, or detrimental to the well-being of the participant, to expect consent to be given in writing and accept that, in these circumstance, verbal consent is more appropriate (see Scheyvens, 2014)

sources (see Robson, 2002). See also comments on the 'data saturation point' in the next section.

Data collection and analysis

<u>Interviews</u>

The starting point for the field research was Nukiki village where, obviously, it was very helpful that I was known and had members in the community who could provide additional research assistance in terms of arranging accommodation, transport and interviews. Being reasonably familiar with the village governance structures, as they were in 1991, was also useful.[23]

Once in the field I found that the semi-structured interviews provided a useful starting point, particularly as a checklist for establishing the village leadership structure, determining who the decision-makers were, and what decision-making processes occurred. Relatively early on, however, it became clear during interviews that there were other relevant pathways, not covered in the semi-structured interview schedule, which needed to be probed and explored. This was very stimulating and I simply followed these leads,[24] conducting as many interviews as were necessary to attain a level of consistency in the information I was being given - in short, until I started hearing the same *stori* from different interviewees. At this point I had reached what is termed the 'data saturation point' in qualitative research (Morse, 1995). By the time I reached this stage in the interview process I had ceased using the semi-structured interview schedules as a basis for my interviews except as a checklist to make sure I was being consistent in my approach, and that I remained true to my original field goal of determining what levels of political hybridisation occurred at a local level.

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[23] Once the initial interviews had been conducted in Nukiki I relocated to Taro, where further interviews were undertaken. The alternation between Nukiki and Taro was undertaken twice during the fieldwork.

[24] Commonly known as snowball sampling, one or more individuals are identified from the population of interest. Once they have been interviewed they are then used as informants to identify other members of the population who can provide relevant information (Robson, 2002).

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In all, 47 interviews were conducted comprising 36 males and 11 women. The ages of interviewees were not recorded but as leadership and governance was very much the focus of the fieldwork, the majority of those interviewed were middle-aged and had gained positions of influence within their respective communities.

Recording Information

Fieldwork in Solomon Islands can be a fairly rigorous exercise if it is conducted at village level. Although logging roads do exist on Choiseul, access to most villages is by sea and this usually involves a wet, and often rough, canoe trip where there is a very good chance that most of your equipment will become thoroughly saturated. Other than solar panels for low powered electrical lighting and the occasional generator, there is seldom a reliable source of electrical power in the villages (see also Borovnik, Leslie, & Storey, 2014). While electricity-dependent devices such as dvd players, cell phones and laptop computers are now starting to be used, I was unsure what existed in Nukiki village prior to entering the field as communication with the village was intermittent, at best. Consequently, I decided to keep things simple and adopted a low 'low-tech' approach to data collection and set out with a good supply of notebooks and hard-covered school exercise books which were to be used as my primary means of recording interviews and other information.

As was the case with my earlier research on Choiseul in 1991 (and subsequent community forestry work with the Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation), most interviews were conducted in *pijin* so the process of talking, taking notes and discussing to and fro matters I was unclear on, was a good way of conducting interviews. The whole process became a two-way discussion which is very appropriate in this cultural context. As soon as I could after the interviews I would transcribe the interview notes from my note book to the exercise book, effectively creating a field journal. This also gave me the opportunity to reflect on the issues covered in the interviews and whether or not there were still gaps in my knowledge that needed to be addressed. Periodically, I would also spend time recording my observations on various issues in the village, or particular events that provided insights into village society. These in-field observations proved to be particularly useful during the analysis stage of this study but also, at the time, assisted in shaping the direction the research was taking. These observations were, in fact, part of an iterative process that enabled me to "move back and forth between data collection and analysis" (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014, p. 75) and, as

such, the field journal became useful for scanning, or the 'first cut analysis' of my data.

I did, however, take a digital voice recorder with me in order to provide a backup record of my interviews that could be transcribed or referred to for clarification (see Drever, 1995). In the field I began by asking interviewees if I could record them on my voice recorder but, as had been my experience 21 years earlier with a tape recorder, the villagers were clearly very reluctant for me to do this. Banks and Scheyvens (2014, p. 167), note that recording conversations "can be as intimidating for some as writing it down." In an oral, kin-based culture such as exists in Solomon Islands, information and knowledge are the currency of power (White, 2004b). As a consequence, information is guarded carefully (see also M. F. Smith, 2002) so having one's spoken comments digitally recorded could, potentially, be much more compromising than notes of your comments written by someone else.

I made extensive use of a digital camera in the field, cataloguing all photographs as they were taken. As was the case in 1991, photographs were an integral part of this research, creating a useful visual data base, both for this study and future research. As with the interviews, permission of participants was gained before photographs were taken.

Analysis of data

While the 'first cut' analysis of my data was undertaken in the field, a much more detailed analysis was commenced once the fieldwork was completed. Immediately, on returning to New Zealand, I prepared a summary of my preliminary findings in order to 'capture' the impressions I had gained from my field experience[25] while they were still fresh in my mind. Once this was finished collation of the field journals began. Each interview was numbered and the key points of each interview summarised. Twenty-three key topics or concepts were identified in these summaries and then used to provide the categories[26] for a table in which interviews that included these topics/concepts were identifed numerically (see Table 1). This provided a quick way of locating and referencing interviews during the write-up

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[25] See Gray (2004) re identifying 'the story'.

[26] See Gray (2004) and (Bazeley, 2013) re coding: Robson (2002) and Drever (1995) re developing categories.

phase of the thesis as well as a guide as to the main categories that needed to be incorporated in the discussion on the fieldwork findings.

In the write-up of the thesis care has been taken to respect the privacy and confidentiality of research participants. Several people did, in fact, sign the written consent forms and where this was done I have recorded their names where appropriate in the text, attributed direct quotes to them, or named them in photographic captions. Although all but two of the 47 people I interviewed stated that were happy for me to quote them I have, in some instances, used anonymous titles to protect their confidentiality where I considered this necessary.

Table 1   Key categories identified from interviews

1	Chiefs	13	Wards/constituencies/members
2	Custom/culture	14	Social issues
3	Kin groups	15	Cash economy
4	Church	16	Leadership/power
5	Christianity/spiritual identity	17	Lack of skills/knowledge
6	Leaders	18	Women
7	Decision-making - church	19	Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities
8	Decision-making - custom	20	Land
9	Conflict resolution	21	Logging
10	Customary law vs. western law	22	Climate change
11	Westminster vs. Federation	23	Village school & clinic
12	Provincial government & services		

Field reflections

The initial objective of the field work was completed relatively quickly. This was to undertake a more detailed analysis of the governance structures in Nukiki and fell quite comfortably into the two categories of inter-clan governance and intra-clan governance. The village comprised three main tribes which were further subdivided into various clans or descent groups (see Chapter 6). Prior to commencing my field work I was fairly open minded as to which clan groups I would assess but on arrival in Nukiki it became apparent that it would be appropriate for me to work with the Siropodoko tribe in particular. They were the people whom I had worked amongst in 1991, they knew me, and it was they who were hosting me on this visit. In reality, it was they who were facilitating this research because without their assistance it would have been impossible for me to gain access to Nukiki village.

Inter-clan governance, as practised in the Siropodoko tribe, was fairly straight forward and is described in detail in Chapter 6. Having established what the inter-clan governance structures were within the Siropdoko tribe I then set out to determine what forms of intra-clan governance existed. I had anticipated that intra-clan governance was likely to include the church, the school committee and, perhaps, some sort of community forestry or conservation organisation. Once in the field, it became very clear that the church was the dominant organisational and governance body within the village and the school committee, while important in its own right, was nevertheless subsidiary to the overall power of the church (see Chapters 6 and 7). It also became clear that the only formal link between the village and the provincial government was through the Batava Ward Member and the Ward Committee that had been established.

During my visits to Taro, the provincial capital, I spent time interviewing provincial government officials as well as elected assembly members. I was particularly interested in identifying the links between the provincial government and Nukiki village, both in terms of how services were provided, and also to see how much political engagement there was by villagers in provincial governance. It so happened that during one of my visits community leaders from around Choiseul Province were also staying in Taro. They were there for a workshop to consider the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands. It transpired that most were staying in the same guesthouse as I was so this provided a wonderful opportunity to interview a wide range of leaders from throughout Choiseul to assess what forms of

community governance existed within the province and what were some of the wider governance issues they were facing. Without exception they all very graciously consented to be interviewed and from this I gained a lot of very useful information on governance in Choiseul. This enabled me to place what I was gleaning from Nukiki in a wider provincial context. It also negated the need for me to travel to several other villages to gain another perspective on village governance.

Summary

Qualitative research is inductive, moving as it does from the specific to the general in order to generate or build up a theory (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). The aim of the qualitative research used in this thesis has, therefore, been to examine what forms of political hybridity exist at local level in Choiseul, and in Nukiki village in particular, in order to extrapolate these findings to determine whether they have applicability in a wider political context.

The interviews conducted in Nukiki and Taro yielded rich, in-depth information and, as such, provided a good basis for understanding the complexities of socio-political organisation in that locality (Patton, 2002). In order to interpret this information it was, however, necessary to understand the local context (see Stewart-Withers et al., 2014) and this is where my long association with Nukiki village, and provincial Solomon Islands in general, proved to be useful. While Patton (2002) aptly describes qualitative research as both an art and a science - good preparation before the survey commenced, much support from friends and participants, and a good measure of serendipity, were all elements that proved necessary for the field work to proceed in a relatively smooth manner.

The following chapter describes Choiseul Province and Nukiki village in some detail in order to provide the background necessary to appreciate the locale in which this research was undertaken and the issues and questions this thesis is addressing.

CHAPTER 5

NUKIKI REVISITED

Twenty-one years had elapsed since I first stayed in Nukiki and much had changed in this time. In 1991, I had arrived in the village loaded with supplies and equipment to undertake subsistence-related research over a four-month period. It had been a rather daunting experience yet, as it turned out, one of the most significant and satisfying I was to encounter. Not only did I gain the research material I was seeking, I also gained an insight into a culture and a way of life that was not my own yet, increasingly, has become so.

In 2012 I returned to Nukiki to undertake further research. This time I wanted to examine village and provincial governance more closely to determine what forms of political hybridity existed in order to assess whether hybid polities have the potential to offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists currently (see Chapter 4). Nukiki, therefore, was the logical place for me to commence this research - I was already known there.

In order to appreciate the issues and questions this thesis is addressing, it is necessary to have an understanding of Choiseul Province and Nukiki village. This chapter attempts to provide this background by, firstly, describing Choiseul Province and its government. This is followed by a detailed description of Nukiki village. In this the tribal structure of the community is introduced, as is the role chiefs and the church play in the governance of the village.[27] Following this, the chapter then analyses some of the challenges Nukiki village faces – that of population growth, land shortage, inadequate sanitation and water supply, sea-level rise and development challenges such as those caused by logging and education.

This chapter discusses locally-held concerns that a leadership crisis exists on Choiseul as communities, such as Nukiki, face increasing challenges brought about by the issues mentioned above. The chapter concludes by considering the implications this may have for village governance in the future.

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[27] See Chapters 6 and 7 for a detailed analysis of the respective roles chiefs and the church play in village governance.

Choiseul Province

Located in the northwest tip of the country, adjacent to Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Choiseul is one of the more remote provinces in Solomon Islands (see Map 2). It is one of the six main islands in the Solomon Islands archipelago and is approximately 160km in length. Choiseul is rugged, forest-covered and its settlements are scattered along a coast which is characterised by long narrow beaches with shallow reefs.

The population of Choiseul, as with the rest of Solomon Islands, has grown dramatically since the end of World War II. This has been due to an improvement in medical facilities as well as the success of the WHO-funded malaria control programmes which were undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s (Bennett, 1987). Before mosquito control measures and malaria treatment was introduced by WHO, death rates of children in particular were appalling, with as many as 40-60% of children in Solomon Islands dying from malaria infection before they reached the age of five (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012).

Historically the population of Choiseul was recorded as 4,051 in a 1931 census (*World Atlas*, 1951) but by 2009 it had grown to 26,372 ("Statistical Bulletin 06/2011," 2011, see Table 2). It was, however, widely considered that the 1999 census under-counted the total population because of the tensions at the time (C.P.G., 2009). By comparison, the population of Choiseul was recorded as 31,259 in 2005/6 during a household income and expenditure survey (as cited in C.P.G., 2009) and, according to provincial government sources, was expected to reach 38,000 by 2010 (C.P.G., 2009). This aside, the 2009 census recorded that the average Choiseulese household size was 5.5 compared with 6.2 in 1999. This was slightly lower than the 2009 national average household size of 6.3 (S.I.G., 2009b). Choiseulese households, however, are not particularly well-off and this is reflected in the lower-than-national-average access to amenities such as 'modern' toilets, a good water supply, electricity, and a working radio. Nevertheless, Choiseul ranks higher than the national average in terms of Human Development Indices (0.644 compared with 0.598) and lower on the Human Poverty Index. This can be attributed to Choiseul having higher than national average literacy levels (92 percent Choiseul, 77 percent nationally), a factor which could provide a useful basis for future development (C.P.G., 2009).

Table 2 Population history

	1970	1976	1986	1999	2009
Choiseul Province	8,017	10,349	13,569	20,008	26,372
Total Solomon Islands	160,998	196,823	285,176	409,042	515,870

("Statistical Bulletin 06/2011," 2011)

It was Christian missions, not the colonial state, which provided education to rural villagers in Solomon Islands Western District in the early years of the protectorate (see McDonald, 2009). The Western District, which was to become Western Province after Independence in 1978, included the island of Choiseul. Established in the Roviana Lagoon by the Reverend John Frances Goldie in 1902, the Methodist Mission has been very influential in the Western part of Solomon Islands and provided much of the infrastructure, which included schools, during the colonial period (McDougall, 2008). In 1968 the Methodist churches of Solomon Islands joined with those of Papua New Guinea to form the United Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Later, in 1996, the United Church of Solomon Islands then separated from Papua New Guinea and formed a separate assembly with its headquarters back in Roviana (McDougall, 2008). Today, Western Province is dominated by three main church denominations: United Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Christian Fellowship Church (McDougall, 2008), but in Choiseul the main denominations are the United Church, Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of the legacies of the Methodist Mission, however, was the value it placed on education and this, coupled with the current worship practices of the Seventh-day Adventist church which "help to develop literacy and public speaking skills from a young age" (McDougall, 2008,

p. 9), may well have been a contributing factor to the higher than national average literacy levels that are evident in Choiseul today.

Map 2   Choiseul Province – showing ward boundaries
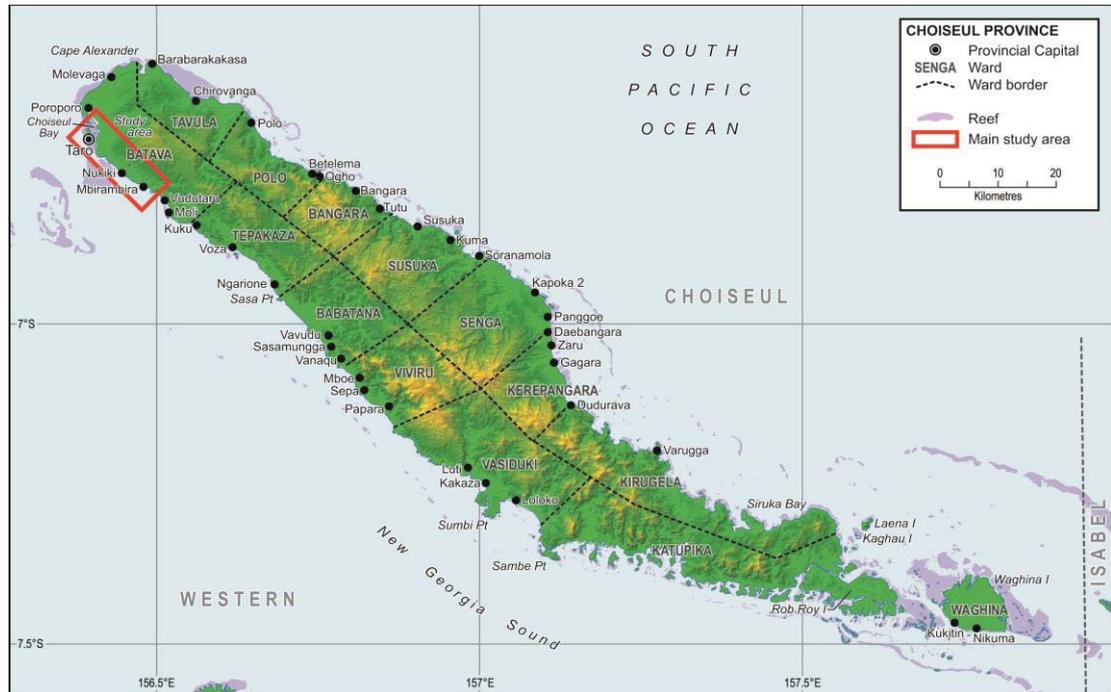
(Source: C.P.G., 2009)

Choiseul provincial governance

Prior to 1972 Choiseul had its own council, one of five that comprised the former Western District. In 1972 the five councils voluntarily agreed to amalgamate, thus forming a single Western Council (see Campbell, 1974).   Later, in 1978, "the Western Council successfully asserted its claim to be (the) sole representative of the West in its dealings with the Kausimae Committee which had been set up to make recommendations about the form of provincial government" in Solomon Islands[28] (Premdas et al., 1984, p. 37).   This effectively excluded Choiseul from becoming a province in its own right. However, the two MPs representing Choiseul on the Western District Council had wavered in their support for the Council to be

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[28] (S.I.G., 1979, par. 2.15-2.17)

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the sole representative of the West and this was noted by the Kausimae Committee which, while it recommended no change to provincial boundaries, did give the central government "the right of review if there were 'serious demands' for separation within a province" (Premdas et al., 1984, p. 37).

In 1991 Choiseul did separate from Western Province. I was based on Choiseul from May to September 1991 in the period immediately before Choiseul gained independence from Western Province and it was clearly evident, at the time, that most people I was in contact with favoured independence. People felt that Choiseul had been neglected by Western Province and that independence, as a province in their own right, would give them access to more resources, a greater share of the cake as it were. This, they believed, would allow development to occur at a faster rate.

The desire for independence has not, however, been unique to the people of Choiseul and, in fact, is common throughout Solomon Islands. As discussed in Chapter 2, Western District threatened to break away from the rest of the Protectorate prior to national independence in 1978 "because of inequitable resource allocation by the central government and fear of domination by the islands with the largest populations" (Moore, 2004, p. 43; see also Bennett, 1987; Premdas et al, 1984). Similar issues later emerged on Guadalcanal during the crisis of 1998 to 2000 and "were a rehearsal of arguments in favour of a looser federation of Solomon states" (Moore, 2004, p. 43). But all this aside, it was clear by 2012 that Choiseul Province had, indeed, developed significantly since separating from Western Province if the urban expansion on Taro island was anything to go by.

Choiseul Province has been divided into three constituencies, South, Northwest and East, and this gives the province three seats in the National Parliament. At the provincial level Choiseul is divided into a further fourteen wards (see Map 2), each represented by a ward member who is elected by the people of the ward to represent them in the Provincial Assembly. Nukiki village, the location of much of this research, is located in Batava Ward (see Map 2). Within the Provincial Assembly a Provincial Executive is formed and this comprises the Premier, Deputy Premier, and a number of Provincial Members who, in total, must not exceed half the Provincial Assembly in number. The Provincial Assembly elects a Speaker to be the presiding officer. The Premier is the political head of the Province and the

Provincial Government headquarters is located on Taro Island in the north-western tip of Choiseul (S.I.G., 2001)

Taro Island – provincial headquarters

Taro Island had originally been owned by the Bakele people but along with neighbouring Supizae Island, it was sold to a foreign company who established a coconut plantation there (Interview #40).[29] However, the sale of land to foreigners had been prohibited by the colonial government in 1914 (Ruthven, 1979) but in an effort to encourage development that could be taxed to fund government expenditure, it had given itself the power to grant concessions to foreign companies on land deemed to be 'unoccupied.' It also acted as an intermediary for a system on 'tenure leases' through which Solomon Islanders leased their land to foreigners (Scheffler & Larmour, 1987). It is likely, therefore, that Taro and Supizae Islands were acquired by the company under this latter arrangement.

According to my interviewee[30] (Interview #40), the Bakele people were able buy this land back, forming a cooperative called the Poroporo Association to make copra to fund the purchase. The land was transferred back to the original owners, I was told, after national Independence. The Poroporo Association established a trade store, obtained a petrol and a bakery licence, and managed the land by grazing cattle. This concurs with Scheffler and Larmour (1987, p. 314) who state that: "In the early 1970s the government began to help groups of descendants of original customary owners of some alienated land to organise themselves into cooperatives and buy back plantations. Technical assistance and capital equipment were provided from a UK aid project meant to promote commercial agriculture, and the loans were repaid out of subsequent production."

Jackson Kiloe, the Premier of Choiseul province, advised that the Poroporo Association is still in existence but has been renamed the Choiseul Bay Association. Most members are from Poroporo village, and some are from Nukiki. There are other members who live outside these communities but these people

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[29] The date of the sale was not specified by the interviewee.

[30] The interviewee had worked for a cooperative many years earlier but whether this was the Poroporo Association has not been verified.

have family connections to Poroporo and Nukiki. The Premier, however, maintained that Choiseul Bay Association purchased land opposite Taro and Supizae Islands, on the other side of Choiseul Bay, but not actually on Taro and Supizae. These two islands, considered to be 'alienated land' (land deemed to be no longer occupied and, thus, acquired by the colonial administration), remained with the Commissioner of Lands and were later transferred to Choiseul Province in the mid-1990s. The title of these lands still remains with the Province, although part of Supizae Island was exchanged with the Choiseul Bay Association for land in Choiseul Bay for the Provincial Secondary School. Taro station, itself, was established by the colonial government as a substation of Gizo and was the responsibility of Western District Council, and then Western Provincial Government, until Choiseul became a province in its own right in 1991. From 1991 Taro has served as the headquarters for Choiseul Province. The airstrip and original wharf were built in 1976, two years before Independence (J.Kiloe, pers. com. Oct. 29, 2012).

Nukiki village

Nukiki village is located eight kilometres by sea from Taro. The journey takes about twenty minutes by motorised canoe, depending on sea and weather conditions. When I first undertook research in Nukiki in 1991 it comprised some ten small settlements, or hamlets, each having originated as a family settlement that had separated from the original village of Nukiki. Collectively still known as Nukiki, these small hamlets were located between mangrove swamps and adjacent coconut plantations, strung-out along a narrow coastal terrace and interconnected by a walking track. Comprising 314 people in 1986 (see Appendix 6), and having grown to 408 by 1991, the size of Nukiki village was still relatively small. The hamlets were generally very tidy with well-swept earth areas around houses and the occasional small enclosed *sup sup*, or house, gardens. Dogs, cats, and chickens wandered around at will. Most of the buildings were leaf houses which took their name from the sago palm leaf used to clad the walls and the roof (see Photograph 1). These buildings were usually well-maintained (Cassells, 1992).

The fragmentation of larger, nucleated villages, such as has happened in Nukiki, was also noted by Hviding and Bayliss-Smith (2000, p. 202) in their study on the island of New Georgia. Here they recorded "a growing tendency for extended

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families to move away from large villages and settle in single-family hamlets." This 'hamletisation,' according to Hviding and Bayliss-Smith (2000), followed a return to past patterns of settlement and was a logical response to increasing population size and associated shortages of suitable garden land.

Photograph 1   Tarepasika 1991

In 1991 there was a primary school in Nukiki and a provincial secondary school in Choiseul Bay but, with very few places available, opportunities for a secondary education there and elsewhere were extremely limited. Restricted higher-education opportunities, and very limited formal sector employment opportunities at both the local and national level, meant that most of the young people, at that time, would expect to stay in the village for most of their lives. The pattern of village life revolved very much around the church, which provided the spiritual and social focus for the community.[31]   Village life was quite structured, in terms of how the

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[31] This pattern of life originated through the early Methodist missionaries who set out to change more than just the religious practices of Solomon Islanders in Western District. For the missionaries, conversion to Christianity required a complete transformation in the individual and "the acceptance of a new set of values involving changes in every sphere of activity" (Early, 1998, p. 307). See also Chapter 7.

community was administered, and how people used their time. During the week, on Monday, Tuesday and Saturday, for example, family members would work in their gardens (see Photograph 2) and coconut plantations, go fishing, diving, or hunting, repair or build houses (see Photograph 3), canoes or implements, or undertake other household chores. Work was often communal, although there was a definite distinction between jobs done by men and those done by women. Wednesday and Friday were specifically designated for community work, such as on the church or school buildings, and Thursday was designated for women's fellowship where the women would get together and the men would do the household chores. Sunday was set aside for rest and worship (Cassells, 1992).

Photograph 2   Nukiki village gardens 1991

Nukiki society was (and still is) normatively patrilineal,[32] thus people speak of the right to land being handed down from father to sons. Chiefs, one for each clan within the tribe, are guardians of the land (see Chapter 6). In 1991 subsistence was the primary means by which families sustained themselves. Opportunities to earn cash were very limited, largely being restricted to copra production (see Photograph 4), a very labour-intensive and low cash-yielding operation (Cassells, 1992).

Photograph 3   House-building in Tarepasika 1991

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[32] Scheffler (1965), however, notes that bilateral, or non-unilinear descent systems do exist on Choiseul. Societies with such systems are considered by Scheffler to have ambilateral characteristics. Recognising that "collateral cognates (from first cousin onwards) belong to more than one cognatic stock," it would not be feasible to maintain total endogamy in small kin groups because of the limited number of spouses available (Scheffler, 1965, p. vii). Total endogamy would also limit the sphere from which aid could be drawn and as Scheffler (1965, p. 170) also observed: "one does need kinsmen, and many of them." Such ambilateral systems, therefore, allow for a controlled extension of claims to resources (see also Chapter 6 regarding the flexibility of custom).

Photograph 4   Open fire copra drier 1991
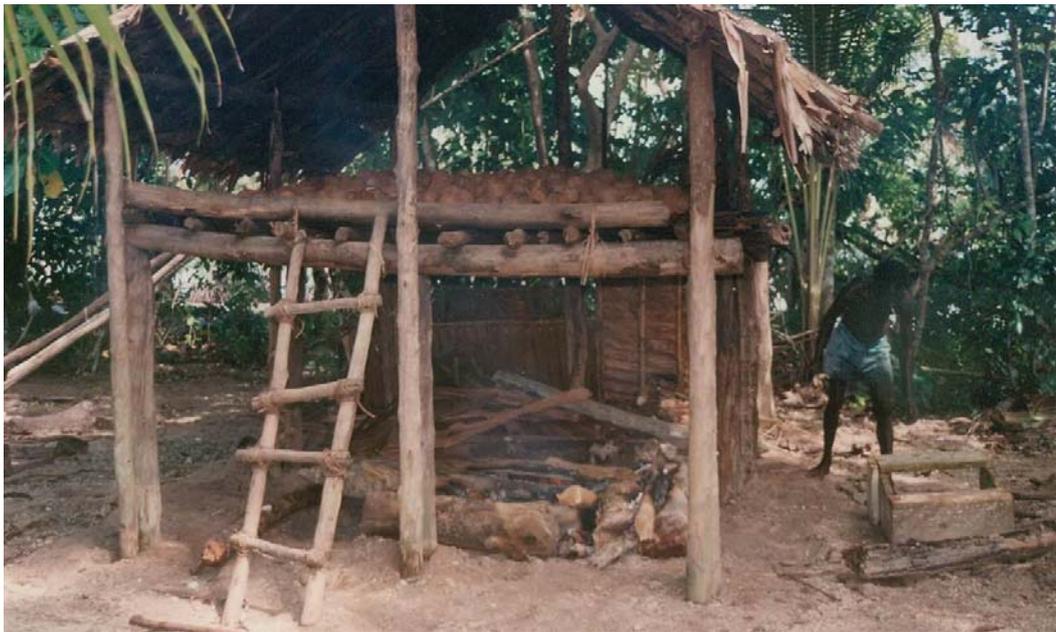
By 2006, when I had last visited, Nukiki was beginning to change. The hamlet of Tarepasika, where most of my friends lived, did not look too much different. Leaf houses had been rebuilt but, essentially, the same peaceful atmosphere prevailed. The entry-point to Nukiki, the mouth of the Talevondo Stream was, however, quite different (see Photographs 8 & 9). Heavy seas had scoured out the bay, something the villagers attributed to sea-level-rise.

Taro was also making its presence felt in Nukiki. Previously, a very small administrative outpost of Western Province, it had become a 'full-blown' provincial centre in its own right. I had been warned of the 'urban sprawl' that had taken place in Taro but was not quite prepared for the extent to which this had occurred. More importantly, and something I did not fully appreciate the significance of at the time, was that some villagers were beginning to commute to Taro by canoe for work. This, incrementally, was to have far-reaching effects on Nukiki. The cash economy, and the presence of a near-by urban centre, were beginning to influence village-life which had previously been relatively undisturbed (Cassells, 2007; see also M. F. Smith, 2002). A level of dependency was also developing. With easy access to services, which were now only a short boat-trip away, villagers were becoming less self-reliant (Interview #31).

Six years later, when I returned in 2012, wholesale changes in Nukiki were quite apparent (see Photograph 5). Census data, recorded by the Pastor of the Nukiki United Church, showed that the village population had reached 910 by 2011 (see Appendix 7). The ten hamlets had coalesced into five main settlements: Solovai, Vakatipu, Loboro, Tarepasika and Karakone. 'Permanent houses,' made from sawn timber and corrugated iron, had begun to outnumber leaf houses made from local material. In 2006 I had noticed that a chief owned a generator, an electric light and a dvd player, something no-one would have countenanced in 1991. But by 2012 there were many generators, and solar lights, and corrugated iron roofs on houses. The solar lights were gifts from national members of parliament under the Constituency Development Fund, or from ward members, under the Ward Grant schemes (Interview #24).[33] The generators were funded by income from logging which was now taking place. Cell phones were also common and laptops were used by some. Although I did observe a few kerosene lanterns, most had been replaced by solar lighting. Cooking was, however, still done over open fires although much of the firewood was now delivered by canoe from the nearby logging camp at Mbirambira. This saved a back-breaking slog by women who would manually carry it out from the forest.

In 1991 people caught bait fish with nets in the lagoon (see Photograph 6) but this no longer occurred in 2012. Women also used to fish from the reef but this had ceased as well. Men, in canoes, could still be observed outside the reef but the fish they caught were often taken to Taro for sale at the market, rather than being used for subsistence (see also M. F. Smith, 2002). Previously men had often carried spears, and bow and arrows, which they used for hunting birds, but these were no longer in evidence. Some boys did, however, carry catapults, and they were exceedingly good shots.

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[33] The Constituency Development Fund and Ward Grants were primary channels through which state-sourced development funds flowed to villages (see Chapter 8) and, as such, represented a highly personalised form of state input.

Photograph 5   Tarepasika 2012

Photograph 6   Bait fishing 1991

Some minor changes to the village routine had also occurred by 2012. One friend commented that it was becoming increasingly harder to get villagers to participate in community work (see also M. F. Smith, 2002). With an increasing emphasis on the cash economy, villagers' need for cash had also increased. Consequently they were busy making copra or undertaking other activities to generate this cash and were less willing to help because of the opportunity cost of doing so (Interview #11).

In 2006 the school and most of the teachers' houses had been rebuilt with 'permanent materials' by the local community (see Photograph 11), a vast improvement on the ramshackle leaf house buildings that existed before. There was also a clinic and the United Church Bishop had taken up residence in Nukiki. But by 2012 it was the changes in the village 'residential areas' that were most noticeable. Quite apart from the preponderance of permanent houses the village seemed much more densely populated. Children were everywhere.

Tribes, clans and chiefs

The village of Nukiki is located on land belonging to three tribes: the Bakele, Solomo, and Siropodoko people (Cassells, 1992). Within the Siropodoko tribe there are four clans, or descent groups: Moqeriqo, Nanavua, Sarekana, and Qumakakana. The people of the three tribes were spread throughout the five main settlements that comprise Nukiki: Solovai, Vakatipu, Loboro, Tarepasika, and Karakone. Intermarriage between the tribes was common and, as a result, many people belonged, or held allegiance to, more than one tribe (Interview #5).

Each tribe has its own chief,[34] or *batu*, if the traditional term is to be used, and under him are clan chiefs. The clan chief is the descent group's principal leader and, as with the Siropodoko people, has custodial responsibility for tribal land as well as responsibilities for the welfare of the people in that clan (Interviews #33 and #35). According to custom this chiefly status crosses from father to elder son, but as was the case in Tarepasika hamlet and Nukiki village as a whole, there were a number of men who, regardless of their descent status, had the right to have a say

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[34] The use of the term 'chief' to denote leadership has been the subject of considerable academic debate. The applicability of this term to describe leadership in Nukiki village, and elsewhere in Choiseul, is discussed in Chapter 6.

in village affairs (Interview #15, see also Scheffler, 1965). In Nukiki it was the church that usually provided the opportunity for them to do this.

Although genealogical qualification was touted as being the normal route to chieftainship, there appeared to be various exceptions to this rule. This became clear during a number of interviews (Interviews #5, #16, #19, #33, #35, #37) and concurs very much with Scheffler's findings in 1965 (p. 112):

> When the 'straight way' and actual arrangements did not agree and when the instances were more or less modern, usually I was told that such was not the way in the past, people no longer followed 'custom' as they should. But as I found more knowledgeable informants and examined similar instances from what was clearly an ethnographic 'past,' I found that exceptions were part of the past too.

A pragmatic flexibility in all matters of custom including the appointment of chiefs, thus, appears to exist which allows the best to be made of a situation. In the words of one of Scheffler's informants: "Our customs are not firm. We look only for that which will help us to live well, and the rest is all talk" (Scheffler, 1965, p. 112).

Chieftainship and chiefs are discussed more fully in Chapter 6 but it is worth noting here that there are some challenges ahead for Nukiki. As mentioned, intermarriage, not only between the three main resident tribes but also with outsiders, may cause tribal allegiances to become quite diffused (Scheffler, 1963, 1965). As a consequence, tribal loyalties may no longer be absolute and this has the potential to undermine the authority of chiefs, particularly in large villages such as Nukiki where there are many tribes. In these large villages the role of the church, as a governing body, has become much stronger because of this multiple tribal composition (Interviews #12, #15, #16, #24, #31, #39).

Nukiki United Church

Nukiki villagers are adherents of the United Church of Solomon Islands. As was discussed earlier, this denomination has its origins in the Methodist Mission, which was first established on New Georgia in 1902 by an Australian, the Reverend

Goldie (McDougall, 2008). In 2012 the main church for Nukiki was still located in Loboro village, the original mission area and settlement of Nukiki (see Photograph 7). It was here that the main Sunday morning service was held. Four smaller satellite churches were also being constructed in the other main village settlements, or hamlets (Interview # 34). A church in Vakatipu had already been completed and one was under construction in Tarepasika at the time this research was undertaken.

Along with the new church, each hamlet had its own *batu lotu* (church leader) who was pivotal in managing the hamlet's affairs. All this was a logical response to the steadily increasing population. Hviding and Bayliss-Smith (2000) considered that the building of a church in satellite hamlets on the island of New Georgia to be a major breakthrough in status transition from hamlet to proper village so, perhaps, this was a sign that the hamlets of Nukiki were also beginning to form an identity in their own right as the population continues to expand.

A United Church Bishop, who had oversight of the church's Choiseul Region, had been located in Nukiki village by 2006. The United Church is relatively decentralised and democratic in its organisational structure. "Village churches belong to sections, which are in turn part of circuits, regions, synods, and the country-wide assembly" (McDougall, 2008, p. 6). Unlike 1991, when there was no Bishop in Nukiki, the presence of the Bishop by 2012 may have served to reinforce the prestige, and thus the role, of the United Church in the governance of village affairs (see Chapter 7).

Photograph 7   Nukiki United Church 2012

Village population

As noted earlier, the population of Nukiki in 1991 was 408. Family size was very large, and it was not uncommon for there to be seven to ten children per household. At the time 57 percent of the village was aged 15 or less and, even then, there was concern that village land resources would eventually be insufficient to support their steadily increasing population (Cassells, 1992). By 2012 the population of Nukiki had reached 910 (see Appendix 7). This represented a 123 percent increase over the population in 1991 and it was having a significant impact on Nukiki village society. Quite apart from the obvious presence of young children, housing density in the hamlets was much higher. Similar to the infill subdivision that occurs in urban centres, additional houses had been built in 'family compounds' to accommodate the next generation of families.

The 1999 census noted that approximately 44 percent of the total population of Choiseul was under the age of 15 years, and that 54 percent was under the age of 20 years (C.P.G., 2009). This would indicate that population growth on Choiseul is likely to remain high for some time yet. However, the annual population growth rate

on Choiseul decreased from 3.3 percent in the period 1986 to 1999 to 2.8 percent in the period 1999 to 2009. Total Solomon Islands population growth for the same periods was 2.8 percent and 2.3 percent respectively (S.I.G., 2009b).

The higher than national average population growth rate on Choiseul can be explained by the Total Fertiliity Rate (TFR) which was 4.7 for Choiseul in 2008. Although this represented a slight decline since 1999, when TFR was 4.9 (S.I.G., 2009a) it was, nevertheless, significantly higher than the national average of 4.1 in 2008 (S.I.G., 2009b). Limited access to medical clinics and a lack of information on family planning methods, at least before medical clinics became more common in rural areas, may explain the higher than national average population growth on Choiseul. Care of the aged also falls to younger family members and coupled with a need for labour to maintain garden production, these factors may also have provided the incentive to have large families. This was certainly the case in 1978 on Kairiru Island, Papua New Guinea, where:

> … the best way to provide for one's security in old age in Kragur was still to have many children and hope that at least some of them would stay in the village and see to your needs when you became infirm or, if they left the village, send you enough money to keep you in fish and rice.

> (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 148)

Census data collected by the Nukiki village pastor for 2010 - 2011 (see Appendix 7) recorded 35 percent of the village population as being in the 1 to 13 age group which is roughly similar to the findings of the 1999 census which showed that 44 percent of the Choiseul population was under 15 years of age (C.P.G., 2009). Anecdotal evidence suggested that family sizes of the younger generation Nukiki villagers were smaller, but no data was collected on this. If it were true it could be attributed to higher levels of education, an increasing awareness of family planning and the increasing emphasis on the cash economy and the associated cost of clothing and educating children.[35] Further work would need to be undertaken to clarify this.

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[35] In a study on Makira, Fazey et al (2011, p. 1286) noted that while there is "a shift towards a monetary economy and increasing recognition of the economic costs of children, there is as yet little indication that this is resulting in attempts to reduce birth rates." Fazey et al do, however, consider that this will change, particularly as education for women increases, leading to an eventual

The impact of population growth

The growth in population of Nukiki village since 1991 has had a significant impact on a number of factors that affect village well-being (see Fazey et al., 2011). Primarily concerning land shortages, sanitation and village water supply, these factors are discussed below:

Village sanitation and water supply

Although some long-drop toilets did exist in Tarepasika, the mangroves on the beach were still commonly used as toilet areas. One area was set aside for women, and another area for men. Excrement was constantly cleansed by the sea so the areas were not unclean. But private they were not, and as population continues to rise sanitation is likely to become increasingly problematic for the village.

Fresh water supply was also a problem by 2012. Unlike 1991, when fresh, drinkable water could be obtained from the adjacent Talaevondo Stream when it was not in flood, villagers now relied on tanks fed by rainwater from corrugated iron roofs. This was very convenient and, in their eyes, a sign of development. However, the capacity of the tanks was limited by their small size because they had to be transported to the village by canoe. Thus, drinking water supplies became critical during periods when there was little or no rain.[36] The Talaevondo Stream and nearby Vughala Stream were, however, still used for bathing and washing clothes but, in the case of the Talaevondo Stream, only at low tide when it was not contaminated with sea water.

At the time this research was undertaken, no plans existed in the village to address these issues other than to obtain additional water tanks to improve drinking water supplies. But with an increasing population, and further salinization of the stream

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decline in birth rates (see also Herz, 2004; Osili & Long, 2008). The Choiseul Provincial Profile of 2009 (S.I.G., 2009a), however, shows that the average household size on Choiseul decreased from 6.2 to 5.5 people between 1999 and 2009. Batava Ward, where Nukiki is located, had an average household size of 5.8 people in 2009.

[36] Although tank capacity could have been increased by the use of multiple tanks, I do not recall seeing instances of this. Cost is likely to have been a determining factor.

due to sea-level rise, the problem is not going to go away. In reality the village leadership is not well-equipped to deal with issues such as this and really needs some form of external assistance to provide the planning and resources necessary to establish suitable sewage disposal systems and a reticulated tap-water supply. Land ownership disputes may arise as such schemes are likely to utilise, or cross, land belonging to a multitude of owners[37] (see also subsequent section on sea-level-rise).

Land shortage

By 2012 a shortage of land available for gardening was becoming a problem. This was caused by the steadily increasing population and, as mentioned, was something that had been predicted by villagers back in 1991 (Cassells, 1992). Gardens, however, were still the main source of food for the villagers of Nukiki. Cultivated using swidden, or shifting agriculture methods, gardens are established in areas that have been cleared of forest. Crops are grown for a period and then, when soil fertility declines, are abandoned and re-established in a newly cleared area of forest. Thus, over time, gardens are moved around the 'forest estate' in a continuous cycle of clearing, burning, crop planting, abandonment, and forest regrowth during a period of fallow (see Macewan, 1978; D. D. Mitchell, 1976; Weightman, 1989). The danger with an increasing population is that the fallow period is likely to be reduced by a more frequent cycle of cropping. If this were to occur on the limestone karst country typical of the Siropodoko lands (Cassells, 1992), soil fertility would decline along with garden productivity (Hviding & Bayliss-Smith, 2000).

When I was in Nukiki in 1991 gardens were located up to three or four kilometres from the villages in the Talaevondo, Barabara, Malatakana, Narimadaka/Libakuda and Vughala areas (Cassells, 1992). By 2012 the gardens of 1991 had been abandoned. Logging of Siropodoko land had commenced some years earlier so by 2012 the villagers were gardening in logged areas in the hills behind Mbirambira Bay. Mbirambira was some four kilometres from Nukiki. The gardens were accessed from the logging road which meant that villagers had a two hour walk to

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[37] In a study on social learning through participatory integrated catchment risk assessment on Guadalcanal, Hoverman et al (2011) noted that differing knowledge cultures, as well as a lack of familiarity with working collaboratively, presented challenges to managing catchment risks such as are now occurring in Nukiki.

get there. The land had, however, been cleared during logging so this made the establishment of gardens relatively easy because villagers were spared the arduous work of clearing bush (Interview #38).

The earlier gardens, having been abandoned, were reverting back to bush as is normal practise in swidden agriculture but these areas were now over-run with wild pigs, displaced by logging on the adjoining Sirpopodoko land (see Hviding & Bayliss-Smith, 2000). This provided a strong disincentive against re-establishing gardens in this area because they would be decimated by the pigs (Interview #38). As part of the RAMSI peace-keeping process, all rifles were confiscated in 2003. This has been a mixed blessing – in the absence of hunting rifles bird numbers have flourished, as have crocodile and pig numbers. Various people, throughout my time in the area, told me of incidents where people had been taken by crocodiles when bathing or collecting water from streams. These incidents were apparently increasing.

Sea-level rise

Sea-level rise was an issue that the villagers of Nukiki were very aware of because of the direct impact it was having on them. When I first came to Nukiki in 1991 there were no wells in Tarepasika village. Drinking water was obtained from the Talaevondo Stream (see Photograph 8), except after heavy rain when the water turned brown from the swamps. By 2006 I observed a well in Tarepasika, as well as a villager's equipment to install these. The well water was used for drinking and washing. In 2012 the well still existed but the water could no longer be used for drinking because it was brackish. The villagers attributed this change to sea-level rise.

When I visited Nukiki in 2006 the shape of the Talaevondo stream mouth had changed considerably since 1991. The house I had borrowed at Kelekeke Point no longer sat back from the water's edge but, rather, stood partially in the sea at high tide. The shoreline had receded some five or six metres in the intervening 15 years, a factor the villagers also attributed to sea-level rise. The tsunami of 2007 destroyed this house and changed the mouth of the Taleavondo Stream still more (see Photograph 9). By 2012, it was no longer possible to drink water from the Talaevondo Stream as it was completely brackish. It was possible to bathe in non-

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saline water at low tide but the stream was no longer clear, being joined near the coast by the Vughala Stream which had its origins in the logging area. Siltation from the logging was causing discolouration in the Vughala Stream, thus compounding the water problems that already exist in the village.

The brackish condition of the Talaevondo Stream was attributed to sea-level rise by the villagers (e.g. Interview #47). According to a Solomon Islands based engineer, sea-level has been calculated as rising about three millimetres per year (Interview #48). This concurs with the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2013) which has recorded a global mean sea-level rise between 1993 and 2010, of 3.2 millimetres per year. Published research on sea-level rise in Australia and the Pacific, however, records an even higher sea-level change of +2.87 centimetres for Solomon Islands over a 5.3 year measurement period (W. Mitchell, Chittleborough, Ronai, & Lennon, 2000). New areas of saline swamp were developing behind the church as seawater reached further inland at high tide. Although this phenomenon was attributed entirely to sea-level rise by some villagers, I did note that the area has been gouged out by the tsunami that followed the serious earthquake of 2007. It has since become a brackish swamp in amongst coconut palms.

W. Mitchell et al (2000) consider other factors that influence sea-levels. They note that recent El Nino and La Nina weather patterns have had a large influence on changes to sea-levels in different locations and go on to mention the possible influence of seismic events or, what they call, vertical land motion. Although the accuracy of data collection has improved in recent years, historic data is considered to be 'noisy' (variable) where "the estimate of trends in sea-level data has been fraught with difficulties due to inadequate quality control of the gauges themselves, datum shifts and combinations of oceanographic and meteorological influences over various time scales" (W. Mitchell et al., 2000, p. 5).

Photograph 8   Talaevondo Stream 1991

Photograph 9   Talaevondo Stream mouth 2012 – after the tsunami

Regardless of the cause, sea-level rise was occurring and it was of major concern to villagers throughout Choiseul (see also M. F. Smith, 2013). According to the Choiseul Provincial Government Planning Officer, sea-level rise was identified as an issue of high priority by villagers during a Provincial Government village-needs survey (Interview #25) and, associated with this, villagers are clearly wanting help from the Provincial Government to secure clean water supplies. As sea-level continues to rise it is also possible that some of the more low-lying settlements may need to be relocated at some time in the future.

Development Issues

In addition to the previously discussed influence of 'urban' Taro, logging and education were two further development issues that were having an impact in Nukiki village. The impact of logging was more obvious than that of education, but both have had ramifications for village leadership and governance. This is discussed in the following sections:

Logging

After resisting logging for over twenty years the Siropodoko people finally agreed to allow Oceania Trading Company to commence logging on their land in the mid 2000s (see Photograph 10). According to one interviewee who has considerable standing in the community, the logging has been a hugely controversial matter within the tribe (Interview #6). Everyone, he told me, had seen the logging undertaken in the 1990s by Eagon Resources Development Co. Ltd at nearby Moli and knew that it had caused many problems. "These problems were known to everyone, but the chiefs and the people wanted the money" (Interview #6). The villagers, I was also informed, had many meetings over many years but in the end it was the chiefs who decided to go ahead with the logging. Given that the authority of chiefs is respected, once the tribal leaders had decided that they would go ahead and log, the Siropodoko people accepted their decision. However, the matter still remained controversial and by 2012 most of the disquiet centred around how the royalty payments had been distributed (Interviews #6, #15). One member of the tribe was reported as taking matters into his own hands by commandeering tribally owned sawmilling equipment and demanding a compensation payment for its

return. Quite apart from this, many people within the tribe privately expressed their opposition to logging.

Logging has been controversial on Choiseul since Eagon commenced their logging operation in 1989. "Since the company began logging, court injunctions have been served against it for trespass and environmental damage. There has also been a marked increase in land disputes" (Frazer, 1997, p. 6). This has been the saddest thing about the logging at Nukiki - it has created division within the Siropodoko tribe. As has been the case elsewhere in Solomon Islands following logging, distrust now exists, particularly over the lack of transparency over royalty payments (see Frazer, 1997; Hviding & Bayliss-Smith, 2000; Kabutaulaka, 2000; Scheyvens & Cassells, 1999). Before, I was told, "the (Siropodoko) people were one, now they have become separated" (Interview #40). This distrust may, in the long-term, have other ramifications for the Siropodoko people. In other areas some chiefs have lost the respect of their people because they have not distributed logging royalties fairly (Interview #31). In such situations it may become difficult for a chief to maintain his authority and hold his people together.

Hviding and Bayliss–Smith (2000, p. 215) noted a similar trend in New Georgia: "In mid-1996, when one of us travelled to forty-five villages throughout Morovo … quite a few elderly chiefs were not at home. They had travelled to Honiara by air or sea for one of two main purposes: either to be lavishly entertained at hotels and clubs as the guests of Asian logging companies, or to appear in High Court cases involving disputes over logging concessions." Similarly, Cassells (1995, p. 19) also records dissatisfaction amongst villagers in North New Georgia, who accused the directors of the North New Georgia Timber Corporation of "wasting money on overhead costs such as travel and accommodation." In one village there was "the belief that royalties did not always get from the chief to the villagers" (Cassells, 1995, p. 20). Similar accusations were also made by some Nukiki villagers in 2012, where concern was expressed that advances, allegedly made to Trustees by Oceania Trading Company, had not been declared to the tribe (Interviews #6, #15).

Another influential member of the Siropodoko tribe advised that, apart from the initial 'good-will' payment from the logging company, which was invested in a Central Bank account, all other royalty payments were reportedly dispersed

throughout the tribe. The Chief and his Executive[38] would prepare a budget describing how funds would be dispersed: sometimes for school fees; sometimes for church maintenance; or for new school buildings, and maintenance; or for medical assistance. The balance remaining would then be dispersed equally amongst all tribal members, regardless of age, once a census of tribal members had been completed (Interview #7). As mentioned earlier though, there were rumours from several sources that undeclared advances had been secured by leaders against royalty payments from the logging company. Thus, having commenced logging, the issue that was causing the most contention within the tribe was the apparent lack of transparency over royalty payments.[39]

At the time this research was undertaken it was expected that logging would be completed by mid-2012. This may be a difficult time for the tribe as income dries-up and people realise that there is little to replace it. According to one of the many Sirpodoko people who were working for the logging company, there may be a need for village meetings "to increase understanding and avoid disruptions within the community" (Interview #7). A post-logging management plan, as advocated by the Department of Forestry, Environment and Conservation, to chart future development on logged lands, had not been prepared by the villagers (Interview #20). Some Ngali nut trees were being planted in order to generate a future cash-income but, over-all, little had been done to utilise the logging royalty payments for future-development on Siropodoko land.

According to a locally-based government forestry extension officer (Interview #33), landowners were being surveyed throughout Choiseul by Forestry Division staff to see what land was available for reforestation. Apparently, there was plenty of land available but people were reluctant to plant these areas in trees because of the distinct possibility that land disputes would arise (Interview #33). However, as discussed earlier, the villagers have established their gardens in the logged areas and, in doing so, would have gained usufructory rights[40] over these sites. Long-

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[38] See Figure 2, Chapter 6.

[39] See also Chapter 6 for a discussion on manner in which perceived injustices over logging have undermined the authority of chiefly leadership.

[40] Individuals or families can hold land-use rights over sections of group estates. While these lands are often held in perpetuity, their right to the land does not amount to unencumbered ownership because if a family died out or established other allegiances, its share in the larger estate generally reverts to the larger group to be reallocated to other members (Scheffler & Larmour, 1987).

term, once garden site fertility declines, these areas could be used for household woodlots, thus creating another source of forestry income for future generations. A great attraction of such small-scale woodlots is that they would be owned by a single household, thus greatly diminishing the potential for land disputes on these parcels of land (Cassells & Scheyvens, 1999). Community woodlots, or even a small plantation, also have considerable potential on old garden sites. However, if land disputes are to be avoided, endeavours such as these would require a considerable level of community coherence and organisation simply because these larger woodlot areas would involve a multitude of landowners.

Photograph 10   Logging camp at Mbirambira

Education

The Nukiki village primary school is owned and administered by the village school committee. Comprising 169 children in 2012, the school caters for students from year one through to year six. The school has eight classrooms and a number of

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teachers' houses. In addition, and also administered by the village school committee, there is a well-housed kindergarten comprising 70 pre-school children (Interview #35). The Provincial Education Authority supports the village school committee by employing the teachers and channelling grants and government funding to the school. The national government sets the school curriculum and pays the teachers' salaries. Overall, I was informed by the Chief Education Officer of Choiseul Province, sixty percent of the school's funding comes from the national government, thirty percent from the provincial government, and ten percent from the villagers, who are expected to pay in kind through the provision of material or involvement in working bees (Interview #32).

It was the school committee, under the chairmanship of the Sarekana clan chief who had, in recent years, significantly upgraded the school by building eight new classrooms (see Photograph 11), the pre-school building, and several new teachers' houses. The funding for much of this came from logging royalties. This effort was also assisted in part by a European Union grant[41] which funded three of the classrooms (Interview #35). Collectively, all this more than fulfilled the requirement of the Provincial Education Authority for villagers to provide support for their school in kind. The Vice-chairman of the Nukiki School Committee considered that the school had a good relationship with the provincial Education Office who, he said, "look after their teachers" (Interview #35).

It was clear to me that the villagers of Nukiki took a keen interest in their school.[42] As already noted, the buildings had improved enormously since my first visit in 1991 and, as with the villagers of Kragur, in East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea, the people of Nukiki were proud of what they had achieved (M. F. Smith, 2002). During the course of this research it also became apparent that more children from Nukiki were attending secondary schools, and obtaining a tertiary education, than was previously the case in 1991.[43] Although I did not specifically collect data on this topic I noted that a number of Nukiki young people were now at

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[41] Funding was provided through the European Union's Micro Project Phase II (Solomon-Times-Online, 2009).

[42] At a rate 91% for 6-15 year olds, the school attendance rate in Choiseul was higher than most other provinces (S.I.G., 2009a).

[43] In 1991 there were very few places available in the one secondary school that existed on Choiseul so higher education opportunities for village children were severely restricted (Cassells, 1992).

university and many more children were travelling away to the community high school at Moli, the provincial secondary school at Choiseul Bay, or to schools beyond. In terms of development, the increasing frequency with which Nukiki village children were gaining higher levels of education was very encouraging and reflects the national trend whereby expected years of schooling is increasing (UNDP, 2014).[44]

Photograph 11   Nukiki village school 2012

A crisis in leadership?

Population growth, development-related issues and sea-level rise were all impacting on Nukiki village, and elsewhere on Choiseul. Collectively, these issues were also contributing to what the Premier of the Province termed a leadership crisis (Interview #31). Other informants also supported the view that leadership

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[44] The UNDP Human Development Report (2014) (for Solomon Islands) noted that expected years of schooling had increased from 6.0 in 1990 to 9.2 in 2012.

was in crisis, although the reasons for the crisis were not always attributed to the above issues.[45]

Embedded as it is in the social and political culture of local community, village leadership is a reflection of local socio-political context (see Allen, 2011). In explaining this, one very well-placed informant maintained villagers have not travelled much so do not know what happens elsewhere in the Pacific. "They don't accept advice from educated people, don't accept outside advice. They know what they know, only believe what they believe" (Interview #39). This informant also maintained that villages have the manpower, but not the technical skills, to deal with the issues they face. Suspicious of outsiders, he said, villagers do not accept offers of help if the person offering it is not one of them. Even though there are now more young people in the village who have graduated from high school, their knowledge is not accepted either and they are becoming frustrated (Interview #39, see also Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1992).

This view was supported by another well-educated interviewee who had worked extensively as a senior civil servant throughout Solomon Islands. He commented that those who remain in the village are not well educated and are resistant to new ideas (Interview #43). The Premier also noted that educated people may be considered to have 'foreign ideas' and because they did not spend much time in their communities, rarely became chiefs (Interview #31, see also M. F. Smith, 2002). The Deputy Premier, himself a former parliamentarian and a chief in his own right, observed that young people won't respect the chief if he makes poor decisions and in the future there will be less recognition of the power of chiefs. In the future people may vote for the chief, as they do now for church leaders (Interview #24). The Premier of the Province also observed that, in some villages, chiefs had lost respect after logging royalties had been unfairly distributed (Interview #31).

According to the Premier, a crisis in leadership appears to be developing throughout Choiseul (Interview #31). Other informants (Interviews #26, #40) believed that changes were 'afoot' and leadership, be it in the village or at a higher provincial level, was under pressure from many quarters. This was not particularly

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[45] Interviews #24, #26, #39, and #40 all spoke of the inability of leadership to deal with issues outside what Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1992) call the traditional knowledge system. See also Chapter 6 where leadership matters are discussed in more depth.

novel because historically change has been continuous in Solomon Islands, at least since first European contact and probably before (see Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012). Although it may not be readily apparent yet, Nukiki village is unlikely to be exempt from leadership changes as villagers are compelled to grapple with future challenges created by logging, sea-level rise, increasing population, changing tribal allegiances, increasing education levels and the attitudinal changes that may be associated with this. The increasing use social networking media, typified by the rapidly escalating use of cell phones by villagers, is likely to have a significant impact as well.

In time, village governance will evolve to reflect these changes. As Boege (2006) has noted on neighbouring Bougainville, such influences are likely to be assimilated as leadership is transformed by (further) integration of introduced knowledge with traditional knowledge (see Gegeo, 1998), thus further increasing the hybridisation in governance that has already occurred (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Summary

Taro, since independence in 1991, has developed as the seat of government for Choiseul Province. Only eight kilometres from Nukiki, the urban centre of Taro has had a significant influence on Nukiki village. It has drawn Nukiki further, and more rapidly, into the cash economy by providing a nearby centre for commerce and employment. It has also created a level of dependency in Nukiki in that villagers have become less self-reliant. All the services they require are merely a short boat trip away at Taro.

A rapidly growing population, intermarriage between tribes and increasing education levels, are causing tribal allegiances to become more diluted, thus diminishing the role of the chief as guardian of his people. As a result, the church is assuming an increasingly dominant role in the governance of village affairs. The location of the United Church Bishop in Nukiki may also have reinforced the prestige, and thus the role, of the United Church in the village.

Logging has further weakened bonds within the community by creating distrust in the village leadership. This is largely over a lack of transparency in the disbursement of logging royalties. Sea-level rise is also putting pressure on water

resources, and in the longer term may affect some of the settlements themselves as low-lying areas are flooded. Collectively, all these factors are placing pressure on village leadership and establishing, what could be termed, preconditions for future changes in governance at the village level.

The next two chapters (6 and 7) examine, in some detail, how the governance of Nukiki village has been transformed by powerful influences from an outside world. Chapter 3 has previously discussed the transformation that has taken place at all levels in Solomon Islands society – economic, political and religious. Chapter 6 now picks up on this by looking at the effect these influences have had on custom and chiefly leadership within Nukiki village itself. Chapter 7 then examines the role the church now plays in the governance of the village.

The transformation that has taken place in Choiseulese society is complicated and, given the segmentary nature of such societies, has not necessarily been uniform. The differentiation that has been made between the discussion in Chapter 6 and the discussion in Chapter 7 is more for convenience in explaining a complex process. In reality, the transformation that has occurred to and through custom, chiefs and the church cannot be disentangled, and what has emerged in Nukiki village is a society that is governed by a political order that is truly hybrid in form.

CHAPTER 6

CHIEFLY LEADERSHIP

This chapter examines contemporary Solomon Islands village governance, as represented by chiefly authority in Choiseul today. The chapter commences by discussing the manner in which traditional leadership is defined and, in doing so, challenges the view that pre-colonial Melanesian leadership was populated with big-men and not chiefs.

Drawing on material from anthropologists such as Ivens (1927), Somerville (1897), Scheffler (1965), Keesing (1997), Bayliss-Smith and Hviding (2012), the pre-contact presence of strong chiefly leadership in the coastal and lagoon regions of Solomon Islands, and its close association with Austronesian-speaking societies such as those of Choiseul, is explained. This leads on to a discussion on the manner in which this chiefly authority has been transformed through European contact and pacification and then, in more recent times, resurrected and legitimised for contemporary use.

A description of Nukiki village leadership, as represented by the Siropodoko tribe, is then given. The manner in which tribal chiefly leadership is practised, and shared with church leadership in a form that is hybrid in nature, is also discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing the challenges faced by chiefly village leadership, in particular from logging, increasing levels of education, and the absence of skills necessary to cope with the changing village environment.

Big-men vs chiefs

Much of the literature on Solomon Islands refers to traditional leaders as big-men, but the villagers of Nukiki, at least over the period in which I have known them, have always referred to their traditional, or customary leaders, as chiefs. While undertaking research in Nukiki in 1991 I noted that "although land holdings amongst the four clans were well and truly mixed, the people still identified with a tribe (or

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tribes)[46] and, in turn, used that tribal affiliation to appoint a chief whose job it was to make sure land boundaries and people's property rights were respected" (Cassells, 1992, p. 50). This, subsequently, led to some confusion on my part. I knew that Nukiki villagers had, in 1991, referred to their leaders as chiefs, but in the intervening years much of the literature that I had read referred to leaders in Melanaesian societies as big-men.

When I returned to Nukiki in 2012 it was still the same – my village friends consistently talked about their chiefs. No one talked about big-men, even though the term was fully understood. In order to clarify this matter, to remove all doubt, I spent much time interviewing villagers to establish who were the chiefs, and how they acquired their positions. I was also interested in the other forms of village leadership – the church leaders and women leaders. What other leaders existed, and beyond this, what were the main concerns in the village, and how were these concerns addressed? What processes were used, and how were decisions reached? More importantly, what role did custom, Christianity, or western-thinking play in decision-making, and what degree of political hybridisation had evolved from this? (see Appendix 4). These findings were very interesting and yielded some surprises but it is the role of the chief that will be considered in some detail in this chapter. As well, it will be argued that the term 'chief' is a more appropriate appellation than 'big-man' when considering leadership in a Choiseulese context.

Big-men

In many respects this term big-man was given currency by Sahlins (1968) who provided a description of big-men that, for a period, came to be accepted as the established norm for leadership in, what he termed, the underdeveloped (political) settings of Melanesia. Under such systems big-man leadership is not generally acquired through descent but, rather, through personal effort. A big-man emerges from amongst his people, having proved his ability to lead, accumulate wealth, and distribute this wealth amongst his followers. It is through the distribution of this wealth, rather than through its accumulation, that the big-man gains his power (Moore, 2004). And it is this that marks him as a leader, as one who is able to provide for his people. Similarly, Bennett (1987, p. 14) describes a big-man as "a

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[46] See Chapter 5 – Tribes, clans and chiefs

man who could win followers, certainly within his own clan group, but also beyond." Not ascribed through inheritance, the big-man earned his leadership through merit, or by gaining 'renown' as anthropologist liked to call it, not only for himself but for his followers as well. In more recent times this would often be by demonstrating largess – feast-giving, dance entertainments, assistance with bride price payments and assistance with funeral offerings (Bennett, 1987). A big-man may also be expected to have oratory skills, and a sound knowledge of tribal land tenure. Knowledge of genealogies and customs are especially important (Kabutaulaka, 1997), and knowledge of magic or sorcery may still be important in some areas.

Chiefs

In anthropological terms 'chief' more commonly describes a leader who holds a hereditary position of paramount, or centralised, authority (M. F. Smith, 2002). According to White (2004a), the term chief, while commonly denoting a person of respect, can have a multitude of meanings. Goddard (2010, p. 11) considers that the use of the term chief, compounded by modern usage, has become a "problematic category in the Pacific" and its use has "become commonplace in societies where scholars would argue that chiefs never existed." The chiefs (hereditary leadership) versus big-men (non-hereditary leadership) dichotomy, in his view, over-simplifies a complex situation in a nation where both ascribed and achieved leadership exist. Kabutaulaka (1997) also points out that there is no single system of leadership throughout Solomon Islands and that the commonly held assumption that the big-man system of leadership is practised by the majority of tribes is not, in fact, correct. Culturally diverse, leadership patterns differ from polity to polity (Kabutaulaka, 1997). Kabutaulaka's comments certainly concur with the views of Douglas (1979) who rigorously contested Sahlin's normative model of leadership for Melanesia. Douglas (1979, p. 26) maintained that "throughout the South Pacific there was a much greater interplay and overlap between ascription and achievement than has commonly been allowed. Within Melanesia heredity was often a factor of some importance in succession to leadership."

With respect to Choiseul, Scheffler (1964a) describes the cognatic descent group as being most important social unit in Choiseulese society. Politically autonomous, as well as being 'corporate' in the sense that they control a geographic area and its resources, over 100 such descent groups existed on Choiseul at the time of his

study in the early 1960s. Each descent group, Scheffler (1965, p. 179) maintains, "is said to have a *batu*, big-man, or manager[47] who is the principal leader." Managerial status, he also observes, is ascribed insofar as it 'crosses' from the father to son. However, Scheffler also notes that a descent group may also have several men who are also considered to be *batu* in that they also have a right to 'voice' in the group's affairs. The man who meets the genealogical qualifications of being the first-born male descendant is, however, recognised as the 'true *batu*'[48] but ever pragmatic, the Choiseulese acknowledge that there are situations where these criteria cannot always be met so make allowances for this. A 'manager,' for example, with no sons can be succeeded by his brother's son or, in the absence of a brother, a sister's son, or even an adoptee. Ultimately, Scheffler (1965) considered that any male who was a descent group member was eligible to be the *batu* of the group provided they demonstrated the prerequisite managerial abilities.

In re-examining his earlier work on Kwaio leadership on Malaita, Keesing (1997, p. 254) considers that it would be misleading to sustain "the old stereotype of a pre-colonial Melanesia populated with big-men (and not chiefs)." Keesing maintains that many parts of Solomon Islands did have hereditary leaders who commanded by virtue of right. The relations of trade and warfare that sustained such chiefly powers were, however, disrupted by European intrusion and then invasion. Furthermore, it was "the coastal, lagoon and strand zones where chiefly power seems to have been the most pronounced" and it was these areas that were most exposed to and transformed by European intervention (Keesing, 1997, p. 254). This resulted in a drastic transformation of indigenous political structures in these areas during the early contact period. Prior to this, early ethnographies such as those by Ivens (1927) and Somerville (1897), suggest that hereditary chiefs of considerable power and status were widespread in the coastal and lagoon regions of Solomon Islands (Keesing, 1997).

In describing the politics of the 'vegetable kingdoms' of New Georgia, Bayliss-Smith & Hviding (2012) also provide a strong case for the existence of hereditary

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[47] Lindstrom and White (1997) note that: "Anthropological wordsmiths devised a series of labels for Melanesian leaders ranging from 'headman,' 'centerman,' and 'strongman' to 'director' and 'manager,' before settling on the now-popular 'bigman.'"

[48] More recent literature places greater recognition on the on-going presence of hereditary leadership in Melanesia, and uses ascription as the basis for attributing 'chiefly status' to this form of leadership (see Chowning, 1979; Keesing, 1997; Lindstrom & White, 1997).

leadership in western Solomon Islands. Here systems of irrigated taro (*ruta*) were once widespread. Inland tribes constructed terraced pondfields to grow taro and then traded the taro with coastal tribes "who were engaged in predatory inter-island warfare and headhunting" (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012, p. 1). These coastal tribes had a history of remarkably strong, hereditary chieftainship and ranked lineages but what was distinctive about this chiefly power of old was that it was based primarily on prestige obtained through inter-island raiding. Trading only provided a secondary form of prestige (Bayliss-Smith & Hviding, 2012).

In times past ability in warfare was also a crucial requirement for leadership on Choiseul. Scheffler (1965, p. 28) states that "leadership was established and subsequently validated in activities directly and indirectly associated with intergroup conflict," a state of affairs that existed in parts of Choiseul until 1925. Traditional leadership was, however, to change drastically under colonialism and the influence of the missionaries. In order to bring an end to the loss of life caused by raiding and headhunting, particularly to white settlers, C.M Woodford, the first resident commissioner, determined "to put down headhunting with a strong hand" (Woodford, 1909, p. 510). Fighting 'fire with fire,' the measures taken against the islanders "were often just as devastating and merciless as indigenous warfare, so that the islanders quickly learned that Europeans, for organisational and technological reasons, could play the game better than they could" (Scheffler, 1965, p. 20). Fear of retribution and the associated loss of property, resources and life put a stop to the fighting but, interestingly, the Choiseulese were amongst the most reluctant to give up their old ways (Scheffler, 1965).

With the suppression of warfare a significant change in the local balance of power occurred and this had a devastating impact on the authority of leaders (Scheffler, 1964b, 1965). Under colonial rule and the increasing influence of missions, operating sanctions such as sorcery, ghosts and the power of life and death, which had been previously used to maintain social order and the authority of chiefs, were now no longer available. This substantially diminished the power of chiefs to settle conflicts and disputes. At the same time missions encouraged their adherents to by-pass chiefs and take their complaints to local preacher-teachers who would be expected to resolve these disputes. Power, thus, shifted from chiefs to the local preacher-teachers. As pacification continued under the influence of Christianity other aspects of society also changed. No longer was it necessary for clans to live deep inland to escape the ravages of sea-born head-hunters. With encouragement

from both the colonial government and from missions the people began to move down to the coast.[49]   In this changed social environment old religious practices began to fall away as sorcery and the spiritual world manifest in a life defined by warfare and retribution, faded in the face of Christianity. Young people learned less of the old beliefs as time went on so by the time Scheffler undertook his study of the social structure on Choiseul in the early 1960s, only a few old men remained who knew much about those beliefs and practices. Only "one or two avowed old pagans" still occasionally talked to the gods and ghosts or spirits, but these practices did not "constitute active social forces for most Choiseulese" (Scheffler, 1965, p. 24).

Although society had changed, competition for leadership still remained strong. The "trading and exchange monopolies, access to symbolically valued objects, and warfare" that had sustained chiefly authority all depended on freedom from outside intervention (Keesing, 1997, p. 261).   When this was overturned pacification diverted leadership efforts from fighting to feasting, thus closing one avenue for gaining prestige and opening another. In some ways, Keesing maintains, this early historical transformation is what created the Melanesian big-man concept of leadership.

The dwindling power of chiefs had, nevertheless, created a power vacuum and this was filled by the missions which offered a new form of prestige and power. In this changed social context Scheffler (1964b), on the other hand, maintains that the only remaining vestige of custom an aspiring leader could call upon to claim his position was that of ascribed or 'formal descent criterion.' In other words, hereditary title was claimed and it is this particular aspect of leadership that has come to be associated with 'chiefly' leadership today (see Chowning, 1979).

While acknowledging that the term 'chief' has eluded precise definition in much anthropological literature, Scaglion (1996) has noted that ethnographic accounts of

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[49] Over this period of social transformation the colonial government had come to rely on the missions to provide education and medical services outside the main government centres, such as they were. Missions, however, were short of personnel so in order to facilitate schooling they encouraged people to settle on the coast in villages larger than hitherto had existed in the hinterland. The colonial government also encouraged this to facilitate administration (Scheffler, 1965).

Austronesian-speaking societies in Papua New Guinea report a presence of chiefs[50] far more frequently than accounts of non-Austronesian societies. Scaglion also observes that notions of chiefly authority have deep roots in Austronesian societies[51] insofar as linguistic reconstructions of Proto-Austonesian culture suggests a society that was characterised by considerable hierarchy and had important hereditary authority. This, Scaglion (1996, p. 23) believes, casts "doubt on arguments that chiefs are being 'created' wholesale in such contexts." A more likely explanation, he considers, is that the traditional authority of Austronesian chiefs is now being resurrected, adapted, and legitimised for use in a contemporary world. To this extent, White (1992, p. 75) has noted, chiefly models of authority have now become potent symbols "of the indigenous and the traditional in contrast with the foreign and the modern."

Articulating between custom and indigenous leadership on Choiseul today

The transformation that took place in Choiseulese society had not only affected traditional leadership, but also the customs that underpinned this leadership. Nowadays, the term 'custom' is often used to distinguish local indigenous values and customs from western values and 'ways of doing things' but, in reality, it is quite different from the traditional ways of old (see Burt, 1982; Keesing, 1982; Moore, 2004). Boege (2006), in discussing the process of state-building in nearby Bougainville, maintains that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the realm of the exogenous 'modern' and the realm of the endogenous 'customary' but, instead, describes a process of assimilation, articulation, transformation and/or adoption at the interface of these two realms. "Today's 'customary institutions,' 'customary ways,' etc, are not the institutions and ways of the pre-contact and pre-colonial past. Traditional societies everywhere have come under modern outside influences; they have not been left unchanged by the powers of - originally European - capitalist expansion, colonialism, imperialism and globalisation" (Boege,

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[50] Scaglion (1996, p. 10) considers the authors of such ethnographic studies to be in a far better position than he "to consider all the complex dimensions of local leadership in the communities described." Scaglion, therefore, accepted chiefs as being present if they employed the word chiefs in their ethnographic description, and absent if not.

[51] Austronesian speaking communites are found, for example, in the island region of Papua New Guinea (Scaglion, 1996) and on Choiseul in Solomon Islands. On Choiseul, the Austronesian-based languages of Babatana and Varisi are widely spoken (see Ethnologue, nd) and it is in the Varisi-speaking area that Scheffler (1963) conducted his research on Choiseul Island descent groups.

2006, p. 2). Nevertheless, says Boege (2006, p. 2), the terms 'custom' and 'customary institutions' are still used because they identify "specific local indigenous characteristics that distinguish them from introduced institutions that belong to the realm of the modern state and society."

Moore (2004) uses the term 'kastom,' the pijin language derivative of custom. Kastom has come to symbolise cultural autonomy, a form of "resistance to cultural, economic, or religious subjugation" by colonialism and other western influences (Moore, 2004, p. 27). In reality, he says, kastom cannot really be compared to traditional pre-contact customs because it is a flexible and ever-changing mechanism that has incorporated many modern influences.[52] Traditional pre-contact customs, it should be noted, also appear to have been subject to change as archaeological evidence from Western Solomon Islands has shown (Aswani, 2008). However, kastom as it is known today, does provide a means by which indigenous culture can remain distinct from 'western' culture. As such, kastom is very important to Solomon Islanders.

On Choiseul the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities (LLCTC) has done much work to record and codify local customs, tribal genealogies and tribal land boundaries (Interview #24). LLCTC is an indigenous non-government organisation (NGO) that represents the people of Lauru, the indigenous name for Choiseul. "Its mission is to unite chiefs, churches and citizens towards a common goal of an enduring, represented and respected Lauru land, people and their culture" ("Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities," n.d.). Codifying customs can, however, be problematic and I was told by one informant that:

> LLCTC has rationalised the customs of Choiseul. They looked at all their customs, and did away with some that were not appropriate. All customs were examined to see how they would fit this generation and those that would not help this generation were done away with. Men are no longer boss of their wives, women can now take part in the church, and other customs such as killing people caught in adultery no longer apply. They are not relevant now, and are counter to the teaching of Christianity.

> (Interview #40)

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[52] Keesing (1982, p. 300) notes that while: "Custom as symbol may idealise and reify the ways of the past ... it can also allow the reconciliation of contradiction."

In many respects LLCTC's attempts to codify custom provides an idealised reformulation of the indigenous socio-political system that once prevailed on Choiseul. Such applications of custom tend to be symbolic, not so much for the meanings they carry but, rather, for the meanings they invoke. In contexts such as these, custom could be construed as a counter-culture of survival in the face of relentless westernisation (see Keesing, 1982).

According to White (2004b), traditional leadership such as exercised by chiefs, is based on the knowledge of custom which includes knowledge of tribal genealogy and local history. Such knowledge underpins the power and authority of traditional leaders and is passed on within families and kin group lines. Having its origins in an oral society, such knowledge is seldom recorded in writing and the rules regulating its use "make up a system of traditional copyright" (White, 2004b, p. 7). In effect, this provides a means of protection by restricting who has the power to talk about this knowledge (White, 2004b) and, as M. F. Smith (2002, p. 113) had discovered in Kragur village, Papua New Guinea, "people handle genealogical knowledge with such care and secrecy for very serious reasons. Rights to leadership … may be at stake." It is the key to livelihood and status in village society.

Indigenous leadership (as practised today) differs significantly from western styles of leadership which are usually endowed by election or appointment. Indigenous authority has its basis in personal knowledge, skill and reputation (White, 2004b). The mantle of authority is personal and does not reside in the institution, as is common in western styles of governance. Modern governments tend to work through written records and documentation whereas the oral practices of traditional authority, which have an inherent flexibility, tend to defy or resist written codification (White, 2004b; see also Keesing, 1982). Because of the differences in the style of leadership, attempts to formalise the status of chiefs by incorporating them into the structure of government risks "changing the nature of chiefs and the way they are viewed by the local communities" (White, 2004b, p. 12). Formalising the status of a chief would represent a departure from custom and create a new kind of chief, one who is appointed rather than recognised as one with authority. This new kind of chief may not be respected, he may not be considered a real chief and, of course, there would be concern that they may "abuse their chiefly status for their own financial gains and pleasure" (Lulei, Rojumana, Maezama, & Manekaea, 1999, p. 6). In a wider sense, legislating custom may also present difficulties by causing its

authority and importance to be diminished, "by rendering indigenous practices as subsidiary to western law" (White, 2004b, p. 12). In advice to the Isabel Council of Chiefs in 2000 the provincial Legal Adviser noted that: "Where a legislation is made the power of chiefs and the power of custom is withdrawn and given to those whose responsibilities are to make laws and (uphold the) imported court system" (I.P.A., 2000). While codifying the customs of Choiseul by the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities has considerable value and appears to have been widely accepted, it may face difficulties if attempts are made to formalise it in legislation.

Nukiki village leadership

Leadership within the Siropodoko tribe[53] of Nukiki village, and elsewhere in Northwest Choiseul, was ascribed (Interview #35). According to custom, leadership in patrilineal societies such as those found on Choiseul, passed from father to first-born son (Interviews #5, #12, #16). This, of course, ran counter to Sahlins' (1968) view that leadership in Melanesia tends not to be acquired through descent, but rather through a man's demonstrated ability to lead. However, as my interviews progressed the story of leadership that emerged in Nukiki was not quite as straightforward as local custom would prescribe. As Scheffler (1965) had already noted, it became apparent that there were many exceptions to the ideal whereby leadership passed from a chief to his first-born son. What if the chief had no sons, or no children, as was the case with Danny, the chief of the Sirpopodoko tribe? What if the first-born son had a responsible teaching position and lived away from the village, as was the case with the Sarekana clan? Custom, inherently flexible as it is, seemed well able to cope with these anomalies.

Normally, in the case of the Sirpopoko chief (see Photograph 12), leadership would pass to his brother but as there was no brother it would then pass to his sister's first-born son[54] (Interview #33, #35). But there was a caveat here as William, the chief of the Sarekana clan, explained (Interview #37). Matters such as this needed to be considered by the whole tribe and they may well choose someone else. This, in fact, is what happened in his case. In 1991 Samuel was the chief of the

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[53] As was mentioned in Chapter 4, the Siropodoko tribe agreed to host this research. Consequently, it is their model of tribal leadership that is described in this chapter.

[54] Scheffler (1965) also recorded this custom. See previous section entitled Chiefs.

Sarekana clan and William was the youngest of Samuel's four sons. The oldest son, Lister, was a teacher and the second-born son, Isaiah, was a sea captain. Neither lived in the village so, consequently, it was not considered practical for either of them to be chief. By the time Samuel passed away Leslie, the third-born son, was next in line for leadership but he had recently been widowed and did not want the leadership, I was told, so suggested to the clan that his younger brother, William, take up the leadership (Interview #19, see Photograph 13).

Photograph 12   Danny Dokabule – Chief of the Sirpodoko tribe

Photograph 13   William Peni – Chief of the Sarekana clan

Clans are primarily based on family or kin groupings. As such, leadership at this local level in Solomon Islands society is less likely to be contested than in a wider tribal, or even multi-tribal, grouping. White (2004a, p. 16), in describing local level leadership on neighbouring Isabel, stated that: "At the most local level, recognised leaders … act as representatives of families and kin groups. Such leaders are regarded as respected elders … and may or may not also be called a 'chief' (see also Scheffler, 1965). Local level leadership is based in families and kin groups who trace common ancestry … and share ownership (stewardship) of land and sea. It is this level of identity, established through common … descent … that determine primary rights to land and sea. In most cases it is leaders of descent groups who are authorised to speak about land." A primary responsibility of a chief, I was consistently told, was to look after the land (e.g. Interviews #24, #35, #40).

As the scope of traditional leadership increases, such as would be found in a wider tribal grouping, a leader needs "to continually establish good relations with followers

through the public demonstration of knowledge, character and effectiveness" (White, 2004a, p. 16). This would explain the reserve I had encountered from one clan chief when I repeated the view of the Siropodoko chief that his leadership should pass to his sister's first-born son. The clan chief was very active in community affairs and held various influential and responsible positions in the governing 'institutions' of the village such as the church, school and Siropodoko tribe itself. He undertook these responsibilities with considerable competence and had achieved a lot for his tribe and the village as a whole, but I did note that he had his detractors. This served to illustrate that competition for leadership remains an inherent part of Melanesian village society (see Scheffler, 1965; M. F. Smith, 2002).

Chiefs and the church – a division of power

With a population of 910 (see Appendix 7) Nukiki was one of the larger villages on Choiseul. In my discussions with leaders from other parts of Choiseul I learned that village size has a considerable influence on the form of governance that is found in that village (e.g. Interviews #12, #24). Nowadays, the church has become very influential in village affairs and governance is usually shared, to varying degrees, between the church and the chief(s). This is in marked contrast to former pre-Christian times where leadership resided primarily with the chief(s), or traditional leaders (see Scheffler, 1965). The chief, nowadays, is responsible for the tribal land as well as the welfare of the people of his tribe (Interviews #24, #30, #33, #35, #40). In a large village, where several tribes may co-exist, the jurisdiction of the chief is limited insofar as he is only responsible for the members of his own tribe. Members outside his tribe are the responsibility of their own chief who is also likely to reside in the wider village albeit, perhaps, in a separate hamlet. Such was the case in Nukiki.

In large, multi-tribal villages like Nukiki, the church tends to assume overall responsibility for village governance (Interviews #16, #24, #39). "In the big villages where there are many tribes," the Premier of Choiseul Province told me, "the church is stronger relative to the chiefs" (Interview #31). As the Premier, he found it easier to relay information to villages via the church leaders and "in some villages," he said, "the chiefs don't get much recognition (from the people) except on land issues." The church was where most village people gathered on Sundays and it

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was here that village announcements were made and notices regarding village events were read. It was a very effective forum for communication.

Not all chiefs agreed with the ascendancy the church had gained in the governance of village affairs. The chief of Molevaga village (see Map 2), a former civil servant, church treasurer and 'rightful' heir to the chieftainship of his tribe, held such views. Once he assumed his chiefly status he set about reducing the authority of the local church relative to his own authority as chief. The village structure Leneus had imposed looked very much like what one would expect to find in any government ministry or department. In addition to church related activities, he also had committees that catered for issues that are likely to pose problems for Choiseul in the future. Of these, a Health, Water and Sanitation Committee as well as an Infrastructure and Development Committee stood out as being particularly pertinent (Interview #12). Leneus was, however, in a good position to do this – the village comprised only one tribe, and he was the chief. Such was the respect for chiefly authority, in this village at least, that people were prepared to follow their leader.

It is not so simple for chiefs in other, larger, villages. They are one of several chiefs so relative to the village as a whole, their power is limited to the members of their particular tribe. Intermarriage compounds the effect where people's loyalties are divided between tribes, and within families. Chiefly authority is, thus, diluted and although some chiefs consider chiefly authority should still be higher than the church in villages where there are many tribes, in reality it is the *batu lotu* (church leader) who organises the village as a whole: "The chief 'loses' the tribe because the church organises normal activities in the village" (Interview #16).

Another chief, who was currently the deputy premier of the provincial assembly and who had also been a senior minister of a previous national government, explained that the problem with many villages now is that they are fragmented. "In the villages where there are many tribes the church leaders tend to be strong" he said. "The pastor and chairman leader tend to deal with many of the problems (because) the chief is responsible for the tribal land and the welfare of his tribe, but not the people outside his tribe" (Interview #24).

Siropodoko tribal leadership

In Nukiki village, Danny, the Chief of the Sirpodoko tribe, did not seem at all concerned over the role, or authority, of the church relative to his own. In explaining the role of the chief in resolving disputes between tribal members he stressed the collective nature of dispute resolution (see also Interview #34). If problems arise it is the chief's job to *straitem* (sort out) these in order to keep his people together. In a dispute involving his people he hears information from both parties and then calls them together. He may also call other leaders from the village and from the church so that both sides can come together and tell their stories. If, in consultation with the other leaders, it is clear to the Chief that one party is in the wrong, then he advises them of this. They must cease what they are doing and pay compensation according to custom (Interview #33).

Leadership within the Sirpopodoko tribe was quite complex and involved several layers of authority (see Figure 2). At the top level the Chief had an inner circle of managers who were called the 'Trustees.' The Trustees comprised the chiefs of the four clans of the Siropodoko tribe. The role of the Trustees, I was told, was to support the chief who was now quite aged (Interview #37). It was the Trustees who decided the 'matters' of the tribe. If the issue was a small administrative matter the Chief and the Trustees would make a unilateral decision. A big matter, however, would need to go 'down' to the 'Executive' for endorsement. The Executive also comprised the same four clan chiefs, plus the *batu lotu*, two more village leaders and a spokesman for the Chief. Most decisions of the tribe were made by the Executive (Interview #37). Once the Chief makes a ruling, however, albeit through the Trustees or the Executive, people will accept this I was told by one villager: "Even if they don't agree with the decision they will keep quiet" (Interview #6). Such was the case with logging in Nukiki although, as mentioned before, a number of villagers did privately express their opposition to it to me.

Figure 2   Siropodoko tribal leadership

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │         Chief           │
                    │     Siropodoko tribe    │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 ↓
      ┌───────────────────────────────────────────────┐
      │                   Trustees                     │
      │                                                │
      │     Clan chiefs - Moqerego, Sarekana,          │
      │      Nanavua and Ugumatakana clans             │
      │                                                │
      │   (Small administrative matters – Chief and    │
      │   Trustees decide unilaterally, larger issues  │
      │    go to Executive for endorsement)            │
      └───────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                 ↓
      ┌───────────────────────────────────────────────┐
      │                  Executive                     │
      │                                                │
      │                4 clan chiefs                   │
      │                     +                          │
      │            United Church Batu lotu             │
      │             2 elders + spokesman               │
      │                                                │
      │  (Most decisions made by Executive – really    │
      │   big issues taken to tribe for discussion)    │
      └───────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                ↑↓
      ┌───────────────────────────────────────────────┐
      │               Siropodoko tribe                 │
      │                                                │
      │  (Two-way information flow between people and   │
      │              the Executive)                     │
      └───────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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For really big issues the matter may be 'pushed down' to the tribe for discussion (Interview #37). But I was also told it is hard to hold a general meeting for the tribe as a whole so information is passed down to the tribe through members of the Executive. The spokesperson will also usually make announcements, regarding issues of concern to the tribe, in the church. The village, of course, is small enough for people to express their views and provide feedback to members of the Executive on issues that concern them. In addition, the regular Sunday evening meeting with the clan's own *batu lotu* provides a more formal forum for this to take place (Interview #6). Information from this meeting is passed from the clan *batu lotu* to the principal *batu lotu* for the entire settlement of Nukiki and it is he who is a member of the Executive.

I did, however, sense there was a reticence on the part of one clan chief to discuss the general, or whole-tribe meetings. This was understandable and it was necessary to be sensitive as I was digging deep into the heart of tribal leadership. Some of the issues that are likely to have been brought before the tribe as a whole would have been quite contentious and, although I had a good idea what the issues were from other conversations, it was not my place to openly discuss these.[55] I was, nevertheless, told that there had been three general tribal meetings in recent times and one of these was over logging. This meeting lasted all-day (Interview #7) and, no doubt, would have been quite contentious as the tribe had been against logging since 1989, when Eagon Resources Development Co. Ltd had commenced logging on Choiseul: "The chiefs knew the people were against logging but went ahead anyway" (Interview #6).

The current Sirpodoko tribal structure is quite managerial in the way a number of roles are defined. An explanation for this could lie in Nukiki villagers' adherence to the United Church. Established on Choiseul in 1905 as the Methodist Mission, the United Church has a decentralised and democratic organisational structure (McDougall, 2008, see also Chapter 7). The church has had considerable influence in Choiseul and people are familiar and comfortable with its structures of governance. It is quite likely, therefore, that aspects of church governance were appropriated, at least in part, for use by the Siropodoko tribe.

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[55] Smith (2002), in discussing politics and secrecy in Kragur village, Papua New Guinea, faced similar issues. He noted that there were differing versions of the facts and some information was kept secret for political reasons because rights to leadership may be at stake.

The management of Siropodoko land was clearly the prerogative of the Siropodoko chief and here the church had little jurisdiction. However, in terms of jurisdiction over the Siropodoko people, the members of his tribe, the chief shared his authority with the church. Dispute resolution between tribal members, for example, was the collaborative responsibility of the chief and church, an example of political hybridity, in fact.

Tribal mechanisms for dispute resolution

Dispute resolution was the accepted 'customary' way of addressing wrongs (Interviews #6, #7, #35, #39) and, if the offence was severe, it involved both the payment of compensation and a reconciliation ceremony. The reconciliation ceremony is an important part of dispute resolution. During a reconciliation ceremony the people representing each side of the dispute sit opposite each other. There are speeches, and at the end of these there may be an exchange of cash as compensation (Interviews #5, #33). The size of compensation payable, should it be deemed necessary, was linked to the severity of the offence. Sometimes, if the offence was small, all that would be required was for the offender to say sorry and exchange a small gift. It would be important, however, to take along a leader (chief, *batu lotu*, etc.) who would act as a witness to the reconciliation (Interview #33). If it was a 'big offence', involving another tribe for example, the two chiefs from these tribes would sit down together in order to resolve the matter.

The aim of customary dispute resolution is to fully air grievances and to bring about the reconciliation of the parties concerned (Epstein, 1971). The process outlined by the Siropodoko chief followed a pattern similar to other Melanesian societies (see Epstein, 1971; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002; Howley, 2005) insofar as the extended family of the offender would meet with the family of the victim and the community to discuss the damage caused by the offence. This would lead to the offender being shamed in the eyes of the community and to a realisation that his or her offence was not just inflicted on an individual but on their family as well. In a similar manner to Nukiki, the offender and his or her family would offer an apology and some form of restitution, thus enabling the broken relationship to be repaired and the offender forgiven and restored (Howley, 2005).

In times past, compensation payments in Nukiki were made using custom money (*kesa*), but now cash is used. Interestingly, the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities has set the value of one unit of custom money as $1,000 cash (Interview #33). Sometimes the church alone would adjudicate on an issue (Interview #6) and in such a case compensation would not necessarily have to be paid but a reconciliation ceremony would be held if it was a serious matter (Interview #33). If the church leaders and the chief work together to resolve a matter then the compensation payable would be less than if it had been resolved by custom alone. The point Chief Danny wanted to make, however, was that in Nukiki, both the chief and the church co-operate. "Both sides hold tight," he said (Interview #33).

The divisive influence of logging

While the relationship between the chief and the church might have been harmonious, one issue loomed large in the village and was dividing the community. That was logging. By 2012 the Chief of the Siropodoko tribe was quite elderly and had come to rely on other leaders in the community to assist him. This had widened the scope for others to be involved in the leadership of the tribe but some villagers were highly critical of this and maintained that leadership of the tribe had effectively been hijacked by those who favoured logging.

It was clear that logging had brought financial and material benefits to the village as a whole. Many people now had houses constructed of sawn timber, rather than of bush material as had been the case in 1991. Corrugated iron roofs and water tanks were now very common although these were funded, in part, by the national member of parliament through his Constituency Development Fund (see also Chapter 5). Trade stores were more common and the village school and teachers' houses had been completely rebuilt, largely with village funds obtained from logging royalties. But logging had caused disputes within the village and various accusations were made against leaders regarding this.

The real difficulty in all this was that people on both sides of the logging dispute were part of the same tribe. And this was the key issue with regards to the village – it threatened the unity of the tribe and with that the legitimacy of the leadership, which was seen by some as greedy and self-serving. As one friend so succinctly

put it: "Before logging the people were one, now they have become separated" (Interview #40).

The legitimacy of chiefly leadership and the efficacy of community governance

Elsewhere, chiefs had lost the respect of their tribe over the unfair distribution of logging royalties (Interview #31). The Premier, Deputy Premier, as well as other leaders, all talked at various times about a crisis of leadership, at village level, on Choiseul. Much of this concern seemed to centre on the larger villages which were multi-tribal in composition. Families might have links to several tribes and because of this tribal loyalty to individual chiefs had become diluted. But there were other issues as well: population was growing and the availability of garden land was diminishing; sea level was rising and this not only physically threatened coastal settlements such as Nukiki, but was also causing freshwater streams and wells to become contaminated with saltwater.[56] Local villagers, while acutely aware of these problems, seemed to have few answers to remedy them. A senior church leader had much to say about this:

> Community government was not organised in Solomon Islands (and) the community does not exercise any power over itself. People steal and rape. Community government is weak. They may talk about health but make no rules to ensure good health. The people (of Nukiki) now 'make' (undertake) fund-raising but don't take charge of the community. There is no plan for the future.

> (Interview #39)

These were serious comments from one who is well respected throughout the wider Choiseul community. He was not alone in expressing these views. Another villager had for many years been a civil servant. On retirement to Nukiki he had tried to introduce new ways of doing things but the people had told him they were too busy to try them.[57] He also said that a mutual friend had tried to introduce job

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[56] See also Chapter 5.

[57] What these ways were was not specified in the interview.

descriptions for the *batu lotu* and chairman leader of the church but the people had not supported this. His view was those that remain in the village are not well educated and are resistant to new or outside ideas. "The education level of villagers is low and even the level of education they get is not as good as in colonial times." He too, lamented that there was no plan for the future. "People do not look ahead and anyone that tries to introduce changes does not usually succeed" (interview #43). The senior church leader said much the same. "The village people have not travelled so don't know what is happening elsewhere in the Pacific. They know what they know, and believe what they believe. They don't accept advice from educated people, don't accept outside advice" (Interview #39).

The villagers of Nukiki were not alone in their suspicion of outside ideas. M. F. Smith (2002) described a parallel situation in Kragur village. Like Nukiki, the villagers of Kragur valued education highly and by the late 1990s "the general level of formal education had far outstripped that of the 1970s" (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 150). Kragur, however, was having difficulty integrating those with a formal education because the schools, based on a western style of education, brought a new kind of knowledge to the village. This tended "to undermine traditional authority and ferment disharmony among Kragur people, putting younger villagers at odds with traditional leaders and, some charged, at odds with each other" (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 151).

Nukiki, in 2012, was probably at an earlier stage on the road to attaining the higher level of general education that Kragur had reached in the 1990s, but the signs of community resistance to educated young people were there. The senior church informant explained that:

> There are more high school leavers in the villages now but they, with their knowledge, struggle to be accepted. So these relatively well educated young people are frustrated. They watch dvds, drink *qaso* (home brewed alcohol), get drunk, (and) smoke marijuana. One form seven student (even) raped someone. Social change is taking place and this cannot be stopped.
>
> (Interview #39)

In Kragur, one of Smiths informants observed: "All these educated kids, they think they can do something on their own" (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 158). People, Smith

noted, were learning European ways in schools and this encourages self-reliance.[58] In schools children learn to compete as individuals for grades and advancement but "the kind of striving for individual achievement that fits well in a school, in urban areas, and in the money economy is not a good fit with village life" (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 158) where chiefly authority, at least in the case of Nukiki, is still respected. In Kragur it was the big-men and the educated young men who had the greatest difficulty in understanding each other. As Satap, Smith's informant explained, "They are on different wavelengths" (2002, p. 159). New institutions, in the form of church youth groups or environmental NGOs, have also allowed young people to become involved in formal public positions in institutions outside the hierarchy of traditional village leadership. According to Smith this enables them to travel to meetings in other villages, or further afield, "taking notes and bringing back announcements and reports. While this might not impress a grizzled big-man, it might embolden the new leaders to speak up more often and more loudly in village affairs" (M. F. Smith, 2002, p. 158; see also Chapter 8).

Comments from the Premier of Choiseul Province tended to support the views of the Kragur villagers. He noted that "as people become educated they may no longer respect uneducated chiefs" (Interview 31, see also Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1992). He also observed that educated people were thought, by village people, to have foreign ideas and because they spent little time in the village they rarely became chiefs. This view was also supported by the senior church leader. He stated that Nukiki villagers "don't accept advice from educated people, don't accept outside advice. People are suspicious of outsiders and this is a stumbling block for the communities. Most leaders in the community," he said, "drop out from school at standard six. Communities, such as Nukiki, need leaders with skills but these are not there. The church also lacks skills in these areas," he said, referring to skilled technical people. Villagers have the manpower, but lack the technical skills. "Villagers need the provincial government to come and help here" (Interview #39).

Also like Kragur village, a large number of people from Nukiki had left the village to get an education and, subsequently, to pursue successful careers. While they retained strong links to the village, they may only return at Christmas or for family events, at least over the period in their life in which they were active in their careers. I remember one migrant villager who had held several senior government positions

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[58] Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1992, p. 21) also make the point that formal schooling has "been important in creating the beginnings of a national Solomon Islands culture."

commenting some years ago that she was not listened to in Nukiki. Perhaps the villagers thought that she too had 'foreign' ideas? Or maybe, like the villagers of Kragur, the people of Nukiki saw her and the other migrants from Nukiki, as being out of touch with the realities of village life. Perhaps, too, she also found it difficult to live up to the village expectations of her kinship obligations as well as simultaneously provide for the basics of urban and professional life (M. F. Smith, 2002, see also M. F. Smith, 2013), albeit in Honiara. Whatever it was, it is not easy for villagers who have migrated. Life in towns and life in the villages are worlds apart and the business of surviving in the urbanised world of the cash economy, as well as maintaining kinship bonds in the village, can be challenging indeed. Yet it is the migrant villagers who, for the most part, provide villagers with their link to the outside world and with remittances. And they, the villagers, are heavily reliant on it.

Political hybridity and the process of change

In Nukiki, village governance was strong at the tribal level and worked well. In spite of grumblings over logging, the position of chief was still well respected and the chiefs, in turn, worked in relative harmony with church leaders who represented the 'other' main institution of governance in the village. There were, of course, many instances where chief and church elder were one and the same person. Such influential leaders had an important role to play in the life of the village as a whole and it was, in many respects, artificial to disassemble leadership into custom and the church. The two had effectively merged over the last century, at least in Nukiki, within a Christian context (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion on this). It would not be unreasonable, then, to say that a form of political hybridity had occurred between custom, as represented by chiefly authority, and the church - at village level in Nukiki.

There was, however, an inherent weakness in the close association between chiefs and the church. Governance in Nukiki was largely church focussed, reinforced perhaps, by the presence of the United Church Bishop for the Choiseul Region (Interview #21). According to one chief, "Nukiki is just concerned about the church. Everything is handled by the church which takes a lot of their time. They neglect other things" (Interview #16). This, of course, was not quite true but unlike Molevaga village, the leaders of Nukiki did not really have a plan to deal with the secular issues that were becoming more pressing as time progressed (see Chapter

5). It was also clear that the skills and experience to deal with most of the issues that were beginning to confront the Siropodoko people did not reside within the village itself. Custom, for all its strengths in the management of a subsistence society, was becoming increasingly less able to address the impacts of population increase and sea level rise. Land shortages and the increasingly multi-tribal composition of the community is likely, in the not too distant future, to put such pressure on customary ways of allocating land that it may have difficulty in coping. It was becoming clear, therefore, that the village leadership would, before too long, need outside assistance to deal with these issues.

Logging was challenging the integrity of chiefly leadership and resentment from this may remain. But, in the bigger scheme of things, the influence of logging on the Siropodoko tribe may be relatively short-lived. A longer-lasting impact on tribal leadership is likely to be wrought by, or through, education. Already a new breed of younger and better educated leaders are appearing in various places throughout Choiseul as was evident at the leaders' workshop I observed in Taro. One chief had, in fact, been a Vice Chancellor at a university in Papua New Guinea and had considerable influence, not only in the affairs of his village, but throughout Choiseul Province as a whole. Nukiki, at this stage at least, may not be able to field such a leader but like the villagers of Kragur in Papua New Guinea (M. F. Smith, 2002), the people of Nukiki also value education for their children and several were attending university overseas. This bodes well for the future of these children but changes in the focus of village leadership are likely to take a longer time as few who gain a higher education return to the village, at least in the short-term. In time, however, the older more traditional folk who may be suspicious of the 'foreign ideas' espoused by their younger, more educated kinfolk will pass away and the younger ones will rise up. And, also like Kragur village, some of the older, well-educated villagers will return to Nukiki to retire after careers in the government, or other national and international institutions or organisations. Understanding the outside world, as well as village life, they too are more likely to become influential in village affairs as their elders pass away.

Summary

Under the combined influence of colonialism and the missions, traditional leadership on Choiseul and elsewhere in Solomon Islands, changed drastically. The suppression of indigenous warfare by the colonial government significantly changed the balance of power and this had a devastating impact on the authority of chiefs. In turn, the increasing influence of missions meant that the operating sanctions by which chiefs had previously used to maintain social order and their authority – sorcery, ghosts, and the power of life and death – were no longer available. This substantially diminished the power of chiefs to settle conflicts and disputes. Missions further eroded chiefly authority by encouraging their adherents to by-pass chiefs and take their complaints and disputes to local preacher-teachers for resolution. Power, thus, shifted from the chiefs to the local preacher-teachers.

Vestiges of traditional power still, however, remain but in a modified and often hybridised form. The transformation that took place in Solomon Islands society has not only affected traditional leadership, but also the customs that underpin this leadership. Thus, the customary institutions and customary ways of today are not those of the pre-contact and pre-colonial past. These, as with Solomon Islands society as a whole, have come under modern, outside influences and this has precipitated change. But, again, the change has not been absolute because, although introduced practices have been adopted, they have also been modified to suit Solomon Islands conditions in the process. As such, 'kastom,' the pijin language derivative of custom, is a term that is used to distinguish local indigenous characteristics from those that have been introduced – symbolising a degree of cultural autonomy and offering a form of resistance to cultural, economic and religious subjugation (Moore, 2004).

In Nukiki village, the chiefs and the church share power and in some instances a chief and church elder are one and the same person. In many respects it is artificial to disassemble leadership into custom and the church because the two have effectively merged. Complementarity between church and traditional governance, one of the core dimensions of political hybridity, exists. The chiefs adjudicate over the tribal land and, in cooperation with the church, are responsible for the welfare of members of their particular tribe. The church, however, has become very influential in village affairs and, as a result, village governance is largely church focussed.

This has created an inherent weakness in the community in that it is ill-equipped to address secular issues that threaten its wellbeing.

The politically hybrid arrangement that exists in Nukiki was not, however, evident everywhere on Choiseul. Whether it occurs, or not, largely depends on the size of the village and the number of tribes resident therein. Molevago village, for example, comprised only one tribe and, here, the chief refused to share power with the church. By contrast, in large villages that contained many tribes, the power of each chief was limited relative to the size of the village as a whole. In these villages the church tended to assume greater power.

CHAPTER 7

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

In a little over one hundred years Solomon Islands has been transformed from an archipelago inhabited by a people with a reputation for being 'ferocious savages' to a nation that is now predominantly Christian. Today, the church plays a prominent role in the life of local Solomon Islands communities such as Nukiki village.

By way of introduction, this chapter commences by briefly describing the Nukiki village church as I first encountered it in 1991. The chapter then sets back in time to the early years of European contact and discusses the arrival of the Methodist Mission in Western Solomon Islands and the part it played in effecting the significant social transformation that has occurred since that time.

While conversion to Christianity was widespread on Choiseul, varying degrees of syncretism and appropriation have occurred. This is examined, after which the chapter moves on to describe the indigenous church as it has evolved on Choiseul. The present-day United Church, which had its origins in the Methodist Mission, is then discussed with particular reference to the manner in which the church is governed and the influence it has in Nukiki village today.

The political hybridity that has evolved between chiefly leadership and church leadership is also considered. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the role the church has had in creating leadership opportunities for the women of Choiseul.

The Nukiki church

In 1991 there was only one church in Nukiki. It was a small leaf house building located alongside the entrance to the Talaevondo Stream. It had no doors or windows, just an opening through which one entered, or gaps through which one gazed. The 'floor' was coral sand and the 'pews' were simple slat benches with no backs. The men sat to the left of the central aisle, and the women to the right. The services were conducted in the Babatana language and, for one who could not understand Babatana, seemed dreadfully long - especially on those uncomfortable,

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without-back, benches. But the villagers were kind to me and in the service the leader would often announce the hymn number in English for my benefit. Sometimes I knew the hymn or the chorus but not, of course, in Babatana. The Nukiki United Church, of which denomination the villagers were adherents, was located on the other side of the Talaevondo Stream from my leaf house. During the seemingly long services I would look out across the glistening waters of the bay to the coconut grove in which my house was located. The bay and the coconut groves looked inviting in the sweltering heat.

Christianity was very important to the villagers of Nukiki and Sunday was for church and after church it was a day of rest. I did not like Sundays very much – they were too long and quiet. But church was not just on Sundays, there was also a service every morning. Around 7 a.m., or thereabouts, someone would ring the church 'bell' to call the faithful to *lotu* (church). The bell was, in fact, an old acetylene gas bottle that hung from a tree. It was struck with an iron bar and made an off-key clang, a jarring sound which I will always remember with a curious affection. The bell signalled the start of my day but, I have to confess, never enticed me to attend morning *lotu*.

Immediately behind the old leaf house church a new concrete block church was being constructed. It had a concrete floor, and a corrugated iron roof, and each of the concrete blocks was hand-made. The new church building was truly a labour of love. The coral sand on the beach by Nukiki was unsuitable for concrete so, over many years, the villagers had paddled their canoes to Pavora Bay to collect sand to bring back to Nukiki to make concrete blocks. There was no reef at Pavora Bay so the beach was exposed to the open sea. As a result the sand was finer, having been ground-down and sifted by the incoming waves, and this made it suitable for making concrete. The villagers had obtained several steel moulds that they used to make the concrete blocks. They would mix the sand with cement on a flat piece of galvanised iron before pouring the wet concrete into the moulds. Thus, block by block the walls of the church building were raised. Their dedication was humbling.

The villagers would often talk to me about Sister Lucy, the last remaining expatriate Sister at the original Methodist Mission[59] station at Sasamunga. I never did meet Sister Lucy, a fellow New Zealander from Morrinsville, but it was clear that the

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[59] The United Church of Solomon Islands has its origins in the Methodist Mission (see following section – The indigenous church)

people of Nukiki, and beyond, held Sister Lucy in very high regard. I too admired the courageousness and fortitude of those early missionaries, and what they had left behind. An island people that had converted to Christianity was their lasting legacy.

The arrival of the Methodist Mission

By the 1840s some Choiseulese had been taken to Queensland or Fiji by labour recruiters and 'blackbirders' (slave traders) to work as cheap labour in the sugar plantations. Some, a few only, returned to Solomon Islands and it was they who were to become prominent in the process of social and cultural change which followed this period (Scheffler, 1965). Traders had also begun to establish permanent settlements in Solomon Islands and by 1870 their business "was assisted considerably by the inter-colonial labour trade, which introduced thousands of Solomon Islanders to many of the products of western technology" (Bennett, 1987, p. 45, see also Chapter 3). Traders, however, were caught between two societies; that of their European homeland and that of Solomon Islands, where they had settled. Resident traders led a tenuous existence. Not only were they at the mercy of fluctuating commodity prices and the larger trading companies from whom they bought their goods, they also lived amongst a people who were often at war with one another. Head hunting and cannibalism prevailed. In order to survive traders would rely on the patronage of a local leader, or chief, but because of the fragmented, localised nature of Solomon Islands society, a chief's influence may extend no further than a few adjacent villages. It behoved the trader, therefore, to seek out and align himself with the strongest chief in the area. Caught, as they were, between two societies the traders were, however, uniquely positioned to act as middle-men by offering an entry point to Solomon Islands society for other Europeans. This was an opportunity that Christian missions capitalised on (Bennett, 1987).

Prior to 1991 Choiseul was part of Western Province which, earlier, had been part of the Western District of the colonial government. It was in the Western District, at Kokenqolo - near the present-day Munda in the Roviana Lagoon, that the Methodists were to establish their Mission headquarters in 1902. The Methodist Church had been active in the Pacific since the mid-1800s and, using their successful missions in Fiji and Tonga, had been training local ministers and

teachers to evangelise other areas in the Pacific. In 1879 a Methodist missionary by the name of Reverend Dr. George Brown travelled through the Solomon Islands en-route to New Britain where the Methodists already had a mission. Brown recognised the potential of Solomon Islands as a mission field and it was his vision that eventually led to the establishment of a Methodist Mission in Roviana. Requests for missionaries to be sent to Solomon Islands had, however, been made from Solomon Islands labourers in Fiji some two decades before this. Many had become Christians while absent from their home islands so it was them, and returned labourers, who were instrumental in 'opening the door' for missionaries to become established in Solomon Islands (McDonald, 2009).

Initially cautious about opening a new mission field, the Australian Methodist Conference of 1901 agreed to start a mission in Solomon Islands, spurred on, perhaps, by the fear that they might be pre-empted by another competing mission in the Western District. Brown had, on earlier visits to the area, made contact with traders Frank Wickam and Norman Wheatley who had established themselves in the Roviana area of New Georgia. As was the case with some other traders elsewhere, they were very helpful to Brown and in 1899 provided him with accommodation, transport and moral support. It was with their assistance that Brown chose to establish a mission in Roviana, amongst a people who were considered to be the most treacherous and blood-thirsty race in the Western Pacific (McDonald, 2009). Such a challenge, it seems, was irresistible for Brown. The area had been untouched by other missions and in spite of resistance from local chiefs, Brown, with the support of the resident planters and traders, established his mission anyway (McDonald, 2009).

The Methodists had their eye on Choiseul as well and in 1905 the Methodist District Synod in Gizo recommended to the Methodist Conference in Australia that they should include the island of Choiseul within the mission district but that it should be constituted as a separate Circuit (McDonald, 2009). This caused some consternation for the Anglican Melanesian Mission who also coveted Choiseul. The Anglicans, represented by Bishop Wilson, and the Methodists, represented by Chairman John Goldie, 'squared off' over the matter but eventually, in 1907, it was resolved by a comity agreement that the Methodists would not expand east of Choiseul and the Anglicans would not expand west of Isabel (McDonald, 2009).

Reverend Stephen Rooney had been appointed superintendent of the Choiseul Circuit but it was Fijian teacher named Feresa who was the first missionary to take up residence on Choiseul. With a good supply of medicine he was left by Goldie to 'do his best' somewhere on the coast of northwest Choiseul (McDonald, 2009). A second teacher, a Samoan named Muna, was landed by Goldie at Kumbara. The people of Kumbara were opposed to this and had erected strong bush vine barriers across the beach to stop the dinghy from landing. Goldie, however, broke through these and left Muna in the house of a friendly chief. Muna, it transpired, did not last long and 'left' shortly after. There were several explanations for this, none of which boded well for poor Muna; ill health, a pending raid by head hunters from Senga, and a story that he had been tied to a raft and set adrift with no food or water (McDonald, 2009; see also Early, 1998). Eventually, however, the people of Kumbara became more amenable to having a missionary, but with the proviso that he came from Roviana and that he was a white man.

Stephen Rabone Rooney came from a missionary family. He had also been a member of the original Methodist mission party to the Western District, which had been led by John Goldie. Consequently, he had had several years experience in the area before he was posted to Sasamunga, in the Babatana language area of Choiseul, around 1907 (McDonald, 2009). As was the case elsewhere, there was dissension amongst the local people as to whether or not a missionary should be allowed ashore but, in what seems to have been the fashion amongst the Methodists, Rooney landed anyway. Quite sensibly, his wife and son did not accompany him in the early days (McDonald, 2009; see also Early, 1998). Describing the local people as "frightfully dirty, sickly, and lazy" he set about to produce a "cleaner, healthier and more industrious people" (McDonald, 2009, p. 50), as well as converting them to Christianity.

Rooney faced threats to his life, "the most spectacular being the charge of axe-wielding Ngajikesa on a bush path" (Early, 1998, p. 56). Fortunately for Rooney the first blow missed and the assailant fled. McDonald (2009) also describes an incident where a gun was held to Rooney's head but, again, he survived when the cartridge failed to fire. Early (1998) had also reported what appeared to be the same occurrence but did not specifically identify Rooney as the missionary under threat. In August 1905 the Royal Navy had sent the ship *Emerald* to punish the people of Babatana for their alleged involvement in the murder of Captain Findlayson on his vessel *Savo*. A number of Babatana villages were destroyed in

the raid and several people were shot (McDonald, 2009). This, no doubt, would have caused widespread fear amongst the local people and probably helped discourage many other aggrieved tribesmen from harming Rooney. Nevertheless, his situation would have been quite precarious and one cannot help but admire his fortitude, especially in the early days when he was totally isolated and had very little contact with any fellow Europeans.

The task of converting the Choiseulese to Christianity cannot have been easy. And it is likely that missionaries, such as Rooney, were under some pressure from mission-supporting, home-country churches to show some fruit for their labour, and for the financial support they were given from home. The basis for missions lay in the Biblical command to Christians known as the *Great Commission*:

> Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.

> Matthew 28:19-20 (S.I.C.R.)

There is no doubt that Rooney was sincere in his mission and by 1910 his labour had begun to bear fruit. On the 28th August 1910 he baptised his first converts at Sasamunga on Choiseul (Early, 1998; McDonald, 2009). There were, however, various reasons why Solomon Islanders converted to Christianity so the Methodists went to some lengths to ensure a convert was sincere before they baptised them and offered them church membership. "A life well-lived and knowledge of the basic rules of the church seemed to have been the prerequisite for church membership on Choiseul. This was not given lightly in most Methodist areas" (McDonald, 2009, p. 37).

Conversion to Christianity

A number of authors have offered general explanations as to why Melanesians became Christians. Burt (1994) maintains that many of these explanations emphasise "a pragmatic concern (by Melanesians) to change their relationship with the colonial world, to acquire western goods and technology, knowledge and power,

to substitute an ideology of peace for traditional religious values, and perhaps to bring about a social transformation under spiritual inspiration" (Burt, 1994, p. 7). He also maintains that while such assertions may be so, the detailed local studies needed to substantiate these views are few and far between.

A feature of the Methodist Mission's early work on Choiseul was the efforts it made to achieve peace. Although there were eight language groups on Choiseul (see chapter 6), Early (1998, p. 57) maintains that "there were no important cultural or social divisions between the districts of Choiseul." It may, in fact, have been more accurate to call these distinctions, rather than divisions, because feuding and inter-tribal fighting was rife and this made the work of the missionaries difficult, not to mention dangerous. In order to facilitate its work the Mission, therefore, took on the role of peacemaker and, in time, was very successful. Peace, consequently, "came to represent the Christian transformation" and as "peace spread, people came in groups from the hills to trade, to establish a church and then build houses around it, giving the missionaries access to potential converts" (Early, 1998, p. 58).

On Choiseul, according to McDonald (2009, p. 44): "Individual conversions were the most common pattern, followed by groups of individuals." Unlike Polynesian societies, or neighbouring Santa Isabel for that matter, there appeared to be little pressure from chiefs to accept the new Christian faith. Decisions "seem to have been made thoughtfully and without any coercion, other than that of missions" (McDonald, 2009, p. 44). As previously discussed, the Methodists were very careful to determine the sincerity of their converts and, over one hundred years later, it is impossible to pass judgement one way or the other on this. All that can be said now is that, today, the United Church, born of the Methodist Mission, has a strong presence on Choiseul and most of the population would describe themselves as Christian, regardless of whether they adhere to the Methodists tradition or one of the many other denominations that now coexist on Choiseul.

The advent of Christianity, and the almost simultaneous imposition of colonial rule, must have presented a massive challenge to the traditional systems of religious and political authority that existed on Choiseul. Burt (1994), in his analysis of the Kwara'ae people of Malaita, examines this issue in some detail. The increasing dominance of the colonial government, he maintains, provided a very significant threat to the social and political 'plausibility structure' that underpinned, or supported, the world of the Kwara'ae people. The Kwara'ae, quite naturally,

perceived their encounter with colonialism through the prism of their own human and spiritual relationships, but when it became clear to them that the colonial government was emerging as the dominant power it created a major crisis for the Kwara'ae people in terms of their relationship with the spiritual powers that had hitherto supported their own traditional social order. As a result of organised pressure from the colonial government the small, feuding local Kwara'ae communities, quite quickly, began to lose their political autonomy. This caused them to question the power of their ancestral ghosts, or spirits, to protect them. Their 'sacred cosmos,' and the entire social order to which it belonged, began to collapse and, as their traditional religion lost its power for them and over them, more and more people turned to Christianity for support and protection. This change in religion meant that the Kwara'ae, in effect, had to construct a new social order, a new 'plausibility structure.' The struggle that occurred between the religious and social activity of their traditional religion, and that of their new-found Christian religion, Burt says, contributed to the process of social change that occurred in Kwaio. By World War II most Kwara'ae, had joined the South Sea Evangelical Mission schools and had "transferred religious and political authority from the ghosts, and their priests, to the 'teachers' who mediated the power of God" (Burt, 1994, p. 141). This process helped transform Kwara'ae society by creating new social and cultural institutions that, Burt (1994) maintains, were more appropriate to the new political realities of life under a colonial government.

It is likely that similar spiritual and social transformations also took place on Choiseul during this period. Early (1998, p. 65) describes parallel events in the Methodist Mission areas of the Western District of Solomon Islands:

> Conversion was not so much a rejection of traditional religion as a means of acquiring the protection of a new religion. Crises associated with the arrival of Europeans, including fighting and introduced diseases, appeared as crises in the relationships of spiritual power which supported the traditional social order. Personal misfortune, the death of a leader, natural disaster, martial defeat, or epidemics might lead people to look to Christianity for answers.

The ghosts and gods of the Choiseulese people

Scheffler (1965) discusses the ghosts and gods of the Choiseulese people. A person who was successful was said to demonstrate mana – supernatural or magical powers. Mana, it was believed, was given or bestowed by the gods (*bangara*) and spirits or ghosts of the dead (*manuru*). To succeed in any enterprise one must observe the restrictions and customs of the *bangara* and *manuru*, and pay tribute to them at the proper times. Any adverse event was the result of the gods or ghosts being angered. Men who had the talent for being able to 'speak' to the *manuru* or *bangara* would then be called upon to discover the cause of this misfortune and what sacrifices or medicines were required to atone for it (Scheffler, 1965).

Bangara, it was held, were more powerful than *manuru* and they took various forms. "Some had the appearance of men, others had the bodies of animals such as snakes. Most of them resided in the sea but a few (lived) in the bush" (Scheffler, 1965, pp. 243-244). Most tribes, or descent groups, maintained at least one *bangara* and to this they made sacrifices and offerings. The responsibility for 'caring' for the *bangara* fell to one man but this man was not necessarily the *batu* (chief, big-man) (Scheffler, 1965), evidence that there was some differentiation in the leadership of these groups. Each *bangara* had a sacred place and this was out of bounds to all except the keeper of the *bangara*. And it was to the *bangara* that the kin group turned to for advice in times of need: whether it was advisable to conduct a raid, or a request to inflict an injury on an enemy. The *bangara* had a number of animals that went with or followed it, and these animals were forbidden as food for the clan, the keepers of the *bangara* (Rivers, 1914; Scheffler, 1965). It was these animals that did the bidding of their *bangara*. Sometimes they also served as the oracle of the *bangara*. The sighting of such an animal may, thus, be interpreted as an omen of some sort for the tribe (Scheffler, 1965).

In Nukiki village the animal associated with the *bangara* was the crocodile (see also Rivers, 1914). By 1991 most villagers in Nukiki were quite devout in their Christian faith and village life revolved very much around the church. However, towards the end of my stay in Nukiki a friend from Taro had taken me by boat to Choiseul Bay. There, we entered the mouth of the Sui River and after a while spotted a crocodile, eyes and snout just poking above the surface of the water. Later, back in Nukiki, I was told by a villager that the crocodiles were their 'friends.'

In 2012, I recounted this story to the same friend and he explained the significance of the crocodiles to the Siropodoko people. Crocodiles, and sharks for some tribes he said, were considered to be spirit ancestors that could be called up for assistance, for example, in times of war. Their powers were invoked in order to defeat the enemy. These spirit ancestors were believed to have spawned the tribe from whom the people were descended. This belief, I was told, has been eclipsed by Christianity (see also Scheffler, 1965) but people still respect the crocodile in the Sui area where they talk to them and do not kill them (B. Savevai. Pers. com. Feb, 2012; see also Rivers, 1914; Webster, 1911). Interestingly, my friend and other members of the Siropodoko tribe, had no problem killing crocodiles elsewhere, no doubt because the sacred location of the *bangara* was in the Sui River and not elsewhere on Choiseul. A chief of one of the Siropodoko clans told me how he had shot a crocodile in the days before RAMSI confiscated all their guns. Another friend told me how he had, more recently, snared and hacked to death a crocodile in the Mbirambira River. It was subsequently eaten.

Syncretism and appropriation

In Nukiki some vestiges of earlier customary beliefs remained, even amongst practising Christians. Burt (1994) maintained that the Kwara'ae religion was not so much abolished but rather transformed and reproduced in new forms through Christianity. Early (1998) also noted that the religious change that had occurred amongst converts in the Methodist Mission should not be over-emphasised. Life for the converts, Early maintained, continued to be based on a religious world view, albeit that of a different religion. Having noted the strength of Christian belief in some Choiseulese friends I could not hold entirely with Burt's and Early's views now, but my observations were made several generations after the period they were referring to and by 2012 Christianity was well established. It is, however, pertinent to note that in the beginning of the twentieth century the Methodist missionaries in Western District had also become aware of varying degrees of syncretism and appropriation in the beliefs of their converts. "This forced the missionaries to admit that (the) traditions (of their converts) need to be acknowledged and remain incorporated to some extent in the islanders' altered lives and beliefs" (McDonald, 2009, p. 29). One such event occurred at the mission station at Sasamunga. Even though the Methodist missionary Rooney had baptised his first converts in 1910, some women were not allowed inside the church

building until 1913. This was due to a belief amongst the local people that evil spirits would enter married women or widows if they entered a sacred building. These spirits, it was also believed, would then be carried back to their village. This would have been an anathema for Rooney, but in order to overcome this a traditional ceremony was held to lift the tapu and allow women to participate in services inside the church building. This, according to McDonald (2009, p. 38), "presented an odd case of allowing traditional ceremonies to determine participation in Christian services."

White (2012, p. 173), in a study of the articulation between chiefs, church, and state in Santa Isabel, noted that there was "a certain degree of confusion and ambiguity as the lexicons of the state, of churches, and of indigenous practice collide." White maintained that rather than view custom, the church, or even the state, as bounded institutions it would be much more productive to look at the methods of articulation, or bridging practices, used to mediate between these institutions. In the United Church of Nukiki, however, there did not appear to be any confusion between Christianity and custom. The villagers seemed to be quite clear that the church looked after their spiritual well-being and the chief adjudicated in matters of custom. Custom, as it was explained to me in the village, tended to revolve around land matters, dispute resolution, and relational issues between the people of the tribe (Interview #33). However, if one 'dug a little more deeply' it became clear that a certain degree of respect for the tribal totem still remained (Interview #35).

The missionaries, it seems, did their job well because Christianity has taken hold on Choiseul. But credit should be given to Solomon Islanders as well because it is they who have adapted to a new spiritual and temporal world, and shaped it as their own. It is tempting to assert that Christianity, like the state, has been colonised by the Melanesian lifeworld (Dinnen, 2009), and this has happened to some extent. But the opposite has also happened. Christianity has, to a considerable degree, inhabited the lifeworld of the people of Choiseul. Choiseulese society is vastly changed from the day Reverend Goldie put the hapless Muna ashore at Kumbara.

The indigenous church

When Rooney was superintendent of the Choiseul Circuit he instituted Quarterly Meetings. The Quarterly Meeting was the basic meeting of the Methodist Administration on Choiseul and it was these that provided the roots for the creation of an indigenous Methodist church (McDonald, 2009). In contrast to Goldie, who "never held a Quarterly Meeting in all his 49 years in the Roviana Circuit" (Carter & Tuza, 2000), Quarterly Meetings were continued on Choiseul by those that followed Rooney. Missionaries Vincent Binet and John Metcalfe encouraged local leadership and "agreed very early on that the local church should be organised in such a way that it could carry on its work if the expatriate missionaries were, for any reason, taken away" (Carter & Tuza, 2000, p. 32). This was a wise and far-sighted approach because it was through the traditional Methodist Quarterly Meeting that local Christian leaders obtained a real place in the running of the Mission. This, in turn, led to a strong and developing local church which, all-too-soon, was to stand the Christians of Choiseul in good stead as World War II unfolded and most of the expatriate missionaries were withdrawn.

Today, one hundred years since married women and widows were first allowed inside the church building at Sasamunga, the United Church of Solomon Islands, successor to the Methodist Mission, exemplifies both the strengths and weaknesses of post-mission Christianity in Melanesia (McDougall, 2008). However, to its credit, the Methodist Mission "fostered amongst its adherents a sense of trans-local identity that overlaid and extended pre-Christian exchange networks and alliances" (Dureau, 1998, as cited in McDougall, 2008, p.5). During the colonial period the Methodist Mission provided much of the infrastructure for Western District, of which Choiseul was a part. This included schools, clinics, and the hospital at Munda. Under the direction of Goldie, the Mission also entered into commercial ventures (McDonald, 2009) and this, as well as providing business infrastructure, also established commercial networks for the Mission in the region. The Mission's holistic approach to Christianity was to benefit local people in more ways than one; Methodist Mission trained men were also employed by the colonial government administration (McDougall, 2008), thus laying a foundation for the day when Solomon Islanders would be responsible for their own destiny as a nation rather than as small, feuding segmentary societies.

To achieve what he did, Reverend Goldie must have been a very determined character. Able, autocratic and domineering, Goldie exhibited the characteristics of a *bangara* and "is said to have understood Solomon Islanders like few other Europeans of his time" (Early, 1998, p. 69). But while he earned the loyalty of his flock, he failed to devolve authority and this created a crisis for the church after he retired in 1951. In the absence of the strong leadership he had provided, a breakaway movement emerged under the leadership of Silas Eto in the late 1950s. This, subsequently, became the Christian Fellowship Church (Early, 1998; McDougall, 2008, see also Chapter 2).

The Methodist Mission had an uneasy relationship with the colonial government. Goldie had a strong following and the Methodist Mission provided much of the infrastructure in the Western District. Because of this the colonial officials needed Goldie, but at the same time resented his authority, dubbing him the unofficial 'king of Western Solomons.' Goldie, for his part, was quite antagonistic towards the colonial government and George Carter, who succeeded Goldie, believed that Goldie's antagonism prevented the development of a partnership between the church and the state which Carter maintained could have provided "effective and stable social conditions, not only in the short-term, but (also) for the future" (Carter, 1973. p. 90; see also Hilliard, 2013).

In 1968 the Methodist Church of Solomon Islands joined forces with two United Church congregations and the Papua Ekelesia Church of Papua New Guinea to form the United Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. However, this union only lasted 28 years and in 1996 the Solomon Islands church separated from its Papua New Guinean counterparts to form the United Church of Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands United Church Assembly (headquarters) is based in Roviana (McDougall, 2008), the site of the original Methodist Mission and a fitting tribute to its origins.

United Church structure and leadership

Despite Carter's misgivings over Goldie's autocratic management style, the United Church of Solomon Islands has, in fact, become decentralised and democratic in its organisational structure. It is now an independent and self-governing organisation and, as such, its structures and ideologies align quite closely with the development

and good governance agendas that are currently fashionable with Australia and other influential donors in the region (McDougall, 2008).

The United Church in Solomon Islands is administered as follows: At the national level the church is governed by an Assembly which has its administrative headquarters in Roviana (Munda). The country is divided into Synods, and within Synods are Circuits. Circuits comprise Sections to which village churches, such as that of the Nukiki United Church, belong. True to its democratic foundation, leaders are elected within the United Church. This represents a significant departure from the way traditional leaders acquire recognition, and thus their mandate to lead. Within the United Church "each group elects leaders (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer) who represent the local group at Section, Circuit, or Regional meetings (McDougall, 2008, p. 7). Local churches have a pastor who, although he may enjoy status and moral authority within his community, is very lowly paid. In order to survive he, like his fellow villagers, must tend his gardens. I would sometimes see Franklin, the pastor of the Nukiki church, walking back from his garden in the bush, weary like everyone else, after a hard day's work.

Nukiki is an important United Church centre on Choiseul. Not only does it have a pastor, but the Circuit minister is also based there. During the period I was in Nukiki he lived in the village guest house. Ministers have a higher status than village pastors but they are still modestly paid. Unlike other big-men in Solomon Islands society, "they do not have access to other sources of cash for consumption and distribution. ... Most of the material benefits they do enjoy (houses made of permanent material, gifts of food, woven mats and other items) come from the generosity of the people they serve" (McDougall, 2008, p. 7). This, according to McDougall, means that their social status is mediated through a host-guest relationship, whereby the host gains status by taking good care of their guest who, in turn, is under obligation to them, or in their debt. Reciprocal relations such as these are, in fact, a customary norm (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009).

In addition to the pastor and the minister, Nukiki village was also host to the Bishop of the United Church Choiseul Region. This was quite a contrast to 1991, where the church appeared to be run by local village leaders alone. Always important in Nukiki, the United Church had obtained, by 2012, a more significant presence in the village. The church building was now a substantial concrete structure, and the village was now the Regional United Church headquarters for the whole of

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Choiseul. The headquarters was not, however, ostentatious. The office building was a small leaf house located alongside the teachers' houses which, in contrast, were made of 'permanent material.' The Bishop's house, which was next to the office, was a two story building made of permanent material but the lower story housed additional offices used by the minister and one or two other staff. During the Sunday morning church service the Bishop took his place in the congregation along with everyone else and it took me some time, in fact, to realise who the friendly gentleman was who always said hello.

I spent some time interviewing village leaders in order to establish the nature of the church structure in Nukiki. I was told quite clearly by chiefs and other village leaders that the chiefs and the church worked closely together in Nukiki village (Interviews #33, #34) and it was quite apparent that this was so. Usually, after the Sunday morning church service, the village leaders, be they of the church or chiefs (some were both), would gather to discuss the issues of the day. One interviewee, in describing the village leadership, gave chiefs, the *batu lotu*, pastor, and chairman-leader of the church, equal rankings within the community hierarchy (Interview #34). The same person, however, had earlier placed the chairman-leader under the pastor in the church hierarchy (Interview #7). The pastor himself (see Photograph 14) provided a diagram of the church structure in which the chairman-leader, *batu lotu*, as well as the treasurer and church secretary, were under the pastor (see Figure 3).

The rankings of the relative positions were less important than the role, or the function, that the church leaders fulfilled in terms of governance within the community. While the pastor was the spiritual head and shepherd of the congregation, it was the chairman-leader who was the leader of the church, as an organisation. He chaired the church meetings and provided instructions to the *batu lotu*. The *batu lotu*, literally the chief of the church, was the leader of the congregation (Interview #42) and passed instructions from the chairman-leader on to the church and, because they were one and the same, to the community as a whole. The *batu lotu* was responsible for organising church activities and community work in the village (Interview #9). The chairman-leader, *batu lotu*, and other church leaders were all elected to their positions. The elected term of the *batu lotu* was two years (Interview #9) and, although I did not specifically ask, I assumed the term of the other church leaders was the same.

The five main hamlets that comprise Nukiki each had, or were in the process of constructing, their own church building where the hamlet congregation could meet on Sunday evenings. Each hamlet had its own *batu lotu*, also elected, and who answered to the 'main' *batu lotu* of the Nukiki village church (Interviews #34, #42). Each of these hamlet-based churches had its own working committee and issues relevant to the hamlet were discussed at their Sunday evening meeting. This meeting was the forum where issues of concern in the hamlet were aired and it was from this meeting that information was relayed by the hamlet *batu lotu* to the main *batu lotu* and vice versa (Interview #34).

Church meetings are very important in the life of the village, not only for dealing with church-related matters, but for most other matters as well. The church provided the venue for village meetings and, through its leaders, also had the ability to organise everything within the village. This was done through the *batu lotu* who is, in effect, the village leader, providing the overall organisational structure for the five hamlets, and the three main tribes, that comprise Nukiki (Interview #6). In reality, the church and the village are practically one body, although there were some early signs that church attendance was declining. Some people were now too busy doing their own work, often to generate cash for school fees, to attend church-organised village work days. Nukiki villagers were not alone in this. Villagers of the United Church congregation on Ranongga faced similar pressures and older members of the United Church Women's Fellowship (UCWF) also complained "that women today only care about earning money for their own families and are no longer willing to put their effort into community activities like the UCWF" (McDougall, 2003, p. 15).

Figure 3   Nukiki United Church structure
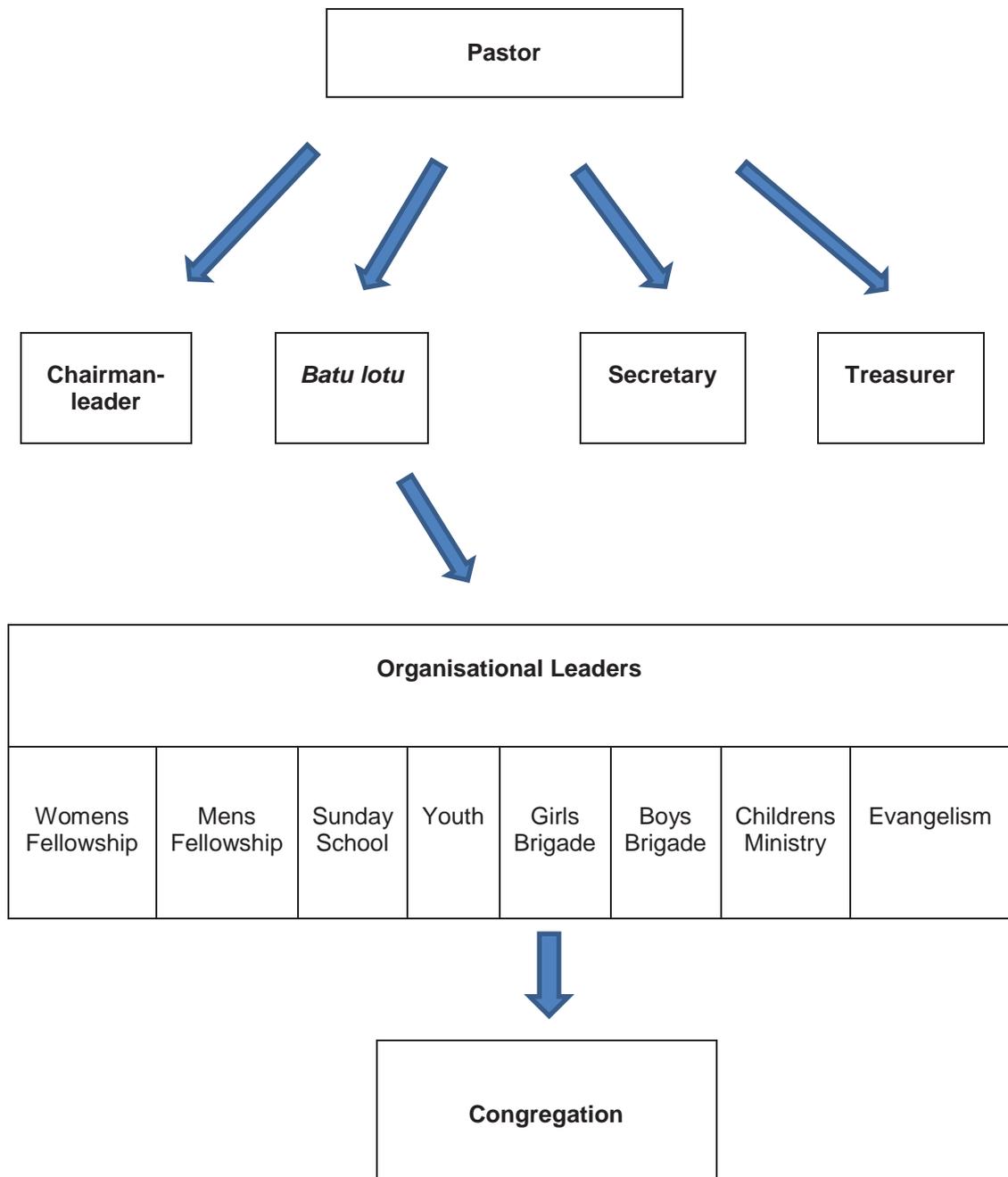
(Interview #9)

Photograph 14   Frank Taqebatu - Pastor of Nukiki United Church

In large villages such as Nukiki, where a number of tribes coexist together, it is quite understandable that the church, today, would assume a dominant organisational role. The responsibility of the chief is only to the people of his tribe, whereas the Methodist Mission, as mentioned, deliberately fostered a sense of trans-local identity amongst its adherents that overlaid and extended the exchange networks and alliances that had existed in pre-Christian times (McDougall, 2008). In other words, the Methodist Mission assumed a pastoral role that transcended tribal loyalties. In the process it created an effective decentralised and democratic organisational structure that, in time, was able to incorporate most kin groupings, or tribes, within its geographical sphere of influence. This organisational structure was inherited by Nukiki village which simply replicated what they had learned from and through the United Church.

The hybridisation of chiefly and church leadership

As an outside observer it seemed quite clear to me that chiefly leadership and church leadership coexisted together quite comfortably in Nukiki. A bit like an old married couple, the two systems seemed to accommodate each other's differences, allow each other space insofar as differentiating duties, but in most matters they worked harmoniously together. This was an example of political hybridity at its best, a hybrid political order where complementarity, in academic terms, was deeply embedded.

Hybrid political orders aside, the church has certainly provided more leadership opportunities for a wider variety of villagers than would have existed under the traditional chiefly systems of old. A glance at the Nukiki United Church organisational structure demonstrates this. And a more careful analysis shows that this, in turn, also allows women and youth to participate in decision making, not only in the village, but between Circuits, Regions, and even at the national level. It is no wonder, then, that Australia and other donors to Solomon Islands, find the structures and ideologies of the United Church most congruent with their own 'good governance' agendas for Solomon Islands (McDougall, 2008); the United Church has, in many respects, prepared its people well for citizenship in a modern state.

The role of the church in creating leadership opportunities for women

While attending Sunday morning worship in the Nukiki village United Church in January 2012 I noted that the preacher was a woman. She spoke well and with an authority and presence that the men in the congregation seemed quite comfortable with. This was certainly a change from the Nukiki church I knew in 1991 for, then, it was the men who led the services. When I questioned the men after the service I was told that it was quite normal to have a woman preacher nowadays.

While I was staying in Taro I spoke to a number of women leaders from throughout Choiseul. They had congregated there, along with the male leaders of the province, to consider the proposed Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands. The fact that they had been included in the meeting was, in itself, quite significant and a sign of changing times. One retired woman, who had had a very successful career in primary, secondary and tertiary education, told me she had attended

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secondary school in New Zealand. The Methodist Mission was responsible for education in the Western District in those days so it is highly likely that her education in New Zealand was sponsored by the Methodist Church of New Zealand which, in turn, was responsible for the Methodist Mission in Solomon Islands. I did not verify this but I did learn that during her school holidays in New Zealand she had stayed with Methodist families who had missionary links to Choiseul (Interview #23). I was enquiring about the role of women in Choiseul society and was told that there were changes in how men treated women. "Our men on Choiseul are now better than they were. Things look brighter'" she told me, "education does bring women up" (interview #23).

Another woman, who had pioneered women's clubs in the Methodist Church in the 1960s, later helped found the national women's movement in Solomon Islands. She spoke very highly of the Methodist missionary wives, who taught the women of Western District personal hygiene, house management skills, how to dress well, and gave them an education. As a result of this, she proudly told me, "in the 1960s the women from Western District were smartly dressed compared with the women of Malaita, who still went around bare-breasted and in grass skirts" (Interview #27). The teaching of local women had historical antecedents. Mrs Rooney, back in 1912, was reported to be 'getting hold of the women and girls on Choiseul' and in 1921 a Mrs Nicholson, on nearby Vella Lavella, was said to have transformed 'her' girls from "filthy little creatures of habit" to girls "who are quite graceful and attractive." At a special event on the mission station that year her charges were described as "bright bonnie lasses dressed in spotless white" (McDonald, 2009, pp. 32-33: see also Early, 1998). As dated as such reporting may seem, it does signify the beginning of a social change that, in time, was to have important ramifications for the women of Western District. It was the commencement of a journey, still on-going, towards their emancipation. My informant was part of this change and had gone on to represent Solomon Islands women at the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, and elsewhere as well. Such was the foundation laid by the missionary wives of the Methodist Mission in the Western District of Solomon Islands (see also McDougall, 2003, regarding opportunities created by the UCWF for the women of Ranongga).

One of the women I also talked to in Taro was President of the Choiseul Provincial Council of Women, a branch of the National Council of Women.[60] The Provincial Council of Women had links to women's groups in all of the 14 Wards in Choiseul and had also been recognised as an NGO by the Choiseul Provincial Government. This recognition entitled them to an annual grant from the Provincial Government and, as well, they also met with the Premier to discuss issues of concern. The Provincial Government also had 'Women's Development Desk' officer who would attend the Council of Women's meetings (Interview #14).

Well set up with an administration building opposite the Provincial Government offices in Taro, the Provincial Council of Women concentrated on educating, or empowering, village women to deal with issues facing them, such as domestic violence, teenagers, STDs and child abuse. As well, they also provided training in gardening techniques, nutrition, and taught other practical skills useful in the village (Interview #14). Another important function of the Council of Women has been to educate men as to what the important issues are for women and, in my informant's view, the men were starting to understand. Based on her travels with the Council elsewhere in Solomon Islands, she felt that Choiseul men were much more supportive than men in other provinces (Interview #14). I had no way of verifying this.

Another woman I interviewed was the coordinator for the UCWF in the Babatana Circuit, the home base of the old Methodist Mission headquarters on Choiseul. Working with women's groups within the villages, her job as she saw it, was to talk to the women to find out what their needs were. Once these needs had been identified, she would put together a programme to address them. Now-a-days, the main issue facing women seemed to be the lack of funds, most likely for school fees for their children. If their husband was not good at earning money, or keeping it for that matter, then the women would have to work very hard to support their families. As mentioned in Chapter 6, there was now a much greater emphasis on cash than there had been in 1991, so families were under pressure to pay school fees and meet other expenses that were now deemed necessary. The need for a market house in the village where they could sit down and sell their produce, or transport to other markets, were big issues for village women (Interview #21). Although primarily catering for United Church women, the coordinator said she

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[60] Nevelyn Manavakana was also the wife of the chief of Molevaga village (see Chapter 6).

cooperated with other women's organisations such as the Provincial Council of Women and the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Community's women's group. Essentially, however, the United Church Women's Fellowship leaned towards pastoral care, and the Provincial Council of Women towards capacity building and advocacy (Interviews #14, #21).

I interviewed other women leaders as well and their stories also indicated that a shift in Choiseulese society was taking place. Governance, previously a male domain it seemed, was, at least in some areas, beginning to be shared with women. I had not seen this to the same extent elsewhere in Solomon Islands when I was working with other provincial governments, so was pleasantly surprised and quite impressed. In Nukiki village, in 1991, I had noted that the men ran the village meetings so had asked one of my friends about the role of women in village affairs. My friend rather wryly told me that they, the men, may very well make the decisions at the village meetings but they still had to account to their wives for these decisions when they went home! Perhaps, then, the women had always been much more influential than was obvious and given the fairly egalitarian teachings of the Methodist Mission, this may have been so.

It was one thing, however, to talk to women leaders of the Province – they had reached a higher level of influence than was available to most village women so their experience may have been atypical. I, therefore, interviewed village women. One was the newly elected leader of the Nukiki UCWF branch. She was new to the job so at that stage could not tell me very much. Another more senior member, and founder of the local Methodist Women's Fellowship in 1961, was able to provide a history of the local branch of the Fellowship (Interview #41): In 1961 a pastor-teacher joined the local Circuit of the Methodist Church and suggested to the women of Nukiki that they form a women's group. The group was duly formed and its original purpose was to teach local women western ideas about house cleaning, sewing, how to dress, personal health, cleanliness, and how to plant flowers! Apparently this was very popular with the local women (Interview #41) and, at the time, would have represented a significant departure from what they were used to. Although missionaries' wives had tended to concentrate on teaching Solomon Islands women domestic skills, they had also given them access to religious knowledge and the sacred world (Early, 1998), which had previously been denied them under pagan customary beliefs. This in itself would have been tremendously empowering and, combined with access to education and the suppression of

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practices that had discriminated against women, the Mission had, in effect, set in train a process of social change that is still playing out today. As Early (1998, p. 321) succinctly states: "Missionary women's vision as to what Solomon women's lives should be like was radical in its time and place."

As if to support this my informant in Nukiki and her friend, who was the wife of the clan chief and my gracious host, told me that the main purpose of the United Church Women's Fellowship had changed. Women had now acquired the western skills they were taught in the early days so the Women's Fellowship now encourages women in their Christian faith – singing, worship, and by providing programmes for women. And they, too, observed that women could now preach in the church. In fact, they said, women are now free to do anything; they can come and go at meetings, they are free to speak in front of people at village meetings, whereas before they were not. They both felt that women had "come up now (improved their position), so there isn't really a problem" (Interview #41).

It would be somewhat simplistic to attribute the changes that have occurred in men's attitudes towards women to a single organisation, such as the church alone. Education, according to another woman interviewee (Interview #22), influenced how women were perceived, and times had also changed. Donor countries had become much more gender aware themselves and had, over twenty years, been undertaking development programmes in Solomon Islands that addressed gender inequality.[61] The younger generation had, perhaps, taken on board some of these ideas. I noted younger males in Nukiki village, boys who many years ago had played with my own sons, appeared to have a more egalitarian relationship with their own wives than some of my older village friends. But these were just passive observations, albeit made over a few weeks, and I did not specifically interview people on this. What was clear, however, was that a change in gender-power relations was occurring. And although there appear to be a number of factors causing this, it would be inaccurate to discount the role of the church. The egalitarian teachings of the Methodist and, later, United Church are most likely to have created the preconditions necessary for this change to occur on Choiseul, as

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[61] NGOs and, in more recent times, donor projects such as those sponsored by UNIFEM, UNICEF, WHO and AUSAID, have targeted areas such as human rights, violence against women, women's health, women's economic development, women in governance, and leadership training for women in Solomon Islands (IMG, 2010; Wallace, 2011)

well as providing direct opportunities for women to develop and exercise leadership skills.

Summary

Overlaying and extending pre-Christian exchange networks and alliances, the Methodist Mission fostered a sense of trans-local identity amongst its adherents. It also created much of the infrastructure for Western District during the colonial period thereby providing opportunities for its adherents to engage with a world beyond their segmentary, village-based societies. As well as assuming a pastoral role that transcended tribal loyalties, the Methodist Mission created an effective decentralised and democratic organisational structure that, in time, was able to incorporate most kin groupings, or tribes, within its geographical sphere of influence.

At the local level, field work in Nukiki village showed that the villagers had replicated many elements of the governance structure that had been introduced by the Methodist Mission, thus mirroring notions of a liberal public sphere advocated by proponents of good governance. It did not, however, seem to be an issue for anyone in the village that church leaders were elected to their positions, a system that was completely different from the predominantly ascriptive manner by which chiefs gained leadership. In fact, it was quite clear that chiefly leadership and church leadership coexisted together quite comfortably in Nukiki. The two systems seemed to accommodate each other's differences, allow each other space insofar as differentiating duties, but in most matters they worked harmoniously together. This was an example of political hybridity at its best, a hybrid political order where complementarity was deeply embedded.

Hybrid political orders aside, the breadth and egalitarian leadership style of the United Church has also provided many more leadership opportunities for a wider variety of Choiseulese villagers, including women, than would have existed under the traditional chiefly system of old. Elected leadership, chaired village meetings, the emerging emancipation of women, a national congregation that transcends kin group loyalties - the democratic and decentralised organisational structure of the United Church has prepared its people well for the tenets of citizenship in a modern state.

Yet, in many respects, people's citizenship is dual; on the one hand they have individualised democratic rights as United Church members, and on the other hand, they have their kin group identity which is pluralist by nature. This is not a problem to them, because like their fellow Solomon Islanders, the people of Nukiki simply define themselves at different levels for different purposes. They have, in fact, quite adeptly accommodated the two systems of leadership in a politically hybrid manner.

Chapter 5 notes that Nukiki village appears poised to enter a period of considerable socio-political change and, in many respects, the pre-conditions necessary to successfully achieve this, in terms of governance, have already been established through the influence of the United Church. The proposal for a Federal Constitution for Solomon Islands, therefore, is very timely and actually offers the possibility for political change in a way that hitherto has not existed. This is considered in some detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

THE STATE: REPRESENTATION, SERVICE DELIVERY
AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

This chapter considers the role of the state on Choiseul, firstly by examining its presence in the province, and then its effectiveness in terms of its ability to facilitate local political representation and to deliver services.

The abolition of Area Councils created a serious political gap in terms of connecting provincial governments with their predominantly rural constituents. The inability of provincial governments, such as Choiseul, to provide adequate services to their constituents further diminished the influence of the state at village level. After discussing attempts to strengthen provincial governments in their ability to govern and deliver services, this chapter then examines the Constitutional reform programme that is underway in Solomon Islands. The proposed Federal Constitution provides an opportunity for Solomon Islanders to address the political disconnect that exists between the state and rural communities. While a Westminster-based constitution was adopted at independence as the basis for state governance, preceding chapters of this thesis have demonstrated that the Westminster parliamentary process has largely been captured and appropriated to serve local political interests, rather than that of the country as a whole. This ability to adapt and conscript external influences for their own purpose, however, has been applied to good effect at village level, as Chapters 6 and 7 describe. Here, a hybrid form of political order has evolved that combines traditional chiefly authority with an external form of governance introduced by the church. The state, however, has little influence in these hybrid polities.

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine whether such models of political hybridity have an application within the proposed Federal Constitution and can offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current constitution. This chapter suggests that Community Governments, one of the three tiers of government proposed in the Federal Constitution, would provide a suitable political arena whereby existing hybridised forms of local governance could be merged with such functions of state as are necessary for good governance.
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Governance under the existing constitution

Choiseul Provincial Government

Formed in 1991, Choiseul Provincial Government came into existence under Section 5 (2) (b) of the now superseded Provincial Government Act, 1981 (S.I.G., 1981). The province is administered from Taro, which is located in Choiseul Bay at the extreme north-western tip of Choiseul. Logistically, therefore, Taro is not an ideal location from which to serve the province. Logging roads do exist on the island and these serve community economic and social needs temporarily. However, logging roads are built and used primarily for the extraction of logs so once logging is completed, maintenance ceases and these roads fall into disrepair (C.P.G., 2009). Currently there are two operational airfields on Choiseul, Taro in Choiseul Bay and Kanghau, but for all intents and purposes the only feasible transport throughout the province is by sea. Two shipping companies provide regular services to the province, thus providing a vital link for the small, isolated coastal villages in which most Choiseulese reside (C.P.G., 2009). However, for day-to-day transport the Choiseulese rely on motorised canoes, either privately owned or hired, and these are very expensive to run, limiting villagers' access to services and, thus, their ability to participate in the wider provincial economy (Moore, 2007a).[62]

Government services and political representation are not exempt from the difficulties created by an inadequate transport infrastructure. Provincial Assembly members have to travel to Taro to attend Provincial Assembly meetings and Provincial Government service providers, such as forestry, health, education and police officers, all have to rely on weather-dependent sea transport. Provincial Government funds are limited, equipment is often old, unreliable or simply broken, so the links between the Provincial Government and its constituent communities can often be quite tenuous, particularly for the more isolated, remote communities. As a result, local communities, the myriad of small villages that comprise Choiseul Province, are resourceful and tend to operate independently[63] from the Provincial

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[62] Walking tracks do, however, exist such as between the hamlets that comprise Nukiki village. Other tracks penetrate the interior of Siropodoko lands providing access to gardens and old logging roads.

[63] By way of historical example, in 2009 the Choiseul province budget was SBD5.4 million. Of this, SBD5.26 million was to be spent in the Choiseul Bay area and the remaining SBS180,000 to be spent on a house at the Malangono provincial government substation, near Sasamungga.

Government which, apart from overseeing the village school[64] and perhaps a medical clinic if they are lucky, has little influence on daily village life.

Provincial Governments have had a chequered past in Solomon Islands. Sanctioned by the Constitution of Solomon Islands (1978) and defined under the Provincial Government Act 1981 (S.I.G., 1981) in terms of their (relatively limited) ability to function, provincial governments were an attempt to create greater regional autonomy through decentralisation. In 1981 Solomon Mamaloni became Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. More decisive than his predecessors, Mamaloni was a strong advocate for decentralisation. Under his direction the Provincial Government Act 1981 was created which, in addition to making provision for greater regional autonomy, also established five provincial ministries that were designed to enhance direct liaison between the provinces and the national government (Moore, 2004). Under this Act Provincial Assemblies were created in each province.[65] Provinces were divided into wards (14 in the case of Choiseul) and each ward is represented by an elected member. Collectively these members comprise the Provincial Assembly. Following elections the Assembly elect a premier by secret ballot and he, in turn, appoints a deputy premier and ministers with portfolio responsibilities, thus forming the Executive. The Executive is accountable to the Provincial Assembly (UNDP. et al., 2012) mirroring, at provincial level, the Westminster parliamentary system of the Solomon Islands national government.

Area councils and wards

An important aspect of provincial governments, as mandated by the 1978 Constitution and the Provincial Government Act of 1981, was the provision for Area Committees, more commonly known as Area Councils (H.M.G., 1978, 13 (b)). According to a former civil servant now residing in Nukiki, the purpose of Area Councils was to enable political representation by local chiefs, or other local

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[64] Primary school teachers' salaries are funded directly by the national government. This accounts for approximately 60% of school operating costs, the remainder of which is met by a School Grant that is provided by the provincial government. Local communities are expected to contribute to this grant in kind by undertaking working bees to improve and maintain their school's facilities (Interview #32).

[65] See also Chapter 2.

leaders, at ward level. The jurisdiction of each Area Council was the ward (Interview #10). Moore (2004) and White (2004b) were a little less specific and maintained that Area Councils were intended to provide local level government representation and, in consultation with the Provincial Government, were responsible for small regions within the province. What the responsibilities of Area Councils were was not, however, defined in the 1981 Act. In 1996 Prime Minister Mamaloni, as mentioned, introduced a new Provincial Government Act which was intended to supersede the 1981 Act. This Act "would have drawn Area Councils closer into the provincial parliaments, but the Act was challenged in the High Court and never implemented" (Moore, 2004, p. 59). By this time, however, there was widespread disillusionment with Mamaloni's leadership and he was narrowly defeated in the 1997 election. During the process of rationalisation and centralisation that followed, itself a response to the perilous financial situation that had been created by Mamaloni, another Provincial Government Act (S.I.G., 1997) was introduced and this abolished Area Councils, thus leaving a gap in government at that level (White, 2004b). In the absence of Area Councils, the only remaining formal point of contact between the ward constituents and the Provincial Government is through the ward member (Interview #3) and the ward committees these members constitute, a link that Cox and Morrison (2004) consider has become increasingly politicised.[66]

The absence of Area Councils seemed to be a serious gap in terms of connecting the Provincial Government with its constituents yet during interviews with both constituents and the Honourable Member for Batava Ward, in which Nukiki village and Taro are located, neither seemed overly concerned at their loss. Area Councils were not well supported by provincial governments and their communities. White (2004b) maintains that their elimination was a reflection of the fact that traditional leaders had continued to provide the organisational basis for local governance. The lack of support for Area Councils may also have had its roots in an earlier Plan of Operations that was instigated by the pre-independence Colonial Government in the early 1970s. This Plan, in addition to amalgamating various local councils into several larger, more viable councils also attempted to strengthen the role of

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[66] Other than stipulating the dissolution of Area Assemblies (Area Councils), the 1997 Provincial Government Act (S.I.G., 1997, Section 8(1)) provided no information on wards nor the manner in which they were to be administered. Whether Ward Committees, such as those that existed in Batava Ward, replicated the former Area Councils was not clear. Based, however, on comments from the Premier of Choiseul Province, the administration of wards was likely to be variable and reflect the ability and integrity of the Ward Member and his constituency (Interview #31).

traditional leaders and chiefs at, the then, district and sub-district levels. By 1976 the Plan had largely been implemented but a problem developed insofar as traditional leaders did not want to participate in local councils because one of their tasks would be to collect the head tax – an unpopular feature of the colonial administration. To do so would have meant a loss of respect and the degradation of their status within their respective communities (Nanau, 1997).

Another view put forward by Nanau (1997) was that Area Council Members were often ignored by central and provincial governments because many of the Area Council Members were illiterate or had a low educational background. Furthermore, Area Councils were undermined by the Provincial Government Act 1981 and Provincial Executives which failed to set clear objectives as to what Area Councils were actually responsible for. All this, according to Nanau (1997, p. 190), represented a failure by the provincial government system to "acknowledge and utilise the potential of people who (were) closely accountable to the rural populace."

White's view (2004b) that traditional leaders continue to provide the organisational basis of local governance was certainly supported by my own research findings but a weakness, in the case of Nukiki, was that local governance was largely church-focussed and was incapable of dealing with the wider, more secular socio-economic issues that the community faces today (see Chapter 6). In the World Bank-sponsored Justice for the Poor initiative, Allen et al (2013) made a parallel observation with respect to the ability of local communities to deliver justice. "While local systems (of justice) remain the dominant and preferred system for managing everyday disputes, the research makes (it) clear that kastom and the church systems are simply incapable, on their own, of dealing effectively with certain newer forms of disputation and conflict." (Allen et al., 2013, p. 69).

In the absence of Area Councils I was interested to establish what sort of linkages existed between villages such as Nukiki, and the Provincial Government. It became clear that the villagers of Nukiki saw the Provincial Government primarily as a service provider (Interviews #16 and #24) and were not really interested in matters of provincial governance. According to one villager "people don't really know what the policies of the Provincial Government are. They don't participate in the policies of the Provincial Government. What communities expect from the Provincial Government is services" (Interview #10). Services, it appears, are tangible evidence that the Provincial Government is serving the villagers' needs. This view

was corroborated by a chief, and a former Ward Member, who was living in Taro. He too had kinship linkages with one of the Nukiki tribes and clearly stated that the villagers are "interested in services, not policies" (Interview #16). However, for all this the villagers still appeared to appreciate their own Ward Member who tours around the Ward and talks to villagers. Honourable William Sualalu, I was told, is Nukiki's "voice inside the Provincial Government. People travel from Nukiki to seek him out, and he comes around to find out what the needs of the people are" (Interview #16). "Chicken, battery, piggery, and petrol" were singled out as examples of such needs!

In an interview with the Honourable Member of Batava Ward it became clear that he considered that his constituents had high expectations of him as their Ward Member. He had a clear strategy to encourage self-reliance and to build the capacity of his constituents (Interview #44) but, as much as anything, the interview served to illustrate that Ward Members were carrying a heavy workload insofar as they were the only real conduit for information to flow between ward constituents and the Provincial Government. Similarly, Ward Members through their Ward Grants, and the three national members of parliament through their Constituency Development Funds, are also primary channels through which development assistance flows to villages. While various NGOs also provide project and community funding at village level via their own programmes, in terms of day-to-day support, the villagers of Nukiki, at least, appeared to look primarily to their politicians for the provision of services and development assistance.

Although the Honourable Member for Batava Ward had a clear strategy by which he provided development assistance, this was not always so with other Ward Members. Outvoted by his own Provincial Assembly on the matter, the Premier himself considered that Ward Grants should be scrapped and used directly for infrastructure development instead. Based on information that had been provided by some wards for a pending Choiseul Province rural development plan,[67] he noted that some communities had had difficulty prioritising their development needs by allowing inter-ward jealousies to influence their decisions. Financial literacy is often lacking in rural communities, he told me, so their ability to set realistic goals is often questionable. On top of this, he observed, not all of the Honourable Members are

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[67] The Premier may have been referring to the next Choiseul Province Medium Term Development Plan which was required for the period 2012 – 2014.

honourable! Some, he said, are just 'in it' for the chiefly status of the position, the money, or to "gain lots of friends." Under the first past the post system votes can be "stacked by wantoks and the politician has to spend the rest of his term pleasing them."[68] The Premier considered that Ward Grants should be scrapped as some Members use these as an easy source of money, rather than planning and budgeting for infrastructure development which he saw as a priority (Interview #31).

Despite the fact that Area Councils are not missed it is clear that there are weaknesses in the current system of local area representation in provincial governance. Too much emphasis is placed on the Ward Member who is really the only formal link between the Provincial Government and ward constituents. If the Ward Member is good, and is well supported by strong Ward Committees, then the current system can function in terms of providing a voice for constituents within the provincial government.   However, it does place the Ward Member under considerable pressure. If, for whatever reason, the Ward Member is weak or has appropriated the process for his own purposes, then the effectiveness of local community representation within the Provincial Government is diminished, or worse, thwarted.

Challenges in providing government services

Structural issues, inadequate infrastructure and, in some instances, a lack of capacity all combine to make it difficult for the Choiseul Provincial Government to provide consistent and reliable services.   Examples of such challenges are discussed in this section.

Forestry

The villagers of Nukiki had resisted logging for over twenty years but eventually members of the Siropodoko tribe, one of the three tribes that comprise Nukiki, agreed to logging on their land. A source of considerable contention amongst the villagers (Interview #6), logging had, as discussed in Chapter 6, deeply divided the community (Interview #15).   Legislation to regulate logging in Solomon Islands

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[68] As has been discussed in Chapter 3 with respect to national politicians, traditional social obligations based on kin group loyalty are still influential in determining the manner in which power is shared and wealth distributed in Solomon Islands (Moore, 2004).

exists and provides some measure of protection for customary landowners under the much contested, and much amended, Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation (Amendment) Act 1991 (S.I.G., 1991). Although landowner rights and the process necessary to obtain a logging licence are well defined (S.I.G., n.d.-b), the Act itself struggles to reconcile matters of customary law and received law with respect to landowner rights over timber utilisation (Corrin, 1992). This mirrors, in many respects, the difficulties faced in reconciling the tenets of traditional governance with that of the Westminster system of governance.

Forest legislation was not, however, the issue that most concerned the villagers of Nukiki. A senior member of the Siropodoko tribe had been appointed as the liaison officer to mediate between the tribe and the logging company but it appeared that most of his time was taken up with labour relations, or what could be termed human resource issues. The logging operation itself, on the other hand, appeared to be largely unsupervised which was no surprise given the lack of government support for sound forest management (Frazer, 1997). In order to clarify this an interview was arranged with the Assistant Chief Forestry Officer (Operations) who, although based with the Choiseul Provincial Government was, in fact, employed by the Ministry of Natural Resources Department of Forestry, Environment and Conservation – or Forestry Division as it is commonly called. This is common practice in the provinces where the administrative arm of provincial governments comprises some staff who are posted to the province by the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS), some who are employed directly by the provincial government and some, as was the case with Forestry, who are employed by the national line ministries but seconded to the province (UNDP. et al., 2012). Such arrangements are messy and difficult to administer because staff, in some instances, must serve two masters. Forestry officers must, for example, answer to both the Commissioner of Forests in Honiara and the Provincial Secretary of Choiseul Province in Taro. Sometimes there are conflicting directions from the two authorities, such as whether to grant a logging licence (Interview #20) and this prevarication is likely to undermine the credibility of the government in rural areas.[69]

Under the Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation (Amendment) Act 1991 (S.I.G., 1991) Forestry Division are required to inspect and audit each logging operation

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[69] Structural issues, such as these, are being addressed by the Provincial Government Strengthening Programme (see next section).

and, if necessary, suspend any operation that does not meet criteria specified in the legislation. This was all very well but as was common with other provincial service providers, the two canoes belonging to the Forestry Operations section had been out of service for three months because the outboard motors had broken down and spare parts had not arrived. Consequently, all logging inspections had ceased and logging companies had been asked to provide their own log loading summaries (Interview #20), another reminder of the State's inability to provide consistent and reliable services in rural areas.

Education

The Provincial Education Office had a local reputation for being well run (Interview #35). During the period in which this research was conducted the Education Office received sufficient annual funding to make four trips around all the schools of the Province. The Chief Education Officer explained that two trips were usually made in February and July and the balance of the funds remaining kept in reserve to deal with emergencies (Interview #32). These emergencies usually required unscheduled canoe trips, an expensive proposition given the high price of petrol on Choiseul. Like the Forestry Division, the Education Office also faced logistical challenges – of their six canoes and outboard motors, only three were operational in February 2012 (Interview #32).

Provincial planning

The Chief Planning Officer, Choiseul Provincial Government, advised that "the Ward Members are the link between the Provincial Government and the communities …. this year (2012) the Planning Office are trying to investigate the link (between constituent communities and the Provincial Government) by working directly with Ward Committees" (Interview #25). The intention, apparently, was to have a planning framework and to work with Provincial Assembly (Ward) Members to set up institutions to link ward plans with the priorities of the wards. In support of this, another source - a VSA volunteer who was seconded to the Planning Office, described the needs analysis that the Planning Office had recently undertaken for each ward. Stakeholders from each ward were asked to list the main needs of the ward, and then rank these in order of importance. Apparently the 'Honourables' (Ward Members) had been separated into a couple of groups, so they could argue

amongst themselves, and this created 'space' for the other ward stakeholders to get their views across. On completion of the ranking process the intention was to note the top five needs and use these as a basis for preparing Provincial Government plans and budgets (Interview #18). Prior to the needs analysis, plans and budgets were "pretty much a wish list that was not necessarily related to the needs of the wards" (Interview #18). This, evidently, was the first time community-sourced priorities had been collected for planning purposes.

Planning at this level had not been at all common when I worked with other provincial governments between 2002 and 2008. At that time, in the wake of the 'tensions,' the performance of provincial governments throughout Solomon Islands was consistently poor insofar as service delivery was concerned. This time, on Choiseul, I was briefed by a senior officer within the Provincial Government who outlined the role the (then) newly instituted Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (PGSP) was having on developing the capacity of provincial governments (Interview #46). The needs analysis undertaken by the Choiseul Provincial Government Planning Office had been driven by this initiative (UNDP., SIG., & UNCDF., 2011).

Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme

In November 2002 the Solomon Islands Government asked its development partners to increase their focus on provincial development (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 6). The development partners agreed to do this but the lack of an existing national framework to harmonise provincial development, and the inability of each of the donors to fund a nation-wide approach to provincial development, led to three separate proposals being submitted. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) proposed to extend its pilot Isabel Provincial Development Project to an additional two provinces, RAMSI designed a programme to strengthen public administration in three provinces, and the European Union (EU) considered supporting the three remaining provinces (UNDP. et al., 2012). This was not particularly satisfactory and in response the Solomon Islands Government, through the MPGIS, "requested donors to combine forces to develop and implement one programme of support to all provinces" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 6). Following this request, the development partners agreed to collaborate with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to implement a joint programme to support the

MPGIS in all nine provinces. Known as the Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme, the initial five year phase (2008-2012) was financed by RAMSI, EU, UNCDF and UNDP (UNDP. et al., 2012).

In many respects, the PGSP puts wind in the sails of earlier attempts by the Colonial Government, and by former Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni, to create greater regional autonomy within Solomon Islands through decentralisation. The devolution of functions envisaged in the Colonial Government's 1970s Plan of Operations were not realised in the transition to independence (P. Larmour, 1985) resulting in the evolution of provincial governments that were essentially 'lame ducks,' organisations that existed in form but had very little capacity to actually function.

The Provincial Government Act 1981 that had evolved following the recommendations of the Kausimae Committee,[70] and a White Paper prepared by the post-independence Kenilorea Government in response to this, was an awkward and incomplete piece of legislation that resulted from a lack of enthusiasm for decentralisation by key members of the Kenilorea Government (P. Larmour, 1985; Moore, 2004). Mamaloni's subsequent efforts to implement decentralisation were also thwarted, particularly after the 1997 election when he was defeated and a process of greater rationalisation and centralisation within the public sector followed (Moore, 2004). This had a severe impact on the provinces which, although semi-autonomous in name, had very little in the way of financial resources, nor legislative autonomy, to determine their own affairs. Subsequent governments continued to placate provincial governments without making any substantial concessions to them (P. Larmour, 1985).

The PGSP recognises that provincial governments have been marginalised, although diplomatically attributes this to "the prevailing approaches to development management" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 6), thus ignoring the political context which allowed this situation to evolve in the first place. Nevertheless, the PGSP accurately notes that development inputs to the provinces have relied on a number of sources that effectively by-pass provincial governments, these being: centralised delivery by line ministries; financial and technical assistance channelled directly to grassroots communities through community-based organisations and NGOs, and;

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[70] The Colonial Government established a Special Committee in 1978 to make recommendations on the form of provincial governments (see Chapter 3).

financial resources channelled to communities through politicians' constituency development grants and ward grants (UNDP. et al., 2012).

The PGSP has its foundations in a pilot study undertaken by UNDP in Isabel Province in 2003. Termed the Isabel Province Development Project, this initiative set out to "strengthen service delivery, livelihoods, justice and governance, and create a body of knowledge which could be scaled up in the other provinces" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 7). Designed to break the cycle of low capacity, limited responsibility and limited resources in which most provinces found themselves, the PGSP was subsequently structured to tackle these issues in three, five-yearly phases. The overall intention has been to improve governance and service delivery by improving the ability of provinces to manage their finances (UNCDF., n.d.). Once provincial governments have 'put their house in order' in terms of public expenditure management they can then assume responsibility for the delivery of infrastructure and services under delegation arrangements with line ministries. Ultimately, it is intended, provincial governments will operate "within the full scope of their legislative mandate to become frontline public sector providers of basic infrastructure and services, managers of natural resources and promoters of local economic development" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 9).

Without stating how it will occur, the PGSP rather idealistically considers that this approach will bring to bear "central, provincial and community level resources in a co-operative multi-level governance system" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 9). A political outcome such as this is probably beyond the scope of an improved financial and resource management initiative such as the PGSP. However, what the PGSP does is to set out a very plausible approach to effective decentralised governance at provincial level. And it may well prove to be the 'circuit breaker' that finally allows greater regional autonomy as originally envisaged by the Colonial Government in their 1970s Plan of Operations.

One of the main advantages of the PGSP is that it is sponsored by RAMSI, UNDP, EU and UNCDF, international donors that all have considerable influence and who are likely to hold national government politicians' 'toes to the fire' should they begin to waiver in their commitment to increasing levels of provincial autonomy. It would, of course, be foolish to consider this *fait accompli* because much can happen over the planned fifteen year life of the project. However, a discussion in March 2012 with the officer in charge of the PGSP in Honiara was both enlightening and

encouraging; Choiseul Province was assessed by the PGSP as the top performing province, followed second by Isabel.

In the PGSP Joint programme Document (2012) the donors sponsoring the project make it very clear that "while the PGSP supports a greater developmental role for the provincial governments, it does not assume, or require a change in the Constitutional and legal framework that currently regulates them" (UNDP. et al., 2012, p. 7). Quite wisely, the donors deftly side-step the issue of whether or not Solomon Islands should adopt the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution. Nevertheless, the PGSP does provide a sound basis for greater regional autonomy, be it in the form of empowered provincial governments or the state governments of the proposed Democratic Federal Republic of Solomon Islands (S.I.G., 2011a).

The proposed federal constitution

The constitutional drafting process

Following the economic and political turmoil caused by the social unrest that took place between 1999 and 2000, there was a widespread loss of confidence in central government. Western Province, prior to independence, had harboured views of self-government (Bennett, 1987) and at various times since independence there had been calls for a federal system of government, largely in response to concerns "about the suitability of the Westminster style of government to the circumstances of Solomon Islands" (Corrin, 2007b, p. 144). In 1987 a Constitutional Review Committee reviewed the provincial government system and, although it recorded a strong preference in submissions for a federal state government (Aqorau, 2011), there was insufficient parliamentary support to see the proposed provincial government reforms passed into law (Moore, 2004).

The tensions of 1999 to 2000 finally provided the catalyst needed for political change. Out of this traumatic experience came renewed calls for constitutional reform. The 'coup,' according to Moore (2004), may have been a blessing in disguise because since independence Solomon Islanders had looked to Honiara and central government as their provider. The failure of central government imparted a salutary lesson and precipitated a "movement away from the provincial system under a central government towards some sort of state system" (Moore,

2004, p. 19). Moore maintained that by 2004 this movement had become unstoppable.

In November 2002, UNDP launched a new project in Solomon Islands with the aim of supporting constitutional reforms. Under this initiative, which was agreed to by the Government and signed by Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza, UNDP undertook to "carry out a social impact assessment and conduct widespread consultations in all of the country's nine provinces on proposals for the devolution of constitutional power and decentralisation" (UNDP, 2002). According to an editorial in the July-September Constitutional Reform Unit Quarterly Newsletter of 2011, it is likely that the annual Premiers' Conference of 2000, held in Buala – Isabel Province, was influential in securing a commitment by central government to constitutional change. Following this Conference, the Premiers issued a joint communiqué which called for more regional autonomy and greater control over their own provincial resources (S.I.G., 2011b). The review of the Constitution, which subsequently occurred, resulted in the Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands Bill 2004 which, in the preamble, noted that: "Independence from Great Britain … saw the dominion over our clan and tribal communities substituted under the Solomon Islands Independence Order 1978 for a system of unitary government which is and remains largely foreign to our communities" (as cited in Corrin, 2007a, p. 146).

In 2005 a White Paper on the Reform of (the) Solomon Islands Constitution (S.I.G., 2005) was presented to Parliament. The White Paper was more explicit in its condemnation of the 1978 Constitution, stating: "The independence constitution is a relic of its time and its regime no longer fits well within Solomon Islands. It has hindered the social, economic, constitutional transformations the country should have taken within the last 27 years" (as cited from Corrin, 2007a, p. 146). The 2005 White Paper was an important document and recommended the formation of a Constitutional Congress, the Terms of Reference of which had been decided by Cabinet in 2006. Constitutional Congress Members were appointed in 2007 and tasked with undertaking a Constitutional Reform Program as had been recommended by the 2005 White Paper. A Constitutional Reform Unit was also formed to provide secretariat duties for the Congress (S.I.G., n.d.-a). Constitutional Congress Members comprised provincial and Honiara City nominees, who were expected to represent their respective regional interests, as well as national nominees who were to represent other stakeholders of national interest. An Eminent Persons Advisory Council (EPAC) was also formed to advise and work

collaboratively with the Constitutional Congress as well as check on Congress's work when required. By 2011 the two groups were amalgamated to fast-track the process of constitutional reform (S.I.G., n.d.-a).

The process of drafting a new constitution for Solomon Islands has, of necessity, been long and painstaking. It is not the purpose of this thesis to detail this process 'blow-by-blow' but it is worth noting the main outcomes of the process because these offer increased opportunities for local participation in government. The 2004 Draft Federal Constitution, which arose from the Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands Bill 2004, became the guiding document for the Constitutional Reform Program.   In 2009 the First Joint Congress and EPAC Plenary was held to examine, clause by clause, the 2004 Draft. From this the 2009 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands was developed.   In 2011 the Second Joint Congress and EPAC Plenary was held and this made further changes to the Draft Constitution based on feedback from the provinces and Honiara City. The outcome of the Joint Plenary was the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands and it was this document that was critiqued in all provinces and Honiara City through a series of Conventions (S.I.G., n.d.-a).   These were completed by September 2012 (S.I.G., 2012b) and, according to information provided by the Constitutional Reform Program (S.I.G., n.d.-a), were to be analysed by a Third Joint Congress and EPAC Plenary in 2012. Once completed, a final draft constitution, the 2012 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands, would be prepared and audited by an independent expert with constitutional experience (S.I.G., n.d.-a). By September 2012 the Government of India was considering a proposal to provide legal experts to do this (S.I.G., 2012a).

The final activity in the development of the proposed Federal Constitution will be for the Congress to present the 2012 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands to a National Convention and to seek an indicative community response to the final draft (S.I.G., n.d.-a).   Once completed, the Constitutional Congress will officially hand over the proposed Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands to Cabinet for approval and subsequent endorsement by Parliament as the Constitutional Order of the new Federal State of Solomon Islands (S.I.G., n.d.-a). However, these final activities had not occurred at the time this thesis was written so it was possible that

changes to the process could occur, nor was it clear what the eventual outcome would be.[71]

<u>Proposed federal structure</u>

The 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands proposes three tiers of government: a Federal Government; State Governments, and; Community Governments. Sections of the proposed Constitution that are particularly relevant to this study include the formation of State Governments and, more especially, the proposal to establish Community Governments. Community Governments effectively reincarnate the former Area Councils, albeit with a more clearly defined role, and establish a local level of government that links villages far more firmly to the State Government than the Ward system currently does to Provincial Governments. As such, Community Governments will be discussed in some detail as this is the level of governance that most closely affects villages such as Nukiki, the case study of this thesis.

Under the Federal System, States gain the autonomy that has eluded provinces in the current unitary state. "A State, communities and people shall have…. the right to self autonomy in matters relating to their internal affairs within the limits given by this Constitution in the form of a State Government" (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 154 (1)). Under this arrangement each State will prepare its own constitution which, subject to the Federal Constitution and certification by the Constitution Court, will be the paramount law of the State. State legislatures and Community Governments, to the extent it is compatible with the Federal Constitution, may enact laws to allow clans, tribes and local communities to administer their own systems of justice

[71] Following the review of the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands a further draft, the 2013 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands, was prepared. Because there were a number of concerns over certain aspects of the Consitutution, the Joint Constitutional Congress and Eminent Persons Advisory Council Executive decided to defer the final Joint Plenary until an external legal auditor, and a professional legal drafter, could provide independent and impartial advice on the 2011 and 2013 Drafts (S.I.G., 2013b). This was duly undertaken and the final Joint Plenary was held early in 2014 to finalise the Draft Federal Constitution. Following this it was expected that the Constitution would be professionally drafted and then submitted to a National Convention. It would then be reviewed once more by provincial and national stakeholders. Endorsement and the final ratification would then take place (S.I.G., 2014).

Of relevance to this study, the 2013 Draft Federal Constitution reinforced the position of chiefs and other traditional leaders in the governance of tribal systems and territories incorporated in Community Governments (S.I.G., 2013a, Clause 141 (2)).

"according to their distinctive juridical customs, traditions and procedures" (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 158 (1)). Caveats, in terms of overall fairness and justice will apply. Although the 1978 Constitution did make provision for common law and customary law (H.M.G., 1978, Clause 76) it tended to be applied through Local Courts. In contrast, the proposed Federal Constitution provides a distinct opportunity for a hybrid approach to be taken in the application of law, a merging of western style 'received' law and traditional law. This is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Through Community Governments the Draft Federal Constitution has the potential to bridge the political disconnect that exists between the state and rural communities. It is, therefore, appropriate to conduct and analysis of it in relation to the objectives of this thesis, which are to determine whether hybrid forms of governance, as found at village level, could be applied within the Federal Constitution. It is also pertinent to examine the proposed political order espoused by the new Constitution to determine what forms of political hybridity are possible and whether or not these are likely to legitimise the political process for Solomon Islanders, thereby providing them with that sense of ownership that has eluded them hitherto now.

Westminster is a 'loose' term that covers a multitude of forms of government that have their origins in the British system. It is a broad political 'church' that accepts a variety of adherents, some governed under federal systems and some as unitary states. Insofar as the new Federal Constitution for Solomon Islands departs from the unitary state model of governance, it represents a significant shift in the style of governance. But, in spite of this, the proposed Democratic Federal Republic of Solomon Islands can still be accommodated within the Westminster camp. The President, the Head of State, is elected on a rotational basis by the Federal Parliament. The position, however, is largely symbolic and the real executive power lies with Parliament which has the authority to make laws for the Republic. Headed by a Prime Minister, who is elected by secret ballot from within, he or she then forms a Cabinet, comprising a Deputy Prime Minister and the other Federal Ministers, to govern the Republic through Parliament. Although Westminster is much maligned as an inappropriate form of government for Solomon Islands, the proposed Democratic Federal Republic of Solomon Islands is still, in fact, a

Westminster government insofar as the essential elements all remain.[72] The real difference with the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution is that Provinces become States and it is here that a significant devolution of power is scheduled to occur. States will be resourced and legislated to have significant influence in shaping their own destiny and this could provide a very real opportunity for Solomon Islanders to have a much more effective stake in the governance of their own affairs.

The provision for Community Governments is an important feature of the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution. The definition, however, of Community Governments is deliberately loose in the Draft Federal Constitution which leaves it up to States to determine what the qualifying criteria for Community Governments are, and how many there will be. Nevertheless, the Draft Constitution does state that Community Governments are to be "the collective expression of the power and governance base of people… vested in the tribes, clans, lineages, families or any customary groups as the case may be that exist and function in their respective autonomous existing systems and territories since time immemorial but evolving and/or modified appropriately to suit the changing circumstances of our time." (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 160 (2)).[73] Under Schedule Five of the Draft Constitution, Community Governments, amongst other things, have a mandate to regenerate the essential values of traditional governance and customary arbitration methods; control and manage customary land, boundaries and other resources; indigenise traditional 'human rights', education, Christian principles, traditional medicines and cures, labour and economic activities; as well as codify customary laws, norms and systems. As well, Community Governments, idealistically, are tasked with 'controlling' the moral standards and values of society as well as ruling over what are accepted cultural norms, customs, cultural rights, customary justice on crimes and civil wrongs (S.I.G., 2011a, Schedule 5, List IV). Community Governments are also clearly mandated to keep records and promulgate rules and regulations for business and other activities within their boundaries (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 161, List

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[72] See also Chapter 2, footnote 1.

[73] The Deputy Premier of Choiseul Province advised (Interview #24) that Community Governments will be based on *Kolabala* which, he said, means ethnic groups. If this is the case the five functioning language groups remaining on Choiseul will form the basis for defining *Kolabala*. There are actually eight languages on Choiseul (Palmer, 2005) but three are now in danger of becoming extinct (Interview #24). The basis for forming Community Governments will be extremely important.

IV). They are also required to collect tax revenue (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 162) so a high degree of administrative competence will be necessary.

If the decentralisation intended under the Federation is to succeed, the provision of sufficient funding will be absolutely necessary. State Governments will have some ability to generate revenue directly through the collection of taxes. Tax revenue sources are intended to be much the same for States and the Federal Government except that States will not gather import and export duties, and the Federal Government will not collect mining and prospecting fees (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 164, Schedule 9). An important aspect of the Draft Federal Constitution is the revenue sharing mechanism which is intended to allow a more equitable distribution of funds between States and the Federal Government (S.I.G., 2011a, Clauses 175 & 176, Schedule 9).[74] It is likely, therefore, that States will be much better funded than Provinces currently are but with this additional funding comes the responsibility of managing these funds wisely. Responsible public expenditure management is, therefore, the area that is currently being targeted by the Provincial Government Support Programme with the ultimate goal of improving governance and service delivery in the Provinces. Although the PGSP makes it quite clear that constitutional change is not necessary to achieve this (UNDP. et al., 2012), it does have the potential to assist future States enormously by improving existing Provinces' ability to manage their own financial and service delivery responsibilities competently. If successful, this will provide a sound basis for what is likely to become a core State function, that of service delivery undertaken in a fiscally responsible manner.

Long on aspirations and short on how such aspirations will be applied by State and Community Governments, the Draft Constitution is, however, clear on one thing; it is serious about delegating autonomy to the States and local communities. Although the Draft Constitution guarantees States "the right to self-autonomy in matters relating to their internal affairs" (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 154), State responsibilities are sufficiently prescribed in the Federal Constitution to ensure that they conform to the Federal norm. For example, a State must prepare its own constitution which will become the paramount law of the State. However, before

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[74] The revenue sharing ratios for all natural resources including forestry, mining, petroleum gas, agricultural products, marine and fisheries (non-migratory), air space and other natural resources are specified as: i) federal Government – 30%; ii) State and Community Governments and Resource Owners – 70% (S.I.G., 2011a, Schedule 6, Part 1(1)).

the State Constitution can be adopted it must first be confirmed by the Constitutional Court. Once the State Constitution is confirmed the State legislature will then have the power to make laws for the State (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 170), and may also establish State courts of law as prescribed by the State Constitution. States also have the freedom to allow clans or tribal communities to administer their own forms of justice according to their customs provided these customary laws are compatible with the Federal Constitution (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 158). Such powers represent a considerable advance over the limited legislative powers bestowed upon the current provinces and most certainly will provide opportunities for a level of self-autonomy that has not previously existed.

While considerable attention is given to the application of local systems of justice (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 158 (1)), and the application of modified customary forms of governance (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 160 (2)), there is also a strong requirement for sound fiscal management at both State level (see S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 163), and at Community Government level (see S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 162).   Multiple responsibilities, such as these, require a merging of customary aspects of governance with the standard financial management and service delivery functions that would be expected of a Weberian-style state (see Chapter 2). As discussed earlier, such state functions have yet to be fully developed at Provincial Government level,[75] and are less likely to exist at village level (see Chapter 5). Yet, it is at village level where hybridised forms of chiefly and church leadership have evolved (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and already provide, albeit informally, many of the elements of self-governance that are prescribed to increase local autonomy in the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution. Furthermore, such localised forms of village governance enjoy a legitimacy that the state currently does not (see Chapter 3). What is required, therefore, is a merging of these already existing hybridised forms of governance with such functions of state as are necessary for good governance, in the Weberian sense. Community Governments, it is argued, are the 'political arena' where this is best undertaken, at least in the initial phase of constitutional change, simply because this is where political legitimacy currently lies.

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[75] See previous section - Provincial Government Strengthening Programme.

Summary

The proposed Federal Constitution provides an opportunity to bridge the political disconnect that exists between the state and rural communities through Community Governments. In Community Governments, it may be possible to create a political arena in which legitimate local forms of governance can be combined with such functions of state as are necessary for good governance, in the Weberian sense. Such polities, which would be hybrid in form, would have the effect of increasing local autonomy, as prescribed by the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution, and also provide a legitimacy to the political process that has not previously existed. In terms of this thesis, this chapter demonstrates that hybrid forms of governance, such as found in Nukiki village, could have application within the proposed Federal Constitution, thereby providing a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current Westminster-based unitary state system.

In considering how Community Governments might function, the next chapter examines the application of justice in Solomon Islands. The current Solomon Islands justice system is hybrid in form and therefore provides lessons that can be applied at Community Government level. The chapter suggests a tripartite form of political hybridity as an alternative to the schema put forward by Clements et al (2007) (see Figure 1), and then discusses the challenges Community Governments are likely to face.

CHAPTER 9

CHARTING A COURSE OUT OF THE POLITICAL QUAGMIRE

The purpose of this research has been to investigate what forms of political hybridity have evolved previously, and exist currently, at local levels in Solomon Islands and whether, within the context of the proposed Federal Constitution, models of political hybridity have the potential to offer a greater degree of political legitimacy than exists under the current constitution. Chapter 3 discusses the manner in which political hybridity has evolved, historically, within Solomon Islands and Chapters 6 and 7 then analyse the model of governance that exists in Nukiki village. Here, a complementary form of political hybridity has emerged between custom as represented by chiefly authority, and the church.

The previous chapter draws attention to the Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands which offers an opportunity to overcome the political disconnect that currently exists between the state and rural communities through the application of hybrid political orders within the Community Governments that are proposed in the Constitution. One area where such political hybridity has been practised in Solomon Islands is in the application of justice. This chapter, therefore, commences by examining the justice system in Solomon Islands. Hybrid in its application, it provides useful lessons that can be adapted to other spheres of governance. The chapter suggests that a tripartite hybrid political order would be an effective way of facilitating articulation between custom, the church and the state in Community Governments. It also discusses the challenges Community Governments are likely to face. The chapter then outlines how this thesis contributes to the discourse on hybrid political orders, as well as the limitations of this research and possible directions for future research. It concludes with a quote from a senior provincial politician affirming that it is now important for Solomon Islanders to chart their own political course.

The application of justice – lessons for hybrid forms of governance

The application of justice in Solomon Islands is a hybrid system and if a model for how hybrid forms of governance might be applied at Community Government level is needed, then it would be wise to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the justice system, as it currently operates in Solomon Islands. The justice system in Solomon Islands navigates a difficult course between three systems of justice: the custom system, the state system, and justice systems applied by churches (Allen et al., 2013). These justice systems, while distinct, are not entirely separate but are linked and frequently overlap, interacting with each other in both positive and negative ways (Allen et al., 2013). In this form of hybridity three core dimensions exist in the relationship, or exchange, between the state and Solomon Islands society: that of substitution (where what might be considered state functions occur outside the state); that of complementarity (where state and customary approaches overlap), and; that of incompatibility (where modern state approaches are in conflict with customary approaches) (Clements et al., 2007).

The state system of justice that Solomon Islands inherited along with the British Westminster system of government at independence, includes "a court hierarchy and the relevant criminal and civil state justice apparatuses, including a police force" (Allen et al., 2013, p. 43). In addition, there are four tiers to the state court system. At the lowest level are Local Courts which are presided over by lay decision makers who are appointed by the resident principle magistrate on the recommendation of the provincial premier. These are the courts which are, or were, most accessible to rural Solomon Islanders. In these courts, the law or customs of the area over which the court has jurisdiction, prevail. The rules of evidence do not apply and generally, lawyers are prohibited from attending (Evans, Goddard, & Paterson, 2010). In effect, these are a first level jurisdiction court. Above Local Courts are Magistrate Courts, and beyond this the High Court and, ultimately, the Court of Appeal (Allen et al., 2013). It is the Local Courts, however, that are most relevant to this discussion because they were originally administered by local Area Councils, thereby providing access to the State justice system that was within, and relatively accessible to, rural communities.

In the rationalisation and centralisation of State services that occurred in the 1990s, Area Councils were suspended and the logistical and administrative support for Local Courts shifted to Honiara, becoming the responsibility of the Chief Magistrate.

This, along with the degradation of government services in general, had a dramatic effect on Local Courts (Goddard, 2010) which virtually ceased to function, thus earning them the dubious reputation of being "the most dysfunctional level of court operating in Solomon Islands" (Allen et al., 2013, p. 47). In the absence of effective local access to the State justice system, rural Solomon Islanders were compelled to rely almost solely on local forms of justice to settle and resolve their disputes.

The application of local justice was a topic that arose numerous times during the interviews that were conducted in Nukiki village and Taro. One of the questions asked during interviews concerned how effectively issues were resolved in the village (see Appendix 4) and this would often turn to matters of justice. It became clear that many villagers of Nukiki preferred matters of justice to be resolved by custom, rather than by the state (Interviews #6, #7, #13, #30). They were not alone in this view. A Commissioner of Justice, Reconciliation and Peace, who was based in Honiara, advised of the conflict between restorative justice, as applied by the chiefs, and 'repudiative' justice, as applied by the state. He also went on to explain that Choiseul Province still depends on Western Province for its court hearings and that as "the years pass, there are still no hearings and the cases pile up." The police, he said, are also absent from communities in their time(s) of need so "the church and custom chiefs stand in to pacify the situation because the authority of the church and chiefs are recognised locally" (Interview #1).

Two long-standing friends in Nukiki village elaborated on this further by explaining why villagers preferred to use custom and the church to resolve matters than go to the police. One explained that it was the job of the chief to resolve matters such as theft (Interview #6) and the other explained that "crimes, disputes and other issues confronting the community are worked out within the community." When dealing with such issues: "the chief will always consult with the *Batu lotu* (church leader) and a time will be set to look at the issue. The parties involved will then be called together to reach a solution." He described two kinds of solutions which were to: settle the problem with compensation, and; ask both parties if they can forgive each other. If they agreed to this "then they will pray over the issue at a reconciliation ceremony (but) if the problem is not solved within the village structure then the chief or *Batu lotu* may take the matter to the police but will continue to seek reconciliation within the community" (Interview #7).

The account given by the Justice, Reconciliation and Peace Commissioner in Honiara, and my friends in Nukiki village, corroborated closely the findings of Allen et al (2013). In their report, entitled *Justice Delivered Locally*, Allen et al (2013) noted that although local disputants seeking justice called upon all three types of justice systems to resolve or mediate their disputes (state justice, customary justice, and the church), 'kastom' was the most commonly invoked system (see also Dinnen & Allen, 2016). McDougall and Kere (2011, p. 158), in discussing the role of Christianity, custom and the law in conflict and peace-making in Solomon Islands, also noted that "local processes of dispute management are robust and diverse and that Solomon Islanders are willing to utilise different principles as the situation calls for it." McDougall and Kere (2011, p. 148) also explain that "Christianity and customs are entwined," and most Solomon Islanders emphasise the compatibility of the two "in contexts of dispute resolution, seeing them as complementary or alternative paths to the same end goal." Such complementary hybrid forms of dispute resolution were certainly evident in Nukiki village where it may be undertaken by both chiefs and the church (see Chapter 6). Customary dispute resolution, however, often involved compensation whereas if the dispute was resolved by the church, it did not (Interview #33). The primary purpose of church-based dispute settlement was, in fact, to restore social order and relationships on the basis that the community is "undifferentiated … and unified under a single God" (McDougall & Kere, 2011, p. 149). The ritual of dispute settlement is, therefore, almost entirely verbal – involving prayer, confessions, apologies and admonishment (McDougall & Kere, 2011).

Allen et al (2013, p. 65) also note that:

> kastom and church-based dispute resolution are, in general terms, seen as intertwined and mutually supportive, with common underlying goals and values: the restoration of group relations and community cohesion at the local level. By contrast, the state justice system is often seen as a distinct, parallel system focussed on individual retribution and punishment.

Danny, the Chief of the Sirpodoko tribe in Nukiki, would certainly have agreed with this. He told me that "when matters are dealt with by the law, the issue is handled lawyer to lawyer. People don't know what will happen then. Even if the law sends someone to prison they must still face the tribe when they are released and here (in the village) the matter may still have to be settled by custom" (Interview #33).

Members of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), who were based at Taro Police Station, were also interviewed. They explained that most cases they investigate could actually be settled by the chiefs. Chiefs, however, can also bring matters to court if they wish. If this occurs police officers will go to the village to discuss the matter with the chief, explain the process of arrest, and then the process of taking the matter to court where, eventually, the court will make a ruling. The police officers also observed that as most villagers are not educated they prefer to stick to the customary system of law. The police, for their part, will look at the crime and, if necessary, step in and override customary law if what has been committed is serious and it is in the 'public interest' to do so (Interview #26).

Noting that Solomon Islands society is changing, the police officers also observed that some people no longer respect, or trust, their chief. Intermarriage between villagers and members of outside tribes may mean that the chief no longer has authority over people with mixed tribal ancestry. They also observed that there are now plenty of educated people in the villages and they may not listen to the chief if he is uneducated. These people would tend to come to the police over an issue instead. Other villagers, however, find it hard to understand 'white man's law' if all they have known is customary law (Interview #26). Overall, it seemed that much discretion and wisdom was required by the police as to how they applied state law in a manner that was compatible with local custom and church law.

It was hardly surprising that some villagers find 'white man's law' hard to understand. Allen et al (2013, p. 46) found that Local Courts, "to the extent that they are used … are not well understood by the parties, as the formal English language used and the common law rules of evidence are completely foreign to most." Yet, for all this, Local Courts are still important to the wider legal system because it is here that customary land disputes must first be heard, should they be passed on to the state justice system by the local 'Council of Chiefs' (Interview #35), and before they can proceed to a higher level court.[76] Solomon Islanders, paradoxically, have also expressed "a strong desire for the effective articulation between the three systems (of justice) that can enhance the capabilities of all of them" (Allen et al., 2013, p. 34). Furthermore, Dinnen and Allen (2016, p. 79)

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[76] If land disputes cannot be resolved by the Local Council of Chiefs, they can be heard in the Local Court and, if not resolved there, passed up to the Customary Land Appeal Court, and then on to the High Court if necessary (Allen et al., 2013).

maintain that: "Rural communities are conscious of the growing limitations of the local (non-state) institutions in the light of new types of conflict stresses; (and) they see a legitimate and singular role for aspects of what might be characterised as a Weberian state" (see Chapter 5).

Just as Allen et al (2013) have observed that the three justice systems interact with each other in both positive and negative ways, Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 8) also note that "traditional authority systems and churches operate in tension with each other and often with the state." While traditional authority and the church operate in relative harmony in Nukiki village, this was not the case everywhere (Interview #12). Menzies (2007, p. 5), in fact, "sees the mixture of formal law and kastom at village level as problematic." This, he considers, usually leads to confusion and hybridised implementation which can cause conflict and seemingly hypocritical actions. Local traditional mechanisms of justice, he concludes, need to "operate within the comforting shadow of effective state based law" (Menzies, 2007, p. 16).[77] As chiefs no longer have the power to ensure compliance, the backing of a strong and reliable state justice system is necessary to maintain order at local levels (McDougall & Kere, 2011). Or, as one leader from Vakombo in North New Georgia observed: "We need the sting of the law to make people a little frightened" (as cited in Dinnen & Allen, 2016).

Community Governments - articulating between custom, church and state to achieve political hybridisation

Forming effective Community Governments will be challenging as they will have the difficult task of blending western style governance (financial management and service delivery) with other objectives that are more important under custom and to the church. The difficulties of merging customary, church and state forms of governance notwithstanding, many Solomon Islanders have, as already cited from Allen et al (2013), expressed a strong desire for effective articulation between the three systems of justice to enhance the capabilities of all of them. And, in many

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[77] This is espoused by the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands which prescribes: "A State, communities and people shall have … the right to self-autonomy in matters relating to their internal affairs within the limits given by this Constitution" (S.I.G., 2011a, Clause 154 (1)).

respects, this could be the underlying lesson for Community Governments: effective articulation between custom, church and state must be achieved if a form of governance that is more aligned to the local Solomon Islands 'way of doing things' is ever to be realised.

A Community Government that allows effective articulation between custom, the church and the state could be represented by a tripartite hybrid political order – an arrangement where all three forms of governance – custom, church and state – overlap (see Figure 4). At the point where custom, church and the state overlap completely, articulation between all three forms of governance will occur and political complementarity will exist. Beyond this point, the relative influence of each form of governance is likely to vary depending on the socio-political composition of the Community Government at that time. Here, varying degrees of articulation, which incorporate substitution and incompatibility, are likely to exist (see Clements et al., 2007, Chapter 2).

A tripartite model of hybridity contrasts with the schema of Clements et al (2007, see Figure 1) where forms of governance are portrayed using two linear axes – *type of governance*, and *effectiveness of governance*. Clements et al describe the type of governance as a continuum whereby hybrid governance can vary from what is primarily a customary form of governance through to Weberian-style state governance. The tripartite model of hybridity proposed in this thesis incorporates customary and state orders as well as legal pluralism, but it differs in the way it views civil society. In Solomon Islands, civil society is represented, for the most part, by the church (Richmond, 2011) and to define it as anything else would be to perpetuate what Comaroff & Comaroff (1999) describe as a 'western normative veneer' that supplants really-existing local actors. Woods (2008, as cited by Richmond, 2011) maintains that in Solomon Islands civil society has not emerged.

In the linear schema of Clements et al (2007), the effectiveness of governance is portrayed as a (vertical) continuum – varying from fragile governance and violent conflict, at worst, to effective governance and social peace, at best. The worst case scenario of this continuum does not especially apply to Choiseul because the province was not directly affected by the violence of the 1998 – 2003 tensions (see Chapter 2). Effective governance and social peace does, however, have application and this is likely to occur in a tripartite hybrid political order where all three forms of governance overlap.

Figure 4   Community governments – tripartite hybrid political orders
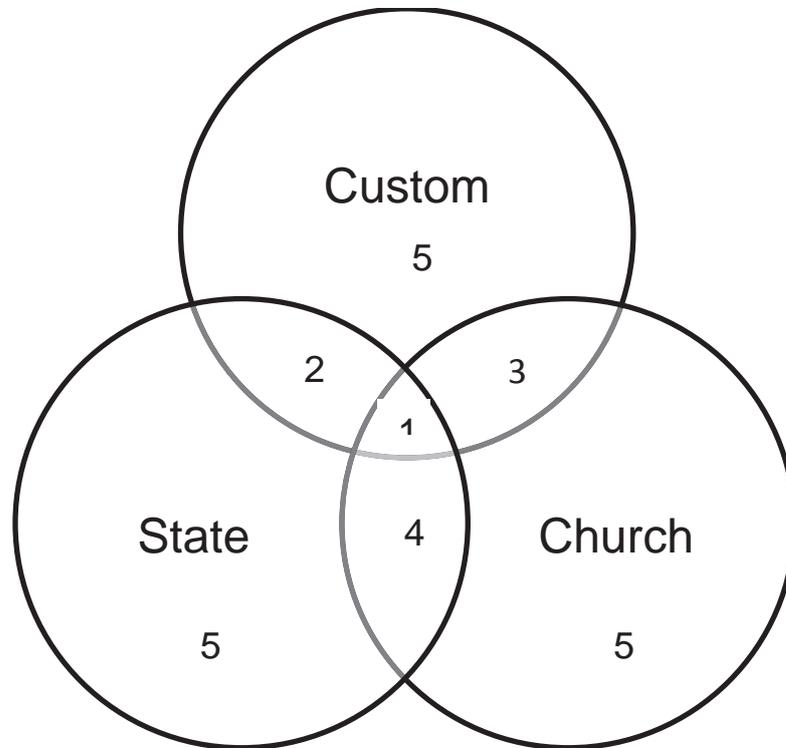
Core dimensions of political hybridity:

1. Complementarity between custom, church and the state
2. Complementarity between custom and the state (incompatibility with church)
3. Complementarity between custom and the church (incompatibility with state)
4. Complementarity between the state and the church (incompatibility with custom)
5. Elements of substitution and incompatibility with other forms of governance

(See Text Box 1)

Text Box 1   Core dimensions of political hybridity[78] as practised on Choiseul

Complementarity between custom, church and the state

Degrees of complementarity exist between custom, church and the state in aspects of the justice system (see earlier this chapter) where, for example, the police use their discretion as to how they apply state law in a manner that is compatible with local custom and church law. Ward Committees (see Chapters 4 and 8), the formal link between villages and the Provincial Government, also comprise elements of complementarity insofar as the hybrid polities of village governance (custom and church) interact with the state.

Complementarity between custom and the state

While Ward Grants may (possibly) be allocated in liaison with Ward Committees, the allocation of Constituency Development Funds by national members of parliament (see Chapter 5) is more likely to be an interaction between the parliamentarian and his/her constituents. As such, it could represent an example of complementarity between custom and the state.

Complementarity between custom and the church

Village governance, as practised within Nukiki, is a clear form of complementarity between custom and the church. While there are interactions with the Provincial Government (e.g. through the Ward Member, education, health police and forestry officers), the day-to-day governance of village matters is handled in relative harmony between the chiefs and the church (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Complementarity between the state and the church

Examples of this dimension of political hybridity were not specifically observed during the course of this research but it was noted that the Premier of the Choiseul Province relied on church leaders to relay information to the villages (see Chapter 6). In this respect church leaders facilitated state governance by acting as a conduit through which the Provincial Government could dispense and receive information.

Elements of substitution and incompatibility with other forms of governance

Custom, church and the state all comprised elements of governance that were specific to that particular institution and, thus, incompatible with other forms of governance. Substitution, on the other hand, has been a significant factor in the transition that has occurred in Solomon Islands society. This has been most pronounced in the area of religion and the protocols of governance associated with this. Here, Christainity has largely (but not completely) replaced customary forms of religion (see Chapter 7).

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[78] See Chapter 2.

Achieving a tripartite political order will be challenging, but it is feasible. Huge changes have occurred in Choiseulese society since planters, traders, missionaries and colonial officers first set foot in the Western District of Solomon Islands in the late 1800s. People have adapted to these external influences and, in turn, shaped them and harnessed them for their own use. Examples of this abound. Gegeo (1998) discusses ways in which the Kwa'arae people of Malaita have brought about change in their own society by adopting and modifying practices and knowledge from the outside and integrating these introduced ideas with their own traditional knowledge, giving it 'life' through the work of their own hands (see Chapter 3). As noted earlier, Dinnen (2009) describes how in the post-colonial state of Solomon Islands the differentiation between state and society became progressively blurred. The indigenisation of the post-colonial state, he observed, "appears to invert Habermas' famous contention that the 'lifeworld' is progressively colonised by the 'system' in late industrial society. In Solomon Islands … evidence suggests that important aspects of the state (as 'system') have been colonised by the Melanesian lifeworld" (Dinnen, 2009, p. 76). As discussed in Chapter 3, this had severe implications for Solomon Islands in terms of maintaining political integrity but, if nothing else, it does serve to illustrate that Solomon Islanders are resilient and more than capable of taking outside ideas and systems and transforming them to serve their own purposes.

There is no guarantee that Community Governments would not also be 'captured' by sectarian interests. Forsyth (2009, p. 228), in discussing the working of hybrid schemes involving *kastom* and the state justice system in Vanuatu, notes that "they are susceptible to domination by local big-men and can in fact perpetuate power imbalances." The broader policy challenge, Forsyth (2009, p. 228) observes, "is how to avoid the capture of such institutions by sectional interests (or indeed domination by power inequalities) while allowing them to remain responsive to local circumstances." And therein lies the dilemma. Whatever political entities evolve, and what form they take, cannot be determined by outsiders. This has not worked in the past (see Chapter 3). Solomon Islanders are well-versed in adopting and adapting exogenous influences for their own purposes (see Gegeo, 1998; McDougall, 2011) and they need to be able to continue to do this – even if this process reproduces existing power inequalities in a different form.[79] Community

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[79] This, however, may change over time as communities develop through, for example, improvements in education and greater participation in the cash economy (see Chapter 5), and also as notions of citizenship and national identity become less abstract (see Chapter 3).

Governments will provide them with an opportunity to bridge the political disconnect that exists between the state and rural communities. In Community Governments, it will be possible to create a political arena in which legitimate local forms of governance can be combined with such functions of state as are necessary for good governance, in the Weberian sense. Such polities, which would be hybrid in form, would have the effect of increasing local autonomy, as prescribed by the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution. They would also provide a greater legitimacy to the political process than exists under the current Westminster-based unitary state system, and provide Solomon Islanders with an opportunity to chart a course out of the political quagmire in which they have been embroiled since independence.

Refining the discourse on hybrid political orders

This thesis contributes to the literature on hybrid political orders in four significant ways:

Firstly, it provides a detailed study of a hybrid political order in a local rural context in Solomon Islands. Prior to this study, little research had been undertaken on contemporary hybrid political orders in Solomon Islands. The thesis investigates the capacity hybrid political orders have to create social resilience as well as mediate external differences at a local level. This social resilience has enabled communities, such as Nukiki village on Choiseul, to continue to function in times of national turmoil and state failure.

Secondly, this thesis fills a gap in literature on the interaction between traditional forms of governance, the church and the state in a local context in Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands. This adds to the body of literature that already exists on the interaction between chiefly, church and state authority in neighbouring Isabel Province, and extends the discussion by introducing the concept of hybrid political orders as a means by which this interaction is mediated.

Thirdly, this thesis interrogates the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands in order to determine whether it provides the opportunity for hybrid political orders to achieve the Constitution's objective of providing a greater degree of autonomy to local communities. Little scholarly attention has been given as to how

constitutional reform might be applied at the local community level in Solomon Islands so this thesis provides a useful contribution in this respect. In considering the dynamics of a specific local hybrid polity, this thesis analyses the manner in which it operates and draws conclusions as to its potential, and its limitations, for application within a wider political context as defined by the proposed Federal Constitution.

Finally, the thesis considers an alternative form of governance to that promulgated by conventional state building models. If state building is to have any measure of success in post-conflict societies such as Solomon Islands, it must be embedded in and engage with the societal structures of those communities. In providing a detailed study of a functioning hybrid political order, the thesis addresses issues that could usefully influence the shape of peace building and state formation, thus adding to the broader body of work in relation to post-conflict societies.

Limitations of this research and possible directions for future research

The results of this research are based, primarily, on field research undertaken in a single village on the island of Choiseul. While interviews with leaders from throughout the province corroborate many of the findings derived from Nukiki village, the model of hybrid governance that is practised in Nukiki may be applied in a different manner elsewhere on Choiseul, and in other parts of Solomon Islands. In order to verify whether the model of political hybridity derived in this thesis has application elsewhere in Solomon Islands, further afield in Melanesia, and outside the region, additional research may need to be undertaken in these localities.

An important objective of the proposed Federal Constitution is to provide a greater degree of autonomy to local communities. The nation of Solomon Islands comprises numerous segmentary societies, each with their own customs and sense of identity. Thus, the argument that hybrid political orders have the potential to play a significant role within Community Governments may also need to be evaluated in other localities to determine whether such polities also have an application there.

Finally …

One of the participants at the Choiseul Provincial Convention to consider the Draft Constitution was the Speaker of the Western Province Government, and a former national government Minister of Law and Justice. Supportive of the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution, the Speaker saw this as a home-grown political movement, "an opportunity to plot their own political future and come up with something more appropriate to Solomon Islands than the political system they currently have" (interview #28). He noted that elder statesmen, such as Sir Peter Kenilorea, who were initially sceptical of constitutional reform, were now firmly behind it. The Speaker also observed that Australia and New Zealand had not been supportive but he considered that "it was (now) important for Solomon Islanders to chart their own political course" (Interview # 28). This thesis seeks to support this aspiration.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

31 August 2011

Ross Cassells
562 Turitea Road
RD 2
PALMERSTON NORTH 4472

Dear Ross

Re: Custom, Governance and Westminster in the Solomon Islands: Is There a Way Out of This Mess?

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 25 August 2011.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc   Assoc Prof Glenn Banks   Prof Judith Bennett
           School of People, Environment and Planning   Department of History and Art History
           PN331   University of Otago
                                                            PO Box 56
           Mrs Mary Roberts, HoS Secretary   **Dunedin 9054**
           School of People, Environment and Planning
           PN331

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Te Kunenga   **Research Ethics Office,** Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
ki Pūrehuroa   T +64 6 350 5573 +64 6 350 5575 F +64 6 350 5622
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                www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix 2

Solomon Islands Government
Research Permit

THE RESEARCH ACT 1982
(No. 9 of 1982)

RESEARCH PERMIT

Permission is hereby given to:

1. Name: *Mr. Rose Macdonald Cassells.*

2. Country: **New Zealand.**

3. To undertake research in (subjects): *The topic of Custom, governance and Westminster in the Solomon Islands.*

4. Ward(s): *Choiseul Bay, Nukiki Village.*

5. Province(s): *Choiseul.*

6. Conditions:

   a. To undertake research only in the subject areas specified in 3 above.
   b. To undertake research only in the ward(s) and Province(s) specified in 4 and 5 above.
   c. To observe with respect at all times local customs and the way of life of people in the area in which the research work is carried out.
   d. You must not, at any time, take part in any political or missionary activities or local disputes.
   e. You must leave 4 copies of your final research report in English with the Solomon Islands Government Ministry responsible for research at your own expense.
   f. A research fee of *SBD300.00* and deposit sum of *SBD200.00* must be paid in full or the Research Permit will be cancelled. (See sec. 3 Subject. 7 of the Research Act).
   g. This permit is valid until __31/03/2012__ provided all conditions are adhered to.
   h. No live species of plants and animals may be taken out of the country without approval from relevant authorities.
   i. A failure to observe the above conditions will result in automatic cancellation of this permit and the forfeit of your deposit.

Signed: .... Date: 24 -1 -12

Minister for Education and Human Resources Development

Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form

Custom, Governance and Westminster in Solomon Islands: A study to investigate whether local governance can be more effective

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being sound recorded. Yes/No

A agree to my photograph being published. Yes/No

I consent to my name or the name of my organisation being used when my comments or opinions are used in this research. Yes/No

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed. Yes/No
If yes, please provide your (email) address:

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name – printed:

Village Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Village leadership

1. Chief(s):

2. Church leader(s):

3. Senior women:

4. What other decision-making groups exist within the village:

   school:
   women's group:
   youth group:
   other:

5. Who are the leaders:

Issues

6. What are the main concerns in the village:

7. How are these concerns dealt with:

8. Are these concerns discussed collectively:

   - with wantoks:
   - in groups:
   - at a village meeting:
   - other:

9. How are decisions reached:

   - by consensus:
   - by a leader:
   - another way:

10. How are decisions recorded:

    - orally:
    - in writing:
    - another way

11. Is the decision-making process different for different issues:

    - list issues: (e.g. land, trees, crops, law & order)

12. Who makes the decisions about these issues:

    - name and title:
    - basis for authority:
    - extent of authority:

13. Role of organisations in decision-making:

- what role does custom play:
- what role does Christianity play:
- what role does Western thinking play:

14. How are disputes resolved:

Responsibilities for governance

15. What village matters are the responsibility of the provincial government (or national government):

16. Do they meet their responsibilities, or do village, church or other leaders have to do this (substitution):

17. Are there some areas where both the village, church or other leaders and government work together (complementarity):

18. Are there some areas where the government is in conflict with customary laws (incompatibility):

Effectiveness of governance

19. How effectively are issues resolved/managed?

20. Are outcomes positive or negative?

21. Could it be done more effectively? How?

Appendix 5

Schedule of Interviews

Interview	Name	Position	Location of Interview
1	Rev. Graham Mark	Commissioner of Justice, Reconciliation and Peace. Church of Melanesia	Honiara
2	Rev. Aitken Zaku	Church of Melanesia	Honiara
3	Hon. Jackson Kiloe	Premier, Choiseul Province	Taro
4	Simmy Vazara	Former Premier, Choiseul Province	Taro
5	Chief William Peni	Chief of Sarekana Clan. Chairman Nukiki School Committee	Nukiki
6	---	Village elder	Nukiki
7	Leslie Inokana	Village elder	Nukiki
8	Paul Vazara	Villager	Nukiki
9	Pastor Frank Taqebatu	United Church Pastor	Nukiki
10	Charles Vunagi	Villager and former civil servant	Nukiki
11	Hon. Harrison Benjamin	Choiseul Provincial Government Member	Taro
12	Chief Leneus Manavakana	Molevaga village	Taro
13	Chief Leadley Pitasua	Vuraqo village	Taro
14	Nevelyn Manavakana	President, Choiseul Council of Women	Taro

Interview	Name	Position	Location of Interview
15	---	Siropodoko tribe member	Taro
16	Franklin Papobatu	Former Batava Ward Member	Taro
17	Billy Savevai	Siropodoko tribe member, former Batava Ward Member	Taro
18	Scott Butcher	VSA volunteer	Taro
19	Leslie Inokana	Village elder	Nukiki
20	Robertson Pekoto	Assistant Chief Forestry Officer (Operations), Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation	Taro
21	Jiulyn Galo	United Church Women's Fellowship Coordinator	Taro
22	Viola Malasa	Coordinator - Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education	Taro
23	Agnes Jacov	Retired teacher	Taro
24	Hon. Alpha Kimata	Deputy Premier, Choiseul Province	Taro
25	Geoffrey Pakipoda	Chief Planning Officer, Choiseul Provincial Government	Taro

Interview	Name	Position	Location of Interview
26	Sergeant Margaret Bisa (and staff)	Officer in Charge, Taro Police Station	Taro
27	Lisa Haruwe	Founder - United Church Women's Fellowship groups	Taro
28	Hon. Jackson Piasi	Speaker, Western Province	Taro
29	Scott Butcher	VSA volunteer	Taro
30	Chief Wally Provan	Chief of Kubo Clan, Panarui village. Secretary Batava Council of Chiefs	Taro
31	Hon. Jackson Kiloe	Premier, Choiseul Province	Taro
32	Davis Pitamama	Chief Education Officer, Choiseul Provincial Government	Taro
33	Chief Danny Dokabule	Chief of Siropodoko Tribe	Nukiki
34	Leslie Inokana	Village elder	Nukiki
35	Luke Soko	President of Land Court, Vice Chairman Nukiki School Committee	Nukiki
36	Ethel Poqesoko	Leader, United Church Nukiki Women's Fellowship	Nukiki

Interview	Name	Position	Location of Interview
37	Chief William Peni	Chief of Sarekana Clan. Chairman Nukiki School Committee	Nukiki
38	Joy Vunagi	Forestry Extension Officer, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation	Nukiki
39	Wished to remain anonymous	United Church office holder	Nukiki
40	Solomon Zarabule	Village elder	Nukiki
41	Constance Isanaru & Dorothy Peni	United Church Nukiki Women's Fellowship members	Nukiki
42	Chief William Peni	Chief of Sarekana Clan. Chairman Nukiki School Committee	Nukiki
43	---	Villager and former civil servant	Nukiki
44	Hon. William Sualalu	Batava Ward Member	Taro
45	Delmay Vazara	Senior member Seventh Day Adventist Dorcus Group	Taro
46	Wished to remain anonymous	Choiseul Provincial Government	Taro
47	Chief William Peni	Chief of Sarekana Clan. Chairman Nukiki School Committee	Nukiki

Appendix 6

Summary of 1986 Census Information
Nukiki Village Hamlets

Hamlet	HHs	Male	Female	Total
005 Bisivugala	2	9	8	17
006 Vakatipu	8	40	33	73
007 Nukiki	11	34	27	61
008 Tarapasike	9	29	28	57
009 Kele Kele	1	5	7	12
010 Maluku	4	11	14	25
011 Kalakalanga	3	10	7	17
012 Tuana	6	12	18	30
013 Lonely Point	2	6	9	15
014 Seuseu	1	5	2	7
Total	47	161	153	314

Solomon Islands 1986 Population Census Report 3A: Provincial Summary. Western Province (1986)

Appendix 7

Nukiki United Church
Congregational Statistical Data Report
2010-2011

Community	Adults Age 36+		Youth Age 14-35		Children Age 0-13		Disabled		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Solovai	4	2	10	5	10	12	-	-	43
Vakatipu	37	30	49	49	53	50	2	4	274
Loboro	33	24	24	30	37	29	1	3	181
Tarepasika	32	34	39	30	30	20	2	4	191
Karakone	34	30	40	35	35	39	4	4	221
Total	140	120	162	149	165	150	9	15	910

Pastor Frank Taqebatu (2012)