

**Ownership of Fijian Inshore Fishing Grounds:
Community-Based Management Efforts, Issues of
Traditional Authority and Proposed Changes in
Legislation**

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INTRODUCTION

Devolution of management represents an alternative approach to formerly centralized and top-down coastal marine resource management; it is being considered by many nations today and is already used intensively in some, with varying degrees of success.¹ This bottom-up approach to resource governance has developed many faces, including community-based, customary, or participatory management. There has been wide acknowledgement of the necessity of bringing local users and stakeholders into the management process,² but so far this has often proven problematic in fiscal and

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1. P. Christie, A. White and E. Deguit, "Starting Point or Solution? Community-Based Marine Protected Areas in the Philippines," *Journal of Environmental Management* 66, no. 4 (2002): 441–454; L. Bolido and A.T. White, "Reclaiming the Island Reefs," *People and the Planet* 6, no. 2 (1997): 22–23; K. Ruddle, "Administration and Conflict Management in Japanese Coastal Fisheries," FAO Fisheries Technical Paper 273 (1987); A.T. White and H.P. Vogt, "Philippine Coral Reefs Under Threat: Lessons Learned After 25 Years of Community-Based Reef Conservation," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 40 (2000): 537–550.

2. F. Berkes, J. Colding and C. Folke, "Rediscovery of TEK as Adaptive Management," *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000): 1,251–1,262; S. Jentoft and B.J. McCay, "User Participation in Fisheries Management: Lessons Learned from International Experiences," *Marine Policy* 19 (1995): 227–246; R.E. Johannes, "The Renaissance of Community-Based Marine Resource Management in Oceania," *Ocean Yearbook* 22: 291–321.

regulatory senses. Community-based marine resource management (CBMRM) has become more prominent in Oceania than in any other tropical region in the world, and the view exists that it has much to contribute to small-scale fisheries management worldwide.³ However, local social and ecological characteristics are often still neglected in CBMRM efforts, perhaps due to lack of financial or personal capacity for such investigations, including focused initiatives. Respected and supported community leadership is a key factor for marine resource conservation.⁴ Customary area ownership, where it still exists, is another very important factor for both CBMRM efforts and the status of traditional authority and village leadership. This article investigates the correlation of these three aspects in a specific setting in Fiji.

In areas where local resource users are isolated from central governments and urban centers, as is the case in many small island developing

Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics 33 (2002): 317–340; D. Pauly, V. Christensen, S. Guenette, T.J. Pitcher, U.R. Sumaila, C.J. Walters, R. Watson and D. Zeller, “Towards Sustainability in World Fisheries,” *Nature* 418 (2002): 689–695; Ruddle, see n. 1 above; K. Ruddle, “Social Principles Underlying Traditional Inshore Fisheries Management in the Pacific Basin,” *Marine Resource Economics* 5, no. 4 (1988): 351–363.

3. U. Fa’asili and I. Kelekolio, “The Use of Village Bylaws in Marine Conservation and Fisheries Management,” *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 11 (1999): 7–11; E. Hviding and K. Ruddle, *A Regional Assessment of the Potential Role of Customary Marine Tenure Systems (CMT) in Contemporary Fisheries Management in the South Pacific* (Nadi, Fiji: Forum Fisheries Agency, 1991), p. 20; S. Iwakiri, *Coastal Land Tenure and Exploitation of Marine Resources in the South Pacific Islands*, Economic Policy and Fisheries Management: Third France-Japan Conference in Oceanography, IFREMER, Nantes (Paris, France: Institut Océanographique, 1991); R.E. Johannes, “Traditional Marine Conservation Methods in Oceania and Their Demise,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 9 (1978): 349–364; Johannes, see n. 2 above; Ruddle, see n. 1 above; K. Ruddle, “The Context of Policy Design for Existing Community-Based Fisheries Management Systems in the Pacific Islands,” *Ocean and Coastal Management* 40 (1998): 105–126; UNESCO, *Evolution of Village-Based Marine Resource Management in Vanuatu Between 1993 and 2001*, R.E. Johannes and F.R. Hickey, Coastal region and small island papers 15 (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2004).

4. G.M. Fong, *Case Study of a Traditional Marine Management System: Sasa Village, Macuata Province, Fiji*, Food and Agriculture Organisation (Rome, Italy: FAO, 1994), p. 85; S. Jentoft, ed., *Commons in a Cold Climate, Coastal Fisheries and Reindeer Pastoralism in North Norway: The Co-Management Approach*, Man and the Biosphere Series (Paris, France: UNESCO, 1998); J.R. McGoodwin, “‘Nowadays, Nobody Has Any Respect’: The Demise of Folk Management in a Rural Mexican Fishery,” in *Folk Management in the World’s Fisheries, Lessons for Modern Fisheries Management*, ed. C.L. Dyer and J.R. McGoodwin (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1994), pp. 43–54; J. Robertson and M.J. Lawes, “User Perceptions of Conservation and Participatory Management of iGxalingenwa Forest, South Africa,” *Environmental Conservation* 32, no. 1 (2005): 64–75.

States (SIDS), participation in and agreement on management decisions can be problematic. The devolution of resource management is thus expected to offer potential benefits to governments and local communities—anticipated outcomes include greater scope for sustainability, efficiency, and equity of resource use—but for many countries it remains unclear or uncertain how and whether these can be achieved and sustained in practice. One constraint may be unresolved user or resource ownership rights; another may be the lack of effective information exchange between the authorities (e.g., fisheries officials and local village chiefs), including the uptake of relevant knowledge and perceptions of resource status and management plans or already implemented measures.⁵ By paying attention to the more traditional notion of local communities as webs of social interaction tied to place, history, and identity,⁶ an increasing proportion of managers and researchers are recognizing the value of CBMRM.

Resource management generally involves restrictions on the ways in which people exploit resources, and, especially because CBMRM requires some hard decisions as to when social values are more important than technical merits.⁷ CBMRM should not be considered as static, but rather as a dynamic social invention shaped by local experience and influenced by external forces.⁸ Attempts to create or strengthen contemporary CBMRM systems should be based upon a realistic assessment of the motives, ethics, interests, and cultural conceptions that drive local actors.⁹ CBMRM is more about the resource users (the community) than the resources; it is about the management of human activities in relation to the resources.¹⁰ Human management and conservation activities are driven by various mutually linked forces, for example, support by contacts (e.g., with government officials), knowledge and education, religion, community dynamics and hierarchy, or perceptions. Social issues of a general nature, such as justice, power, and equity, penetrate local resource management systems in ways

5. A. Cooke and K. Moce, "Current Trends in the Management of Qoliqoli in Fiji," *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 5 (1995): 2–7; Ruddle, see n. 1 above.

6. S. Jentoft, B.J. McCay and D.C. Wilson, "Social Theory and Fisheries Management," *Marine Policy* 22, no. 4–5 (1998): 423–436.

7. M. Amos, "Traditionally Based Marine Management Systems in Vanuatu," *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 2 (1993): 14–17; Jentoft, see n. 4 above; Johannes, see n. 2 above; UNESCO, see n. 3 above.

8. C. Bailey and C. Zerner, "Community-Based Fisheries Management Institutions in Indonesia," *Marine Anthropological Studies* 5, no. 1 (1992): 1–17.

9. Bailey and Zerner, see n. 8 above; Johannes, see n. 2 above; J.R. McGoodwin, *Understanding the Cultures of Fishing Communities: A Key to Fisheries Management and Food Security*, Fisheries Technical Paper 401 (Rome, Italy: FAO, 2001).

10. Jentoft, see n. 4 above; McGoodwin, see n. 9 above.

that may distort their functioning.¹¹ A respected village leadership has been mentioned as a key factor for successful CBMRM; changing leadership and community instability can have a distorting effect on CBMRM and conservation efforts and need to be better understood.¹²

There is considerable ecological, cultural, social, and political variation among and within the countries and territories of the region; however, it is generally true that peoples throughout Oceania share a somewhat common history.¹³ In pre-colonial Oceania, there have been many forms of chieftainship and community leadership based on matrilineal or patrilineal systems, inherited and/or merit-based, ritual, and spiritual.¹⁴ Then colonial authorities came and stayed—often more than a century—and established new types of leaders and power centers competing with the islands' traditional systems.¹⁵ The traditional political leadership of the countries of Oceania was thus challenged and undermined by powerful new structures, with Christian missions further challenging the notions of spiritual power that had often signified precedence in the old systems.¹⁶ The obvious complexities in the co-existence of new governments and traditional structures during the colonial period did not vanish after the independence of most Pacific islands in the 1970s and 1980s; new ways were built in parallel to the

11. Jentoft, see n. 4 above; McGoodwin, see n. 4 above.

12. Fong, see n. 4 above; Jentoft, see n. 4 above; McGoodwin, see n. 4 above; Robertson and Lawes, see n. 4 above.

13. A.L. Dahl, *Regional Ecosystem Survey of the South Pacific*, SPC Technical Paper No. 179 (Nouméa, New Caledonia: SPC, 1980); E. Kolig and H. Mückler, *Politics of Indigeneity in the South Pacific: Recent Problems of Identity in Oceania* (Hamburg, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2002); I. Novaczek, J. Mitchell, and J. Veitayaki, eds., *Pacific Voices—Equity and Sustainability in Pacific Island Fisheries* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 2005); R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo, eds., *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific* (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996).

14. Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above; B. Gustafsson, *Houses and Ancestors: Continuities and Discontinuities in Leadership among the Manus* (Göteborg, Sweden: The Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology at the University of Gothenburg, 1992); S. Hooper, "Who Are the Chiefs? Chiefship in Lau, Eastern Fiji" in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 239–271; J. Leckie, "Return to Nukulau: The Troubled Waters of Ethno-Nationalism in Fiji," in *Politics of Indigeneity in the South Pacific: Recent Problems of Identity in Oceania*, ed. E. Kolig and H. Mückler (Hamburg, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2002), pp. 119–142; D. Shuster, P. Larmour, and K.V. Strokirch, eds., *Leadership in the Pacific Islands: Tradition and the Future*, Pacific Policy Paper 30 (Canberra, Australia: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 1998); J. Tarisesei and I. Novaczek, "Gender, Generational Perceptions and Community Fisheries Management in Lelepa, North Efate, Vanuatu" in *Pacific Voices—Equity and Sustainability in Pacific Island Fisheries*, ed. I. Novaczek, J. Mitchell, and J. Veitayaki (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 2005), pp. 187–208.

15. Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

16. Gustafsson, see n. 14 above; Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

old traditional ones (often made invisible for decades), and island countries entered independence in a variety of ways and conditions. Problems persisted—and remain extant—where countries tried to combine both old colonial and old traditional systems into something modern.¹⁷ Independence has produced political disorder in many South Pacific countries because of the co-existence of two separate systems, one based on traditional (genealogically) acquired authority, and the other based on democratic election and the institutions of a modern nation State.¹⁸ After independence from centralized colonial governments, and in the face of increased efforts at decentralization in many island nations of Oceania in the midst of this political disorder, the reliance on communal and village levels of governance gained new focus. In most South Pacific countries, traditional leadership remained important throughout the colonial period and continues to shape people's identity today;¹⁹ it has regained a new importance now, however, in the context of questions of ownership of land and resources and their use and management. The changing definitions, functions, and expectations of leaders have followed upon political independence for many new nations in Oceania, in the wake of accelerating social and economic change.²⁰ As they experiment with leadership arrangements at varying levels of socio-political inclusion and authority, Pacific islanders are reworking leadership offices (for example, splitting titles in Samoa),²¹ synthesizing traditional and Western models, and drawing on indigenous values and symbols to validate the results.²²

For researchers, therefore, "leadership" must remain a category that requires specification and description in given cases. And it is not only in the theoretical literature that leadership lacks clear definition.²³ In many Pacific societies today, islanders themselves are debating the meaning of

17. R. Churney, "Political Culture and Political Process: Fiji, American Samoa and Palau," in *Leadership in the Pacific Islands: Tradition and the Future*, Pacific Policy Paper 30 (Canberra, Australia: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 1998), pp. 115–125.

18. N. Besnier, "Authority and Egalitarianism: Discourses of Leadership," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 93–128.

19. Shuster et al., see n. 14 above.

20. Churney, see n. 17 above; Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

21. B. Shore, "The Absurd Side of Power in Samoa," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 142–186.

22. K.A. Watson-Gegeo and R. Feinberg, "Introduction: Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 1–55.

23. Watson-Gegeo and Feinberg, see n. 22 above.

leadership in response to a variety of political and socioeconomic factors.²⁴ Throughout most of the Pacific, authority was formerly based on spiritually derived potency combined with a commitment to promote the common good. Money, commodity production, and market exchange, however, have worked to undermine the communal spirit and promote individual competition and wealth accumulation.²⁵ Under such conditions, traditional leaders are often tempted to use their privileged access to economic resources for their own benefit and that of their immediate families, thereby establishing themselves as an exploiting class, alienating themselves from their followers, and damaging their own legitimacy.²⁶ In other cases, chiefs maintain their commitment to the older, more communal economic values, and they find themselves attacked by those preferring the more individualistic, competitive, and in a sense egalitarian system provided by the new political and economic order.²⁷ At the same time, traditional leaders usually lack the skills and worldly experience to be effective actors on the modern stage, and may thus become increasingly defensive and self-centered, further isolating themselves, compromising their authority, and creating a vacuum to be filled by new leaders of a variety of types.²⁸

In addition to these changing orders, diverse regulations regarding user, access, and land ownership rights have caused problems, conflicts, and confusion for local resource management systems in many SIDS in the Pacific,²⁹ especially if the State's (colonial) history, actual status, and related local conditions (e.g., migration) have been neglected in the planning or decision-making process. Land tenure patterns differ from island to island and from region to region; patterns of historical and projected land ownership also differ among SIDS. Because they are determined by tradition, colonial policy, and eventually by post-colonial changes—i.e.,

24. Besnier, see n. 18 above; R. Feinberg, "Sanctity and Power on Anuta: Polynesian Chieftainship Revisited," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 56–92; N.C. Lutkehaus, "'Identity Crisis': Changing Images of Chieftainship in Manam Society," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 343–375.

25. Shuster et al., see n. 14 above.

26. A. Howard, "Money, Sovereignty and Moral Authority on Rotuma," in *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Feinberg and K.A. Watson-Gegeo (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 205–238; Lutkehaus, see n. 24 above.

27. Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

28. Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

29. G. Cambers, A. Mühlig-Hofmann and D. Troost, "Coastal Land Tenure: A Small Islands' Perspective," in *Droits et propriété, économie et environnement: Le littoral*, ed. M. Falque and H. Lamotte (Aix-Marseille, France: Emile Bruylant, 2004), pp. 563–585; K. Ruddle, "External Forces and Change in Traditional Community-Based Fishery Management Systems in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Maritime Anthropological Studies* 6, no. 1/2 (1993): 1–37.

independence—ownership regimes may have undergone several legislative changes during the past century.

Across the Pacific Islands different patterns of customary land and/or resource ownership exist, more or less formalized legally. Community institutions (such as fisheries cooperatives), villages, and clans own coastal lands and/or access rights to the inshore marine resources.³⁰ Here, residents of individual islands regard the surrounding lagoon and reefs as an integral part of their coast. In Samoa, 80 percent of the land is under customary ownership. However, the intertidal zone and adjacent marine areas are, in principle, public lands. In Papua New Guinea, nearly all land (98 percent) is owned customarily, and people still have a very distinct cultural attachment to their land: “We believe that everything on the surface of the land, in the sea and under the ground is ours.”³¹ In Vanuatu, about 97 percent of the land and sea and their resources are under customary tenure: “Land to ni-Vanuatu is what a mother is to a baby. It is with land that he defines his identity and it is with land that he maintains his spiritual strength. Ni-Vanuatu allow others the use of their land, but they always retain the right of ownership.”³² Land has been and remains central also to indigenous Fijian identity, as expressed in *I Taukei* (“people of the land,” the term for indigenous Fijians) or expressions such as *na qau vanua*

30. Cambers et al., see n. 29 above; J.G. Carrier and A.H. Carrier, “Profitless Property: Marine Ownership and Access to Wealth on Ponam Islands, Manus Province,” *Ethnology* 22, no. 2 (1983): 133–151; R.G. Crocombe, “Land Tenure in the South Pacific,” in *Man in the Pacific Islands*, ed. R.G. Ward (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 219–251; R. Crocombe, ed., *Land Tenure in the Pacific* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1987); T.I.J. Fairbairn, “Marine Property Rights in Relation to Giant Clam Mariculture in the Kingdom of Tonga,” in *Giant Clams in the Sustainable Development of the South Pacific*, ACIAR Monograph no. 18, ed. C. Tisdell (Canberra, Australia: Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, 1992), pp. 119–133; S. Farran, “South Pacific Land Law: Some Regional Challenges, Cases and Developments,” *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 47 (2001), available online: <<http://www.austlii.edu.au/nz/journals/VUWLR/2001/47.html>>; R.E. Johannes, “Traditional Law of the Sea in Micronesia,” *Micronesia* 13 (1977): 121–127; F. Kabui, “Crown Ownership of Foreshores and Seabed in Solomon Islands,” *The Journal of Pacific Studies* 21 (1997): 123; P. Larmour, ed., *The Governance of Common Property in the Pacific Region*, Pacific Policy Paper 19 (Canberra, Australia: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 1997); T. Malm, “The Tragedy of the Commoners: The Decline of the Customary Marine Tenure System of Tonga,” *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 13 (2001): 3–13; R. Nari, “Land Tenure and Resource Management: A Major Challenge in Vanuatu,” *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 15, no. 2 (2000): 1–5; Novaczek et al., see n. 13 above; R.G. Ward and E. Kingdon, *Land, Custom, and Practice in the South Pacific* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

31. UNESCO, *Partners in Development—The Motu Koitabu People of Papua New Guinea* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2001); Johannes, see n. 2 above.

32. Nari, see n. 30 above.

(literally “the land which supports me and to which I belong”), or *na vanua na tamata* (literally “the men are the land”).³³ Colonial law in Fiji ensured that 83 percent of land remained under the perpetual ownership of ethnic Fijian kin groups.³⁴

The Fijian Context

In the Republic of Fiji, coastal land tenure issues are particularly interesting due to a dual ownership situation in respect of traditional fishing grounds. Fiji is an exception in comparison to most of the above-mentioned islands, where the ownership of the seabed is almost exclusively in the hands of the government.³⁵

As in other Pacific Islands, fisheries are one of Fiji’s major industries, and like other countries worldwide, Fiji faces many challenges from increasing human population and migration, the development of gears and vessels, the globalization of resource markets, and the emphasis on increasing both one’s economic status and the productivity of the coastal marine environment. The co-management system, which is still one of the most intensely discussed alternatives to the top-down approach to fisheries management, has been in existence in Fiji for many years. Not unusually for the region, Fiji has a customary marine tenure (CMT) system built on local autonomy and self-reliance. The potential function of the CMT system is to control the invasion of local marine space, use by groups within the community, and use of specific resources and fishing gears.³⁶ The CMT system divides the inshore fishing areas into 410 registered customary fishing rights areas (*qoliqoli*) that provide the majority of the catch for subsistence fishers (men and women) and are thus the source of a significant portion of the sustenance of the people, especially in rural areas. The *qoliqoli* are an integral part of a tribal land-sea estate (*vanua*) or district (*tikina*) that extends from the watershed seawards, generally to the outer margin of the seaward slope of the fringing reef. The chief of a *vanua*

33. Institute for Applied Sciences (IAS), *Sustainable Coastal Resources Management for Fiji*, background paper prepared for the Fiji National Workshop on Integrated Coastal Management (Suva, Fiji: IAS, USP, 2002); E. Ledua, *Policies, Problems, Laws and Regulations with Regards to Inshore Fisheries Resource Management in Fiji* (Nouméa, New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission, 1995).

34. J.D. Kelly and M. Kaplan, *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonisation* (Chicago, U.S.A.: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Leckie, see n. 14 above.

35. Cambers et al., see n. 29 above.

36. G.R. South and J. Veitayaki, “The Constitution and Indigenous Fisheries Management in Fiji,” *Ocean Yearbook* 13 eds., E. Mann Borgese, A. Chircop, M. McConnell, J.R. Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 452–466.

(paramount chief of an area), together with his or her clan (*mataqali*), is traditionally regarded as the owner or supreme guardian of the *vanua*'s land, waters, resources, and resident indigenous people—a kind of kin group tenure system that can also be found elsewhere in the Pacific, for example in parts of Micronesia.³⁷

Official responsibility for fisheries resource matters in Fiji lies with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests. Within the Ministry, the Director of Fisheries oversees the work of the Fisheries Division of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.³⁸ Fishing activities in Fijian waters (inshore and offshore) are regulated by the *Fisheries Act*,³⁹ and village and provincial administrators (there are fourteen Departmental offices, one in each province) are supposed to meet regularly and work together in every aspect of fisheries management. The objectives of these meetings include the explanation and implementation of the *Fisheries Act* and of specific new measures and the referral of any emerging issues to the Fisheries Division on the main island of Viti Levu. While information exchange between administrative levels may take place one or two times a year during the general provincial meetings, everyday decisions as well as control over and enforcement of each measure remain with the communities themselves.

In the heavily exploited *qoliqoli*, CBMRM is becoming increasingly important as pressure from local users increases and resource use is no longer considered sustainable. This weight is magnified as the marine environment becomes increasingly vulnerable due to previous exploitation and also to other environmental stresses such as bleaching events or soil erosion. Subsistence lifestyles are still prevalent and are respected, but not sufficiently supported, at the government level—although departments that are already overwhelmed with their responsibilities in urban areas seem to rely heavily on the general autonomy of rural communities.⁴⁰ Prior to colonization, Fijian society, like many other Pacific societies, was strongly hierarchical.⁴¹ Indigenous Fijians lived in villages in well-defined social units that were the basis of all social groupings and activities.⁴² As in other island

37. K. Sudo, "Social Organization and Types of Sea Tenure in Micronesia" in *Maritime Institutions in the Western Pacific*, Senri Ethnological Studies no. 17, ed. K. Ruddle and T. Akimichi (Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), pp. 203–231.

38. Ledua, see n. 33 above.

39. Republic of Fiji, *Fisheries Act*, Laws of Fiji (Adelaide, Australia, Fiji: Government Printer, 1985).

40. UNESCAP, *Community-Based Decision-Making on Coastal Fisheries*, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Kitakyushu, Japan: UNESCAP, 2003).

41. Kelly and Kaplan, see n. 34 above.

42. J. Veitayaki, "Taking Advantage of Indigenous Knowledge: The Fiji Case," *International Social Science Journal* 54, no. 3 (2002): 395–402.

groups in Oceania, community leadership was intimately bound up with the idea of *mana*, kinship obligations, and responsibility for preserving community welfare.⁴³ *Kerekere*, “a system of gaining things by begging for them from a member of one’s own group,” ensured that surpluses were shared, thereby preventing the accumulation of wealth.⁴⁴ This social kinship system, which is also known in other parts of the western Pacific was the safety net that ensured that people were able to meet their needs.⁴⁵

Since independence in 1979, chiefly succession disputes and pre-colonial rivalries have been revived and have had an impact on national political as well as communal issues.⁴⁶ Thus, the political role of chiefs in a modern democracy remains a key political issue in post-colonial Fiji.⁴⁷ The desirability and viability of the State remaining neutral as regards traditional politics and the limitations of traditional and chiefly authority are subjects of debate.⁴⁸ Colonial rule strengthened chiefly power and also enabled many chiefs to have preferential access to education and employment opportunities (e.g., as legal holders of company titles), notably within the bureaucracy. Dr. Bavadra (elected Prime Minister in 1987, a month prior to the coup) repeatedly questioned the abuse of chiefly power and the entanglement of tradition with modernity that in the extreme had become embedded in corrupt practices (also called “communal capitalism”).⁴⁹ Development projects, scholarships, and State expenditures, unfairly allocated to the traditional seats of power, demonstrated that traditional status can (still) bear heavily upon participation in the monetized economy and that poverty is not constrained by ethnicity.⁵⁰

As in many British colonies, the State implemented a dual administrative structure, with one set of regulations and institutions for indigenous Fijians and another set for the non-indigenous population. The Republic of

43. Hooper, see n. 14 above.

44. A.A. Capell, *New Fijian Dictionary* (Suva, Fiji: Government Printer, 1991); R.R. Nayacakalou, “Tradition and Change in the Fijian Village,” *Fiji Times and Herald* (1978).

45. J.C. Cordell, “Defending Customary Inshore Sea Rights” in *Maritime Institutions in the Western Pacific*, Senri Ethnological Studies no. 17, ed. K. Ruddle and T. Akimichi (Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), pp. 301–327; S. Davis, “Aboriginal Claims to Coastal Waters in North-Eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Australia” in *Maritime Institutions in the Western Pacific, Senri Ethnological Studies No. 17*, ed. K. Ruddle and T. Akimichi (Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), pp. 231–253; Novaczek et al., see n. 13 above.

46. Kelly and Kaplan, see n. 34 above; Leckie, see n. 14 above.

47. C. Toren, *Making Sense of Hierarchy: Cognition as a Social Process* (London, U.K.: The Athlone Press, 1990).

48. Kelly and Kaplan, see n. 34 above.

49. Leckie, see n. 14 above.

50. Leckie, see n. 14 above.

Fiji has a system of parliamentary government but retains traditional chiefly rights. The *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* (Great Council of Chiefs; GCC), composed of the fourteen paramount chiefs of the provinces (the highest ranking members of the traditional chief system), brought to life under the Deed of Cession in 1874, still has political power and sets policies for general Fijian affairs and matters relating to the indigenous community.⁵¹ Many Fijians feel that the GCC should play a more active role in national politics.⁵² Its role and authority are an important political and constitutional fact and, perhaps more importantly, seemed to be beyond dispute or debate—at least until the most recent coup took place, after which the interim Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama dismissed the GCC for an unknown period.⁵³

Thus, looking at the situation of traditional authority today in Fiji as a whole, the economic power of chiefs appears to endure, and in many traditional villages across Fiji the installed chief of a *vanua* is still traditionally regarded as the owner or supreme guardian of its land, resources, and resident indigenous people. While the respect paid to a chief depends on many factors such as strength of his or her character, knowledge, and authority, this traditional respect seems to be declining and the chief's roles and positions are increasingly ritualistic.⁵⁴ B.V. Lal even goes further in stating that the era of dominance of paramount chiefs with overarching influence across the whole spectrum of indigenous Fijian society has ended.⁵⁵ For traditionally owned resources in large parts of Oceania, CBMRM therefore also has to consider the social structures of the communities involved, including the issue of leadership and resource ownership. The specific situation and circumstances in which a community exists have to be considered before CBMRM can be successfully implemented.

The question of coastal and *qoliqoli* ownership is very special in Fiji due to a complex regulation in place since the Deed of Cession to the British

51. B.V. Lal, "Heartbreak Islands: Reflections on Fiji in transition," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 44, no. 3 (2003): 335–350; K. Ruddle, "A Guide to the Literature on Traditional Community-Based Fishery Management in Fiji," *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 5 (1995): 7–15.

52. Anonymous, pers. comm. (July 2005); R.J. Madraiwiwi, "Parkinson Memorial Lecture" in *Good Governance in the South Pacific*, ed. K. Gravelle (Suva, Fiji: USP, 2002).

53. Anonymous, pers. comm. (Apr. 2007); Lal, see n. 51 above.

54. A. Cooke and K. Moce, "Current Trends in the Management of Qoliqoli in Fiji," *SPC Tradit. Mar. Res. Manag. Knowledge Inf. Bull.* 5 (1995): 2–7; Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above; A. Ravuvu, *Development or Dependence: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1988); Ruddle, see n. 51 above; A. Vunisea, "Community-Based Marine Resource Management in Fiji: The Challenges," *SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin* 11 (2002): 6–9.

55. Lal, see n. 51 above.

Crown in 1874. Under the present constitution, the indigenous Fijians still have exclusive ownership of the inshore fisheries resources and of their traditional fishing rights. The sea and sea floor, however, belong to the State, and the indigenous people have no rights over either.⁵⁶ This dual arrangement has been a source of confusion for over 130 years.⁵⁷ Since independence in 1979, attempts have been made to resolve the situation and return full ownership rights of the *qoliqoli* to the indigenous authorities. In August 2006, in an attempt to resolve the situation, a “Qoliqoli Bill” was presented before the Fiji Parliament⁵⁸ by which all proprietary rights to *qoliqoli* areas would be returned to the identified traditional (pre-colonial) *qoliqoli* owners. One feature of this proposed legislation is the establishment of a Qoliqoli Commission, which shall administer and manage fisheries operations (including regulation and management of fisheries resources) within *qoliqoli* areas “for and on behalf of, and for the benefit of, *qoliqoli* owners.”⁵⁹ Even before being passed this bill has caused much controversy among the diverse stakeholders along Fiji’s shores—for example, the tourism association’s fears that it will be denied access to beach and reef areas, or the general assumption that the bill will privilege only selected *mataqali*, or the ethnic tensions within the large Indo-Fijian population.⁶⁰ In a society that becomes more and more individualized (putting more emphasis on the individual and its direct family), full ownership in the hands of a few land-owning *mataqali* could undermine responsible CBMRM and the provision of its equal benefits to the entire community. However, even though this bill had been under discussion for more than ten years, its status in August 2006 was the farthest it would reach; the bill was rejected in December 2006 in one of the first actions by the interim Prime Minister Bainimarama during the recent coup (the fourth coup in the young history of the Republic). To go into details on the causes, development, and meanings of this coup would surpass the scope of this article; however, having survived 130 years and three coups, the *qoliqoli* ownership discussions can be expected to land again on the Parliament’s schedule at some point, which is why the bill receives attention in this study. Other, seemingly more pressing issues have to be addressed first in order to improve the use of *qoliqoli* and coastal marine resources—for example, the issue of the

56. South and Veitayaki, see n. 36 above.

57. Cooke and Moce, see n. 54 above; Ruddle, see n. 51 above.

58. The Qoliqoli Bill 2006, Republic of Fiji, available online: <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_7228.shtml>.

59. See n. 24 above.

60. Anonymous, pers. comm. (Nov. 2006); M. Bolatiki, “Qoliqoli Bill—Hoteliers Told Not to Be Greedy,” *Fiji Sun* (Sept. 6, 2006); S. Ramesh, Fiji Bills Create Divisions, Worldpress (2006), available online: <<http://www.worldpress.org/Asia/2507.cfm>>.

necessary local foundations of community leadership and responsibility over CBMRM efforts. The correlation among the existing leadership and traditional authority, existing and planned CBMRM efforts, and the change in legislation through the Qoliqoli Bill, however, has not yet received much attention in Fiji. Local social and ecological characteristics have often been neglected in CBMRM efforts, possibly due to lack of financial or personal capacity for focused initiatives. In the areas where there still is customary area ownership, how do CBMRM systems work in terms of management, and how are they linked to the status of traditional authority and village leadership?

This study tried to investigate and address these questions in the context of CBMRM systems in five communities on two islands in eastern Fiji. Three questions were chosen to present, highlight, and discuss some issues typically found in these villages:

- Are CBMRM systems stagnating or making progress?
- What role do traditions and traditional authority play in CBMRM systems?
- Are dual or single ownership of Fijian inshore fisheries resources and *qoliqoli* (as opposed to communal ownership) for the better or for the worse?

Finally, the implications of mutual changes in legislation affecting land ownership and in the status of traditional authority in the communities visited will be evaluated and summarized. This includes a discussion of how one can define the status quo of communities balancing development with traditions, and also a discussion of whether or not rural Fijian communities can still be described as traditional and whether or not that is desirable.

METHODOLOGY

From 2003–2004 sociological community research investigated the status of CBMRM and local traditional authority in five communities on two remote islands. Strong leadership was identified as a critical foundation for both the implementation of the bill and successful local marine resource management.

Research was conducted in four coastal communities (Malawai, Vanuaso, Naovuka, and Lamiti) in *Tikina* Vanuaso, located on the eastern part of Gau Island, as well as in Natauloa Village on Nairai Island. The four communities on Gau share the same *qoliqoli*. The size of the five villages varied from around 100–200 inhabitants. Women predominate in Fiji's inshore fisheries and also form the main fishing force on Gau, both in terms of time spent fishing and resources harvested, and have a great deal of

experience in and knowledge of the fishery.⁶¹ On Gau, recent community workshops on conservation issues and the development of management plans concerning the *qoliqoli* and the coast in general (issues such as closed marine areas, gear restrictions, mangrove rehabilitation, and waste management) offered first contact with, and access to, the communities. The Lomaiviti group of islands, to which Gau and Nairai belong, is at the center of the eastern islands within the larger Fiji group. Spread over an area of more than 12,000 km², the islands in the Koro Sea represent an important part of the Fijian reef system; however, they have been relatively neglected in the literature to date.

The study investigated and analyzed inhabitants' perceptions of change in their social environment in order to predict the potential implications of the Qoliqoli Bill. To this end, face-to-face life history interviews, focus groups, and participant and non-participant observations were employed. The research was conducted over a period of fourteen months; ten weeks were spent in the communities.

For the life history interviews, one older woman and one older man (each more than 60 years old) were interviewed in each of the five villages. The interviewees had been living in the respective community for most of their lives. Towards the end of the interviews, the older people were asked how they saw the future of their respective village and its people, what their fears or hopes were, and what prospects the future would hold. Because of the personal and time-consuming character of this interview type (a single interview takes one–two hours), only one person of each gender was chosen per village.

Information derived from five all-female focus group meetings complemented the information gained through the individual interviews. Four women from each community were asked guiding questions on subjects concerning family life and the future of the village.

In addition, participant and non-participant observations were conducted during each visit to the communities. This involved participating in and observing the daily activities in the communities studied, immersing the researcher in the research subjects' lives, and involving the researcher as the main research "tool."

Interviewees from the life history interviews and focus groups were selected from at least ten different *mataqali* in order to prevent interviews from taking place with members of the same family and hence potentially

61. N.J.F. Rawlinson, D.A. Milton, S.J.M. Blaber, A. Sesewa and S.P. Sharma, *Subsistence and Artisanal Fisheries in Fiji*, ACIAR Monograph No. 35 (Suva, Fiji: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 1993); A. Vunisea, "Women's Changing Roles in the Subsistence Fishing Sector in Fiji," in *Pacific Voices—Equity and Sustainability in Pacific Island Fisheries*, ed. I. Novaczek, J. Mitchell, and J. Veitayaki (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 2005), pp. 89–106.

restricting the breadth of information. The individual interviews took place in the houses of the respective interviewees; the focus groups were held in the house of one of the women interviewed. Observations were written down continuously after each fieldtrip. The information gained during the focus group discussions was written down simultaneously into a notebook. The women often preferred this method to using a tape recorder. The life history interviews were taped as the elders had no objections and the interviews were of a more narrative and extensive nature. Later on the tapes were transcribed into Microsoft Excel datasheets and categorized; the interviews that had been recorded in the notebook were also put into Excel datasheets for further categorization and analysis. All direct statements quoted here were taken directly from the twenty-four people interviewed (hence the vernacular).

CBMRM—Stagnation or Progress?

In order to look at the specific settings for CBMRM systems and perceptions of CBMRM systems on Gau and Nairai, the introduction has shown that it is important to focus on and scale down community-based research work because of the specificity of local conditions. But then how can one draw general conclusions from a very specific small island study, and how can these conclusions be extrapolated to other (not only small island) settings in the Pacific Islands?

CBMR managers and researchers have to look more to the ordinary, everyday life of the people before starting ambitious projects. Focusing on a specifically developed research methodology (the inclusion of various social groups); specific environmental conditions (fishing or deforestation activities); specific combinations and characteristics of people involved (community structures and hierarchies), and specific perceptions may in fact be the highest level of generalization possible.

Patterns and regulations of natural resources and land ownership and their management vary among the countries of the South Pacific, let alone worldwide. Mainly due to the existing customary marine tenure system, the approach of the Fijian government to marine resource management so far has generally been described as “cooperative” co-management in which government and users cooperate together as partners in decision making.⁶² However, because the licensing system (issuing of fishing licenses for outsiders) is theoretically the only true co-management practice, Fiji has never had a formal co-management arrangement with uniform national

62. S. Sen and J. Raakjaer Nielsen, “Fisheries Co-Management: A Comparative Analysis,” *Marine Policy* 20, no. 5 (1996): 405–418.

guidelines. Together with the findings of other studies,⁶³ the findings of this study show that management strategies and the level of government involvement vary greatly across the Fijian *qoliqoli* and depend solely on the individual fisheries officers, chiefs, and communities involved. This variability and dependence on individual discretion causes problems and conflicts where people feel they are treated unequally or disrespectfully. This situation is not confined to Fiji and the South Pacific; a greater focus on core individuals and their influence, knowledge, and character may be most useful for coastal zone management research wherever governments try to decentralize natural resource management.⁶⁴

Decentralized responsibility in Fiji cannot and should not yet be classified as co-management. Rather, it is a parallel arrangement between government and rural communities; the latter carry the biggest responsibility for their resources. The government relies on the local governance and self-regulation skills of the coastal fishing communities, mainly due to lack of funds and capacity; the government's problems would otherwise be much greater. However, the communities cannot, with their present structure, skills, and resources, establish the management needed to mitigate the increasing pressure on their resources by themselves. Knowledge of different possibilities, practices, and sustainable management regulations remains scarce, and resource owners like government officials often still do not have the means to quantify impacts and pressures on the fishery.⁶⁵ Hence, they require (and ask for) input from outside agencies in the form of biological, environmental, and conservation education as well as help in planning, monitoring, evaluation, and enforcement.

Some Fijian communities have already established closer bonds with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other official institutions (e.g., the USP, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community). They have found means of facilitating management activities, such as communication with Suva officials and academics (e.g., the Mositi Vanuaso project),⁶⁶ follow-up

63. Cooke and Moce, see n. 54 above; A. Tawake and W.G.L. Aalbersberg, *Community-Based Refugia Management in Fiji. Coastal Protection for and by the People of the Indo-Pacific: Learning From 13 Case Studies* (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 2002).

64. UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), *Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific* (Kitakyushu, Japan: UNESCAP, 2000); C.A. Courtney, A.T. White and E. Deguit, "Building Philippine Local Government Capacity for Coastal Resource Management," *Coastal Management* 30, no. 1 (2002): 27–45.

65. A. Cooke, N.V.C. Polunin and K. Moce, "Comparative Assessment of Stakeholder Management in Traditional Fijian Fishing-Grounds," *Environmental Conservation* 27, no. 3 (2000): 291–299.

66. J. Veitayaki, A. Tawake, A. Bogiva, S. Meo, R. Vave, P. Radikedike, N. Ravula and S.P. Fong, "Addressing Human Factors in Fisheries Development and Regulatory Processes in Fiji: The Mositi Vanuaso Experience," *Ocean Yearbook* 21 eds. A. Chircop, S. Coffen-Smout and M. McConnell (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007).

of NGO workshops, or hearsay from other communities or relatives. A privileged connection to official institutions is often found to be positively related to a higher degree of management and awareness⁶⁷—and not only in Fiji⁶⁸—but activities always have been and always will be dependent on the ambitions of the communities and individuals involved. In many places, marine protected areas (MPAs) have represented the first opportunity for local communities and outside agencies to work together.⁶⁹ Thus MPAs play an important role in the process of decentralization and the establishment of local management authority. Seasonal or temporary *tabu* areas (traditional area closures) are an old concept in Fiji, used often for ceremonial reasons (e.g., the place where the chief took a bath was not to be fished).⁷⁰ However, these areas have, since 2000, been increasingly used as a management tool through the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) network.⁷¹ The FLMMA network was established by people involved in community-based fisheries management, including government departments, other conservation agencies, and individuals from the private sector. FLMMA has formed new partnerships with communities all over the developing world and used pilot management areas and those involved in the projects to facilitate the continuation of community management work.⁷² Promoting the idea that healthy living standards can be attained and additional money can be earned with properly managed marine environments and fisheries resources, the network has become the main factor

67. Cooke et al., see n. 65 above.

68. M. Beger, A.R. Harborne, T.P. Dacles, J.-P. Solandt and G.L. Ledesma, "A Framework of Lessons Learned from Community-Based Marine Reserves and Its Effectiveness in Guiding a New Coastal Management Initiative in the Philippines," *Environmental Management* 34, no. 6 (2005): 786–801.

69. N.V.C. Polunin, M. K. Halim and K. Kvalvagnaes, "Bali Barat: An Indonesian Marine Protected Area and Its Resources," *Biological Conservation* 25, no. 2 (1983): 171–191; S. Riedmiller and E. Carter, "The Political Challenge of Private Sector Management of Marine Protected Areas: The Chumbe Island Case, Tanzania," *ACP-EU Fisheries Resource Report* 10 (2001): 141–153; A. Kunzmann, "On the Way to Management of West Sumatra's Coastal Ecosystem," *Naga* 25, no. 1 (2002): 4–10.

70. J. Veitayaki, "Social Considerations in the Sustainable Development of Inshore Fisheries Resources," *Marine studies technical report No. 98/3* (Suva, Fiji: USP, 1998), pp. 60–68.

71. A. Caillaud, S. Boengkih, E. Evans-Illidge, J. Genolagani, P. Havemann, D. Henaio, E. Kwa, D. Llewellyn, A. Ridep-Morris, J. Rose, R. Nari, P. Skelton, G.R. South, R. Sulu, A. Tawake, B. Tobin, S. Tuivanuavou and C. Wilkinson, "Tabus Or Not Taboos? How to Use Traditional Environmental Knowledge to Support Sustainable Development of Marine Resources in Melanesia," *SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin* 17 (2004): 14–35.

72. IAS, see n. 33 above; Tawake and Aalbersberg, see n. 63 above; Vunisea, see n. 54 above.

changing the face and driving the process of CBMRM in Fiji. However, although a more sustainable approach to exploitation has been pursued over the last decade, the varying degrees of success of CBMRM efforts in Fiji are a reminder of people's inability to get organized.⁷³ Attempts are still being made everywhere to modernize methods of exploitation and management, especially with respect to coastal and marine fisheries. In heavily exploited fisheries in which there is not much knowledge of the sustainable capacity of the resources, the benefits of improving the efficiency of fishing techniques must be questioned.⁷⁴ A resource could easily be exploited beyond sustainable levels, potentially beyond recovery, which is why the precautionary approach to fisheries,⁷⁵ recommended by, *inter alia*, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries,⁷⁶ should be implemented in practice at village level.

These challenges can only be met where there is a very strong bond between communities and official agents, based on continuity, community consensus, and trust. For example, every community or district could have at least one experienced fisheries manager working closely together with respected community members. This would ideally render possible an acceptance of conservation measures and general compliance with those measures, communication, networking, and data collection and analysis. Under a system of extension workers similar to that established for teachers and nurses, these "marine advisors" could monitor projects, make marine conservation and education matters of everyday life for the communities, and thus support long-term planning with respect to marine resources. Such a system already exists in other places, for example, in the form of park rangers (in Tanzania or Tonga)⁷⁷ and would greatly strengthen Fiji's capacity for monitoring and managing its marine biodiversity in coastal waters through traditional users' rights. Without such a system, underpinned by the skills of academics, NGOs and other regional agencies,

73. L.P. Zann and V.C. Vuki, "Subsistence Fisheries in the South Pacific," *Fisheries and Marine Resources*, Eighth Pacific Science Inter-Congress (Suva, Fiji: USP, 1998); Veitayaki, see n. 70 above.

74. M. Bavinck, "A History of Nets and Prescriptions; Restrictions on Technical Innovation by Artisanal Fishing Communities along the Coromandel Coast," *South Indian Studies* 3 (1997): 144–164; S. Jennings and N.V.C. Polunin, "Fishing Strategies, Fishery Development and Socioeconomics in Traditionally Managed Fijian Fishing Grounds," *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 3 (1996): 335–347.

75. F. González-Laxe, "The Precautionary Principle in Fisheries Management," *Marine Policy* 29 (2005): 495–505.

76. UN, *Report of the UN Conference on Environment and Development* (Rio de Janeiro: UNCED, 1992); Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (Rome, Italy: FAO, 1995).

77. Riedmiller and Carter, see n. 69 above; Malm, see n. 30 above.

CBMRM in Fiji may remain unorganized and overly dependent on the local authorities for achieving reliable and sustainable marine resource use and conservation. Each community practicing CBMRM should be in the position to take responsibility for the enforcement of management measures and locally developed regulations and rules;⁷⁸ yet in order for this to occur, people first have to understand, be informed, and involved in developing these measures. This calls for good community leadership.

The Role of Traditions and Traditional Authority in CBMRM

One Voice

All of the ten interviewees in the life history surveys agreed that important decisions in the village were easier if the chief was respected and just “one person talks.” In three of the villages, people said that “before,” the situation in the villages was better and that nowadays there were “plenty people, they can’t listen to what the chief says.” Before, “either the *turaga ni koro* [village headman] or the *turaga ni vanua* [chief of the village or area] decided and told people what to do; it was good, easy to follow, better, now it is very hard, now there are so many people, that’s different today.” This meant there were not only more people in terms of quantity but also that more people were giving their opinion and going their own way without much effort to integrate these into the community. “*E na koro sega e na lala* [there will be nothing in the village, nothing will be done], before they listen to one command, with respect for the chief, now not anymore.” Interviewees also said that generally, the atmosphere in the village had changed and even worsened. “The people were good, now they are bad; before they respected the chief, the village, but now. . .” Some village customs such as respectful behavior were not adhered to anymore: “before we can’t shout from there to here [pointing down the hill to other houses], and now we can call, anywhere you stand you can call”; the situation was similar with respect to sharing (*herekere*): “today, if you want something, we can ask for it, but have to give some money; you have to pay, you can’t give it just like that to relatives, we have to pay all the things today. *Sa sega na loloma* [there is no love/pity/kind-heartedness], *sa sega na vakarokoroko* [there is no respect and politeness].” “The way of life changes; the situation in the village is different now, there are plenty problems, it’s like Fiji now— independent; and there are plenty of different things coming in, church *solu*

78. B.R. Crawford, A. Siahainenia, C. Rotinsulu and A. Sukmara, “Compliance and Enforcement of Community-Based Coastal Resource Management Regulations in North Sulawesi, Indonesia,” *Coastal Management* 32, no. 1 (2004): 39–50.

(fees/donation), education in the village, etc.” “There are major changes, compared to the olden times, especially the behaviors of the younger generation, they seem to clash with the traditional people and ways of life.”

The “rules and guidelines that were used by the people” have also changed. They have not always commanded less adherence, but “now with all the changes that come nowadays, different decisions are made to suit the environment; before we could feel free to go around, but now we have to take a [fishing] license.”

Only one village (Naovuka), the smallest and youngest in the *tikina*, was content with their village and its decision making: “decisions are made in the same way as before, one speaks, one talk, because [we are] only one family here, not like in the [other] villages where there are many families.” Consensus and compliance existed in this community and were facilitated by an educated and charismatic character, the last of a chiefly line of brothers. “He is a good leader because people like him,” one interviewee said. They had had some problems in the village they came from (Lamiti), after which they moved down the coast in the 1980s to re-settle on their family land. Their new chief said “it was very hard, now it’s good, now those elders died, it’s easier now for us; before it was different you know, different-minded people, and the children, the boys, the elders had different opinions,” and another one adds, “but he can bring them together now, because he always laughs, people like and respect him.”

Chiefly Death

During the period of this study, a traditional chief of one of the villages died in Suva. Traditionally, the corpse would have been transferred back to his village to be buried there in a big ceremony. On this occasion, there was insufficient money for the transfer and too much discussion among family members, and he was buried in Suva, where some members of his family lived.

When asked what had changed about customs surrounding the death of a chief, presumably symbolizing changes in traditional authority, all interviewees but one (who said everything stayed the same) said that there had been changes in that less and less respect was paid by the villagers. A chiefly death could now be more or less “just like that of some other person.” A few decades ago, when a chief died, the children of the village were kept in one house until the funeral was over. No children were supposed to be seen around the village and outside the house and no playing or noise was supposed to disrupt the respect shown to the deceased. Men and women were “standing back cooking for the children, that’s the time they respected the chief.” “Before as kids, we just hide inside the house, but now kids just come right to the coffin, onto the grave, now they

can run up to right beside the coffin and look in.” Again it was mentioned that “before, when he [the chief] said something, people take part in the decision, but now, when the chief says something, people go on doing their own work, they don’t care what he says.” It was also said that the policy within the community was “very strict” before, but “now we have to open up, to go along with time and changes; time has changed, and you must change according to time, if not, you become stagnant.”

For example, a “temporary *tabu* area [*tabu ni wai*] was often established when a chief died, and opened again later with the *tara* [relaxing of *tabu*]” and fished for the accompanying ceremonial feast. However, in *Tikina* Vanuaso, no new *tabu* area was established in addition to the already existing permanent ones, but people “go and catch the [present] *tabu* area; after that, the area is *tabu* again.”

Hopes for the future of the villages and their people mostly concerned the importance of a respected leader. They can be summarized and elucidated by the following direct quotes:

- “It’s up to the elders, it’s up to the church elders, or the family elders, to tell the children how to keep the village and the life for tomorrow; it’s up to the family, [they] got to teach their children, [they have to] see the future of Lamiti, and make a good Lamiti next time.”
- “[There is] no chief here now, the one that died in February was not a real chief, [he] was not installed to be a chief, the Fijian way. We have to make a chief, and [then] he can speak, one talks and the others listen; at the moment there is none [no chief] but if we have one next year, we will see the change.”
- “They will become good, the people in the village, and there will be more people in the village in the future.”
- “It will be better next time [in the future], more people to come to the village, good for the *tikina* and the school, many school kids would be good.”
- “I am praying for a good chief, [a] good village, one talks, [people] respect each other, that’s what I hope.”

Stagnating development on Gau and Nairai, and the often passive attitude of villagers towards this trend, may be connected to the deterioration of the functions of the traditional village and the loss of traditional chiefly authority. Both reflect a general feeling among villagers of a loss of power, also observed elsewhere in Fiji.⁷⁹ The last paragraphs suggest that the

79. M. Tomlinson, “Perpetual Lament: Kava-Drinking, Christianity and Sensations of Historical Decline in Fiji,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (2004): 653–673.

feeling of powerlessness is reflected mostly in aspects such as decision making, the distribution of management responsibilities, the evaluation of management plans and measures, the enforcement of regulations against outside fishers, and also in terms of income generation possibilities. In addition, both stagnation in development and decreasing community function may mutually reinforce this feeling of loss. The fact that some communities feel increasingly powerless is likely to impact any CBMRM regime, as consensus on issues concerning the entire community and the traditional respect accorded to the chiefs is declining everywhere in Fiji.⁸⁰ Findings also show that this lack of respect is dividing villages and aggravating existing divisions due to increasingly different economic statuses and religious beliefs among families.⁸¹ Those who cope with a “modern,” individualistic, self-determined life independent of *kerekere* have tended to separate from those who still respect the traditional social structure and regard this respect as a precondition for community function and leadership. The notion of having “too many people who talk,” meaning the lack of and inability to find a consensus on the village level, was emphasized in the villages covered by this study. In a study on another Fijian island (Kadavu), people also lamented that “commoners who earn money think they are chiefly too, and begin to act—inappropriately—like chiefs.”⁸²

The chiefly person’s death, an event traditionally surrounded by highly respectful ceremonies and traditional activities,⁸³ gives a good example of changes in respect and traditional authority. The ceremonial activities and behaviors around this event have loosened. In addition, the period after the burial and prior to the ceremonial installment of a new chief seemed to be critical to a village’s function and stability. Some of the villages in this study went without a traditionally installed leader for more than a year, although there were still members of the same chiefly family living in the village. In the *tikina* in Tomlinson’s study the chiefs had not been formally installed within living memory,⁸⁴ exacerbating the sense of lost power. Without a formal installation, chiefs were considered ineffective, and in *Tikina* Vanuaso people actually felt as if the community was without a leader altogether during this period—evidence of not only the feeling of lost

80. A. Cooke, “The Qoliqoli of Fiji: Management of Resources in Traditional Fishing Grounds,” M.Sc. thesis, Department of Marine Science and Coastal Management, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K. (1995); Ruddle, see n. 51 above; Tomlinson, see n. 79 above; C. Toren, “Becoming a Christian in Fiji: An Ethnographic Study of Ontogeny,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (2004): 221–240.

81. Tomlinson, see n. 79 above.

82. Tomlinson, see n. 79 above, p. 656.

83. Toren, see n. 47 above.

84. Tomlinson, see n. 79 above.

power but also of lost identity. Tomlinson's observation that "people and society in the past were unified, proper, and powerful; the present is fragmented, improper, and relatively powerless by contrast" is corroborated by the present study.⁸⁵ With communities fragmented, unstable, or unaware of their power, future CBMRM plans for *Tikina* Vanuaso may become difficult to develop and implement in a useful and sustainable way.

How can an indigenous community recover the social strength and function, lost over decades, that is necessary for the implementation of CBMRM systems, and take on full responsibility for conserving the local (not only marine) environment? The reasons for the decline in traditional authority, respect, and hence traditional community function are widely speculated upon and could be manifold; one possible explanation is the increasing adoption of Westernized standards imported from urban centers and abroad. Almost every family in the communities investigated in this study had relatives residing in urban areas; in the towns, chiefs were increasingly sharing the same problems and rights as any person of non-chiefly origin, and this tendency was through family relatives made known on the island. In parallel to this decline, there are more complex changes in the character of the people and their behavior. To cope with the effects of change and to re-establish a firm basis for the community function crucial for CBMRM measures, each community will need to make its own decisions. The future success of CBMRM on Gau and Nairai will depend on individual people, their education and character, and on finding educated and respected leaders while preventing long gaps between periods of leadership. The process of re-establishing strong community leadership and stability will be highly complex and will vary among communities and *tikina* and thus be very difficult to predict; what this article shows, however, is that this path cannot be found by only looking backwards. Each community, in order to make CBMRM work, has to find a way to establish a stable community structure, and if this is not possible in the future by following the traditional way of installing a chief—for example due to long inter-installment periods—a new type of leadership, including non-traditional leaders, might be needed. Although non-traditional leadership is known to exist elsewhere in the Pacific Islands, for example in Palau,⁸⁶ it is not common and might be impossible to achieve for Gau or other Fijian islands. And again, a strong and continuous connection to government officials as well as other agents, supported by improved transport and communication technologies, might help the rural communities on Gau find their responsibilities and strengths in terms of CBMRM in modern Fiji and help them rebuild community structure. A strong, wise, and respected community leadership is necessary

85. Tomlinson, see n. 79 above, p. 657.

86. Shuster et al., see n. 14 above.

for the sustainable management of natural resources in these regions and hence cannot be neglected.⁸⁷

Dual and Single Ownership of Fijian Inshore Fisheries Resources and Qoliqoli

In recognition of the importance of the subsistence fishery and the challenges faced by the government and the communities, a review of the constitutional rights of indigenous Fijians over their coastal waters and resources has been an integral part of a recent review of Fiji's constitution.⁸⁸ A significant issue was whether the ownership of the traditional fishing areas should return to the pre-colonial position (as envisioned in the Qoliqoli Bill) in which ownership included both the resources and the seafloor, thus giving greater returns, control, and responsibility to indigenous Fijians. Whether these benefits can be achieved remains, however, questionable. Besides an attempted re-establishment of pre-colonial status, can a return of full *qoliqoli* ownership into the hand of the land-owning *mataqali* be a way forward in some respects, and if so which? The Qoliqoli Bill proposed institutionalizing local management of fisheries resources and investing marine customary rights with legal protection similar to the protection conferred on land rights. However, it took until August 2006 to present the Qoliqoli Bill to the Fijian Parliament. This was partly due to the incapacity of the government to organize the financial and human resources needed, but it was also due to the sensitivity of the subject, which is felt Fiji-wide, not only in the government, but by indigenous Fijians, organizations working in the field of CBMRM, the fishing and tourism industry, and other ethnic groups in Fijian society.⁸⁹ The question of legal ownership has persisted and was not decided during the period of this study. The coup in December 2006 froze any effort to process the bill; in fact this bill was one of the main reasons for the upheaval against the installed government, and the coup was welcomed by many diverse groups (such as the military and the tourism industry). Having been an unresolved issue for over 130 years now, it can however be expected that the Qoliqoli Bill will, in its present or a changed form, also survive the fourth coup and resurface on the political stage sooner or later.

Fisheries management, at least in its initial phases, requires sacrifices, not only from the fishers but also from the entire community, and thus

87. Fong, see n. 4 above; The World Bank, *Voices From The Village—A Comparative Study of Coastal Resource Management in the Pacific Islands, East Asia and Pacific Region, Papua New Guinea and Pacific Islands Country Management Unit* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000).

88. South and Veitayaki, see n. 36 above.

89. See n. 60 above.

requires a strong sense of community and strong leadership, which often do not exist.⁹⁰ In Fiji today, the economic power of chiefs appears to be increasing although the traditional respect accorded to them is declining, on Gau and Nairai and elsewhere.⁹¹ The respect paid to the chief and thus the success or failure of a management measure depends on the strength of his or her character, knowledge, and authority. There are signs that in daily decision making, including CBMRM, the chief's usefulness and relevance are increasingly questioned.⁹² Traditional roles and resource use systems within the communities of this study were still more or less well defined, but leadership structures, protocol, status, and beliefs were undergoing change and, as mentioned above, their usefulness and relevance were being questioned by an increasing number of people.⁹³ This study therefore supports the notion that the *qoliqoli* may be unable to cope independently with rapid exogenous change and hence will fail to meet the role in fisheries management that many believe they are capable of fulfilling.⁹⁴

Full ownership under the now shelved Qoliqoli Bill may in a few cases lead to more enthusiasm for community-based projects and thus greater local management efforts and incentives for sustainable resource use. On the other hand, some community-based projects could lead to even greater abuse of regulations and greater exploitation of resources. The success of community-based projects will strongly depend on the quality of the community leadership, structure, and morals; these factors will determine whether compliance with regulations is achievable or not. From a conservation point of view, some communities in *Tikina* Vanuaso were already active in terms of (sustainable) resource management, knowledge systems, or information networking and decision-making; others still looked to the government, NGOs, and other official institutions for the performance of these tasks. The latter type of community would not yet be ready for the devolution of owning rights and full responsibility for their resources, and would be likely to end up alone and in a situation worse than that prior to decentralization.

From the perspective of the communities studied themselves, the *qoliqoli* seem to have always fully belonged to them; in fact, knowledge about the dual ownership regulation was restricted to very few individuals in the

90. Fong, see n. 4 above; Veitayaki, see n. 70 above; The World Bank, see n. 87 above.

91. Cooke, see n. 80 above; Ruddle, see n. 51 above.

92. Cooke, see n. 80 above; Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above; Ravuvu, see n. 54 above; Vunisea, see n. 54 above.

93. Vunisea, see n. 54 above.

94. J.A. Anderson and C.C. Mees, *The Performance of Customary Marine Tenure in the Management of Community Fishery Resources in Melanesia* (London, U.K.: MRAG, 1999).

communities. It was thus impossible to study the effects of a possible devolution of *qoliqoli* owning rights in Fiji to the traditional authorities by asking direct questions about the devolution plans. Rather the inquiry was conducted by investigating the circumstances and requirements that would need to be present for the devolution to be beneficial to everybody (in the communities and governmental departments) as well as the environment.

On this basis, investigations showed that the planned official devolution of *qoliqoli* ownership to the traditional authorities, by itself, would be unlikely to lead to the altered perception and greater awareness of management practices at the community level hoped for by some advocates of the Qoliqoli Bill. The findings of this study suggest that no such changes will take place in the everyday behavior of villagers and community leaders (e.g., participation in decision making, consumption and sale of resources), at least not through the implemented bill itself. The devolution of ownership and thus a decline in the influence of the government and higher local responsibility for the resources and their management might strengthen the power of a few land-owning *mataqali*; however, it can be argued that such elites are no better managers nor better educated,⁹⁵ and therefore the benefit of such an increase in local power is questionable. In addition, ownership of a fishing ground by a single clan, for example, could diminish the responsibility shown towards the marine resources and their conservation, not only because of the disinterest of that particular group in sustainable management but also because other community members may cease to regard resource stewardship as a community activity. Awareness—meaning understanding, responsiveness and consciousness—of marine resource management practices will not be achieved through devolution alone. There are many things that have to happen first, starting, perhaps, with increased information transfer, education, and improved transport possibilities on and off the islands (all of which cannot be taken for granted on Gau and Nairai).

The bill, if implemented, would not strengthen and stabilize local management regimes due to greater compliance with management practices (and hence decreased misunderstanding and conflict over resource use) and responsibility towards marine resources. The findings of this study indicated that, again, greater compliance is linked to, and will only be achieved through, strong and respected leadership, increased environmental education at all social levels, and greater support of basic family needs. All of these again require better correspondence between the remote islands and authorities on the main island, Viti Levu. The neglect of management and conservation necessities and possibilities was, in the

95. Anonymous, pers. comm. (July 2005); Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo, see n. 13 above.

communities in this study, not so much caused by misunderstanding over resource user rights and rules, but rather by a general loss of “community” perception and identity, coupled with a lack of knowledge of the surrounding environment. The resources were declining; therefore community members bought larger nets and spearguns and smashed coral heads to get even smaller fish hiding in them. An accepted, and not necessarily traditional, leader could support the revitalization of identity and responsibility for the environment, its resources, and their management, which is crucial for compliance with conservation measures and thus stabilization of management.

Therefore, our findings have shown that revitalization of the traditional, village-based authority, and thus better control over fishing activities, will not happen as a result of the implementation of the Qoliqoli Bill. Smooth chiefly succession and general “community peace,” supposed to have a positive influence on management practices,⁹⁶ do not exist anymore in many places on these islands and will not be facilitated by a devolution of *qoliqoli* ownership. In some places, in fact, rather the opposite may happen. The village-based authority of the islands can only be revitalized by reversing the general feeling of loss of community perception and identity. Better control over the fishing activities of outsiders and their interference with community and subsistence fishers has been made possible on Gau and Nairai through the decision of the communities (facilitated by management workshops) to cease granting any fishing licenses to outsiders, as well as through the appointment of fishwardens, which began in 2002. One of Fiji’s main objectives with regards to CBMRM should be enforcing, financially and legally, those measures, which rural communities and districts will only in very few cases be able to address by themselves, for example, by means of the marine advisor scheme suggested above.

Independence is the “hope and hurdle” of outer islands such as Gau and Nairai—unwanted but accepted at the same time. True long-term independence in terms of sustainable resource use will only work with government reforms resulting in improved communication, information and transport services to enable the people to make their own wise choices. Ignoring the situation on the islands (including social and environmental changes and hazards) for many more years while diverting financial and natural resources to “pressing” urban issues can and may backfire at some point. The role of the rural communities will become more important because they will become crucial to the balancing act of developing the country while safeguarding its resources.

The effects of a change in legislation, such as the implementation of the Qoliqoli Bill, on CBMRM regimes and village leadership in Fiji, and also

96. Vunisea, see n. 54 above.

whether greater returns from marine resources would in fact be achieved and sustained locally, can therefore still be only the subject of speculation. This study suggests that negative effects in terms of resource exploitation and conflict within communities (e.g., over income distribution) will exceed potential benefits (e.g., possible greater sense of responsibility) by far. Under the present situation—given the fragility of the present CBMRM system, as well as the general decline of the traditional system (for example, chiefly succession) but increasing economic power of the chiefs—full local ownership would not be sensible from a conservation point of view nor in terms of sustainability, efficiency, nor equity of resource use.

CONCLUSION

Today, marine inshore resources are endangered even on remote islands in the South Pacific where subsistence lifestyles persist. Pacific Island States such as Fiji require a community-based marine resource management (CBMRM) system because a centralized government is unable to reach remote island groups spread over hundreds or thousands of kilometers. CBMRM is sprouting on many Pacific Islands but faces many challenges as the environment changes quickly, and both internal (e.g., ownership) and external (e.g., foreign fishers) pressures increase. In this study, Fijian villagers perceived changes over space and time in their natural and social environment, including traditional authority and village leadership. These changes require community members to adapt. These changes, however, had not been taken into account in the initial drafting of the Qoliqoli Bill, when it was still assumed that the traditional communal hierarchy and order would exist.

In order to adapt to these and future changes while supporting the livelihoods of island communities, the villagers' need for strong and knowledgeable leadership has to be acknowledged. It is critical to successful marine resource management and of direct consequence to community welfare and function, the distribution of responsibilities, the transfer of knowledge, and the acceptance of management measures, but it may continue to weaken and erode. In the case of a weakened foundation as described here, with unresolved responsibilities and regulations, a change in the inshore area ownership regulation may cause only more confusion and disputes and make full local ownership impractical and non-recommendable due to its underlying connotation of a "free ride." The people who need and want more information and support in decision making may not benefit from such legislative change; instead it may be those who are already privileged due to their land-owning rights. Thus, in the case of Fiji, before any further steps are taken towards the implementation of the Qoliqoli Bill (if further steps are taken at all), a more careful evaluation of

the magnitude of the potential impacts of the proposed devolution of owning rights and responsibility is needed. This would have to include a rigorous definition of the conditions, regulations, rights, and responsibilities that will be attached to full ownership, and a decision on whether legal protection similar to that conferred on land rights is a realistic aim for Fiji's coastal marine areas. Whether the devolution will take place at some point in the near future or whether it will remain an object of political discussion indefinitely remains unclear. Meanwhile, the conditions under which this devolution may happen should be investigated very carefully in order not to end up in a situation where the government and other institutions use the occasion as an excuse for releasing responsibilities and not providing any more extension work or assistance to the "independent" communities. How high the risks of devolution will be for the environmental resources, the subsistence lifestyles, and the livelihoods of the people concerned will depend on these attached conditions.

The rural communities in this study are in danger of becoming less and less traditional, and more and more undeveloped, in relation to the urban regions of Fiji. Although villagers hope for an improved quality of life, better access to information, improved infrastructure, and reinforced community leadership, attempts to realize these goals have been slow and often unsuccessful. This study therefore gives an example of how villagers can be caught between needing development and wanting adaptation on the one hand, and between improvement for future generations, and former traditions which they lose but still mourn on the other. The people in these communities are becoming less dependent on their traditional culture, a situation which, a few decades ago, they could never have imagined. Similarly, many people who made their way to towns or abroad could not imagine going back to their villages. Another very old and very complex traditional system is losing its efficiency and complexity over time. What remains are societies that are not traditional anymore, but still "developing," versus the "old" traditional but undeveloped ones. The wide perception that the traditional system is becoming eroded is thus a reality—but have these rural communities already moved too far from their traditional lifestyles to be able to "turn back" (re-establish pre-colonial status) or adapt traditional lifestyles to the changing circumstances of life in modern Oceania, a region that, today, is barely comparable to its pre-colonial status and identity? The people interviewed in this study believed that "turning back" was not the best option for community welfare, nor for the management and conservation of their resources, because the communities involved did not want to stand back while the world developed around them. How then could CBMRM work successfully in these communities? One way to lighten the dilemma of being caught between past and future without direction for the present would be to enforce village leadership, for

example through faster re-installments of new chiefs, as the responsibility of each individual community.

These trends and findings are based on CBMRM research in Fiji; however, considering the importance of village leadership and local marine resources in the region, some generalizations can be made and applied to the wider Pacific Island region. It remains uncertain whether the present traditional chiefly systems can survive the changes in the region and regain the ability to lead and sustain these communities, or whether they will be replaced by including new types of leadership, for example non-traditional leaders, in the nomination process. Obviously, the latter would be an even greater departure from tradition in some ways, and such a leader, even where he or she was locally elected and had the blessings of the community elders, might not be accepted in all communities. Nevertheless, if the traditional chiefly system cannot convey the necessary kind of leadership anymore—due, for example, to a lack of competent people of chiefly descent—electing an educated and charismatic leader of non-chiefly descent would be a boost for some communities in terms of identification, welfare, and development. Respect and support for community leadership, and with it social capital and collective action, may be rebuilt; these are essential for the future survival of the community and the environment. They are the islander's "bank and insurance." The necessity of considering these community aspects while working on improving local resource management and conservation with a view to wise decision making must be supported more widely and merged into funding opportunities and policy-making processes. In this way, a more holistic approach to community-based management could make management measures more meaningful, sustainable, and thus more successful in the future.

Despite these generalizations, CBMRM efforts in Oceania will have to remain case-specific, for example at the regional and national level. The changes in the villagers' everyday lives that influence management regimes are not the same in all villages, and one cannot generalize community concerns because the actions so highly depend on the individuals involved. Although traditional respect and social ties are loosening, they do so with varying speed and in various manners. Thus, the aspects of community leadership and fishing ground ownership mentioned in this article cannot be considered independently; they form a complex network that differs from community to community and from island to island. Larger-scale follow-up research must unequivocally address the issues raised by this study before deeper insights and more accurate generalizations can be achieved. Furthermore, deeply focused studies on the specific aspects of social environment of the communities themselves and the development history of each island are needed. Such long-term research and assistance would be most effective when based in and wanted by the communities themselves,

and oriented towards detecting the community's specific concerns and integrating them into the management planning process.

Finally, in parallel to any CBMRM effort, and before any clarification of ownership and leadership status can take place, other pressing issues of development in the region should be resolved—for example, the connections and communications infrastructure between remote islands and the main islands and capitals will have to improve first. The rural communities generally need and want a closer collaboration with their urban and official counterparts—and decentralization has to be used for good (co-)management and not only to release pressure and responsibility from overwhelmed government departments, or to look backwards and ignore the enormous changes these countries have undergone in the past century.

In conclusion, based on this study, the key challenges that persist for CBMRM in rural archipelagic Fiji (and likely beyond) can be summarized in a somewhat idealized way as follows:

- maintaining or re-establishing strong community leadership;
- increasing knowledge of the everyday life of the people, including information on the social and natural history of the islands;
- increasing the focus on core individuals and their respective influences, knowledge, and characters to increase the effectiveness of management responsibility delegation;
- identifying ways of incorporating greater input from outside agencies in the form of biological, environmental, and conservation education as well as help in planning, monitoring, evaluation, and enforcement (such as “marine advisors”); and
- finding ways to (re-)establish and maintain a strong bond among and between communities and official agents based on continuity, community consensus, and trust.

Many small and remote islands in developing States such as Fiji are still far from achieving their full growth potential in terms of sustainability of resource use and livelihood, due not least to political instability. Nonetheless, by slowly shifting the emphasis of development and the flow of money towards a more balanced situation between rural and urban areas, and with appropriate and continuous local leadership for all aspects of community reality, community links to government, and other facilitating agents and their information resources, a possibly triangular (co-)management scheme might become possible in the region as one choice for successful resource stewardship and CBMRM. Otherwise, the “traditional” independent island life may become further eroded, and the small islands and villages even further detached from the general way in which their countries try to represent or identify themselves.

