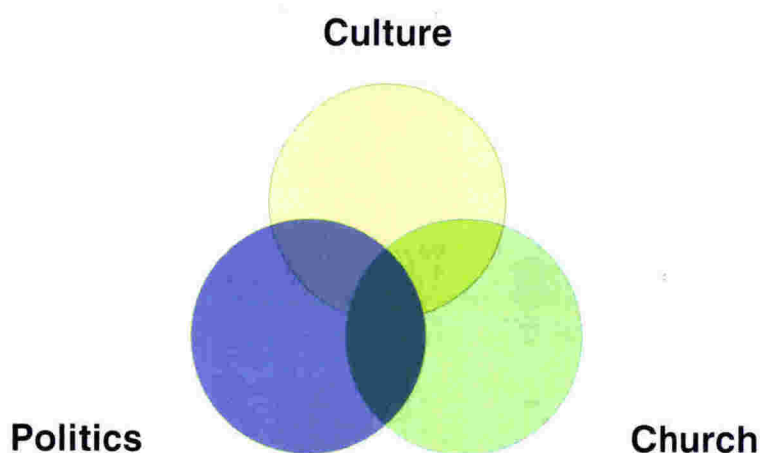


# *PAINAHA*



Gender and Leadership in `Are`Are Society, the South  
Sea Evangelical Church and Parliamentary Leadership—  
Solomon Islands

*Embracing the Past, engaging the present and hopeful for the future!*

Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard

2006

**Painaha**

Gender and Leadership in 'Are'Are Society, the South Sea Evangelical Church and  
Parliamentary leadership— Solomon Islands.

By  
Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard

A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Women's Studies

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## *Painaha*

The concept *painaha* is derived from the `Are`Are word *paina* meaning big. *Paina* is used interchangeably for people who have achieved and ascribed titles and have dignity and status. It also includes the literal meaning of being a heavily built person or object. It is gender inclusive. People with titles are often addressed as *mane paina* (big man), *keni paina* (big woman) and *ta'a paina* (respected people or elderly fatherly/motherly figure). *Painaha* is premised on reciprocal relationship, responsibility and accountability between the leaders (*ta'a paina*) and the ordinary people or followers (*ta'a masika*).

Dedicated to my father, the late Rev. Jesimiel Maeniuta, a leader, a *Araha*, an SSEC  
Minister and a Colonial Headman/Delegate,  
and  
my mother, Crystal Reresina Tarohanaaro, a humble, faithful and diligent leader  
without a formal title.

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To me, it was a worthwhile experience likened to labour pains with the nurse's encouraging words "one more push and the baby will be born". "One more push" has been my core strength in this venture.

*Raemanoha Rika'a* (Thank you very much)

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## Abbreviations

AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BICWF	Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum
BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate
CAPWIP	Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics
GIL	Gender in Leadership
IFM	Isatambu Freedom Movement
LMS	London Missionary Society
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force
MP	Member of Parliament
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RCDF	Rural Constituency Development Fund
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women
SSEC	South Sea Evangelical Church
SSEM	South Seas Evangelical Mission
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USA	United States of America
WDD	Women and Development Division
WFP	Women for Peace
WIP	Women in Politics
QKM	Queensland Kanaka Mission

## Glossary of Terms

Note: This glossary of `Are`Are words used in this thesis has been compiled according to my knowledge and John Naitoro's thesis on *The Politics of Development in `Are`Are, Malaita*, 1993.

Araha	Chief
`Auaapu	A virgin
Ha`ananauha	Wisdom giving
Hare	Menstruation hut
Hehenoro	Disobedient
Houraa	Feast
Huekeniha	Releasing of a bride
Hutaa	Genealogy or kinship system
Hutaahari	Second or third born male genealogy
Hutaahuu	Firstborn male genealogy
Hutaakeni	Female (daughters) genealogy
Keni	Female
Mako	Land
Mane	Male
Nima	House
Painaha	Leadership
Pata	Shell money or cash
Rioanimae	Common ancestor of the present `Are`Are descendants
Ro`oha	Obedient
Toi`ha	Work
Warato`o	The word

## **Abstract**

This thesis stems from my own experience as an advocate for peace as well as a victim during the recent civil conflict that shocked Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003. I had the opportunity to live and work under a leadership in crisis situation where law and order was absent, the economy collapsed and people and leaders were confused. Amidst the confusion, women took an active role in confronting the situation at its peak, a week after the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000 coup, visiting the militants' camps around Honiara, helping victims of the conflict and voicing their concerns to leaders.

This thesis is about gender and leadership. Many Solomon Islanders including myself are searching for solutions to ensure that history does not repeat itself and produce further discord. In doing so, finding new leadership models that would engage both genders and different leadership institutions working in partnership with each other at all levels is necessary.

This thesis examines the presence and absence of women in three separate leadership spheres: the 'Are'Are society, the South Sea Evangelical Church and Parliamentary leadership. The three objectives are, to examine to what extent women exercise leadership in the three leadership spheres, to study the factors that contribute to women's limited access to formal leadership and to examine whether it is possible for women to make a difference if they are involved in the different leadership positions. The questions asked are: whether the roles women perform in both the private and public spheres and the formal and informal structures are leadership roles? Should their roles warrant them leadership positions within these three leadership spheres? Should their roles accord them the title "leader"? Are women satisfied with their current roles and position within the three leadership spheres?

The research framework was based on my personal position as a knowledgeable insider. The methodologies used include focus group interviews, participant observation and face to face interviews with 41 leaders who hold or have held leadership positions in these three leadership spheres within Solomon Islands. Secondary information sources were also valuable.

In this thesis, I argue that the issue of gender and leadership is critical for rethinking and redesigning the future direction of Solomon Islands as a nation state. It will be the key ingredient in reconstructing and rebuilding the new Solomon Islands. The rebuilding process will mean reclaiming women's leadership roles in the three spheres, providing training for women and men leaders, providing political awareness in the wider community and addressing corruption and malpractice in the political electoral process.

Developing a strong, well-disciplined pool of women and men leaders within the three leadership spheres, in particular the formal and Parliamentary leadership is what Solomon Islands needs.

Maps of Solomon Islands and Malaita



Figure 1: Map of Solomon Islands. Source: Otter 2002.

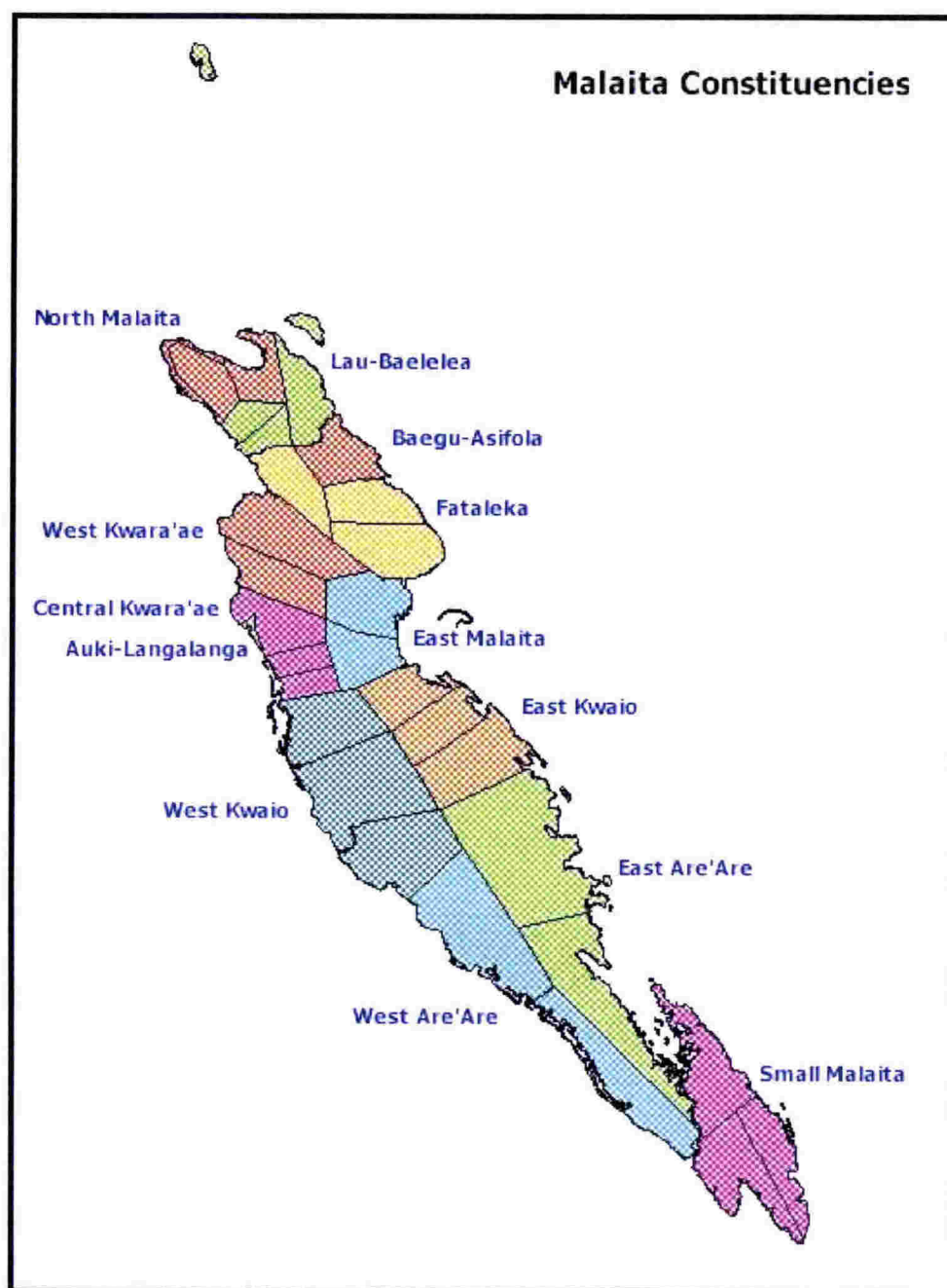


Figure 2: Map of Malaita Island. Source:  
URL [http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/general/malaita\\_select.asp](http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/general/malaita_select.asp)



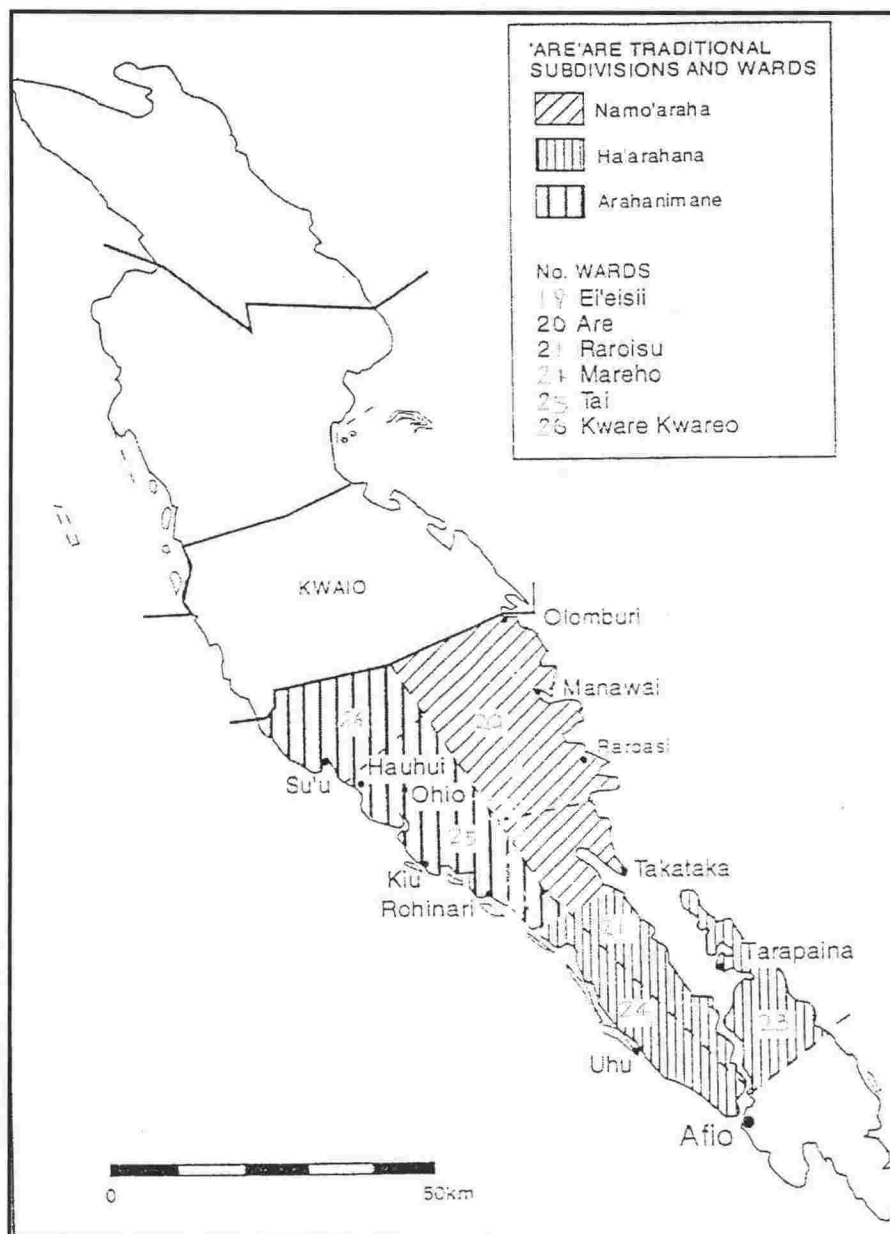


Figure 3: 'Are'Are traditional subdivisions Source: Naitoro 1993



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Partners in Leadership

*Good leadership consists of doing less and being more*

Lao Tzu cited in (Sashkin & M.G., 2003: 7)

This thesis is about gender and leadership in a Solomon Islands context. It stems from the violent ethnic/political leadership crisis known locally as the “civil conflict” that rocked Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003. As the result of the civil conflict more than 20,000 civilians were displaced, many were killed, the economy collapsed and a national leadership crisis ensued. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) described Solomon Islands as “our failing neighbour or a failed state” (ASPI, 2003; Dinnen, 2002; Wale & Pollard, 2004). I argue that any solutions for the future of Solomon Islands rest with finding new and better leadership models that embrace the leadership roles of both Solomon Islands’ women and men and engaging the three different leadership spheres, working in partnership with each other at all levels.

Solomon Islands is a nation of diverse cultures, languages and ethnic groupings, predominately Melanesians but also including Polynesians, Micronesians, and a minority of Chinese and Europeans. According to the 1999 Population and Housing Census, the population was just over 409,000 with an annual population growth rate of 2.8 percent. Women constitute 48 percent. That 41.5 percent of its population are 0-14 years, poses serious challenges for society including employment and essential services. The adult literacy rate in 1999 was reported as 76 percent, for women it was only 68 percent. (Otter, 2002; SIG, 1999)

## Thesis Framework

I am a woman, born and raised in `Are`Are in Malaita, Solomon Islands. I have worked and continue to work with `Are`Are women and men, SSEC women and national women’s organisations at the national level. My earlier research and

publications focussed particularly on women's roles within Solomon Islands. Despite Solomon Islands being a nation described as the "happy Isles" in a tourism promotion slogan (Stanley, 1996), it was thrown into civil conflict in 1998. The conflict in Solomon Islands was not an isolated event within the Pacific. A range of internal conflicts had taken place in Melanesian countries such as New Caledonia in the early 1980s (J. Connell, 1987), Fiji in 1987 (Robertson & Tamanisau, 1988; Scarr, 1988) and Bougainville in 1988 (Spriggs, 1990).

It was at the height of Solomon Islands' civil conflict that a significant number of both rural and urban Solomon Islanders linked the conflict with a crisis in leadership. That theme captured my attention. I believed that a study on leadership alone without gender could not offer a full analysis. Generally men dominate leadership positions at all levels yet men too were main actors during the conflict while women's leadership was visible only at the community level and in their women's groups. As Connell explains "gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes" (R. W. Connell, 2002: 10). It refers to the way in which people's behaviour and attitudes are shaped by factors such as culture, religion, politics or the environment in which one lives. Based on my earlier research on gender roles and my belief in a combined gender leadership model for Solomon Islands, I began this study.

Northhouse (1997:3) defines leadership as a "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". Based on this definition, I have been involved in a range of local leadership positions as a mother, a gardener and a home manager, as member of the SSEC Kukum Campus leadership team including my role as a preacher, a cleaner and a flower lady, the Panatina Valley Community Association, the Women For Peace group, the West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association and member in various boards and committees. For example, in 2001, I conducted a three day leadership workshop for the West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association leaders at Rohinari, Malaita, focussing on roles, responsibilities and characteristics of a good leader. A good leader in my view is a person whose life and character influences those around him/her for a positive change and is a life long process.

In this thesis, leadership as “a process of influence” and leadership as “power” are central in the discussion of the three leadership spheres studied. There are two dimensions of power discussed in this thesis. Firstly, “power to empower” which refers to empowering people around you as a leader (Maxwell & Dornan, 1997; Sepoe, 2002, Scheyvens, 1995) and “power to control” which refers to the power to dominate, control, command and likely to resort by force.

The term “traditional” used in this thesis refers to the indigenous peoples’ knowledge, values and life style. The term “equal” with respect to gender equality refers in this thesis to having the same access to resources and leadership positions without encountering barriers due to gender.

I wish to note here as well that `Are`Are as an oral society believes in the power of the word. My cultural role in the form of *ha`ananauha* (giving of words of wisdom) repeatedly as an `Are`Are mother is also reflected in this thesis.

In this thesis I argue that gender and leadership will be the key ingredient in reconstructing and rebuilding the new Solomon Islands. For the purpose of this thesis, the topic of gender and leadership is examined through cultural, religious and political perspectives as practiced in `Are`Are society, the SSEC and the Parliamentary leadership. This thesis represents first time research, as there is little documentation available on the `Are`Are society, or the issues surrounding gender either within the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) or the Parliamentary leadership. The aim of this thesis therefore is to open up new prospects for further research, discussion, dialogue and critique by researchers, academia and community workers, both from Solomon Islands and elsewhere. These three perspectives have been selected because they provide the overarching and linked structures through which a local system of leadership can be examined.

### **The 'Are'Are Society: Complementary but Separate**

Central to 'Are'Are leadership is the role of culture at the level of both the family and the community. 'Are'Are society recognises that gender in leadership is relevant not only for people but is also linked to the world that revolves around them.

The 'Are'Are word for leadership is *painaha* which intertwines with positions of power, authority, titles and eldership. It embraces reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers. The chieftainship (*arahana*) system in 'Are'Are governs the social organisation of the 'Are'Are society. *Arahana* is channelled through the men and is exclusively for the men, while leadership for women is referred to as '*auaapuha* which embraces women's morality, character and industriousness. The *arahana* and '*auaapuha* are the corner stone of the 'Are'Are society and will be discussed in Chapter four.

### **The South Sea Evangelical Church: Complementary and Saved to Serve**

The work of Florence S.H. Young in establishing the Queensland Kanaka Mission (QKM) which is now known today as the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) is fascinating for two reasons. First, it was started by a woman leader in the form of a Sunday school class for indentured labourers during the labour trade era late 1800s to early 1900s. Second, though women missionaries dominated the initial stages of the mission in the islands, native men were trained to be the first church leaders (Hilliard, 1969; Young, 1926). The SSEC has an indigenous leadership structure and administration and is the third largest church in Solomon Islands.

The SSEC is dominant in Malaita province and has three strands of leadership structures; which are *Fikuanakini*<sup>1</sup> for women and for men the *Lifurongo*<sup>2</sup> and Men's Band. The third strand is the formal structure which is dominated by men from the local to national level. SSEC leadership focuses primarily at the community level and is concerned with developing the spirituality of its adherents. Community church

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<sup>1</sup> Fikuanakini is a Kwara'ae word meaning women gathering together. The name Fikuanakini was later changed to Women's Band and today is used interchangeably with Women's Fellowship in SSEC

<sup>2</sup> Lifurongo is also a Kwara'ae word meaning setting apart men in twos to work as native missionaries in rural communities within SSEC.

teacher/pastor is the principle leader in the community. A further discussion about leadership in the SSEC is provided in chapter five.

### **The Parliamentary Leadership: Equal in Principle, Competitive in Practice.**

Solomon Islands became a British Protectorate in 1893 and gained its independence in July 1978 (Corris, 1973; Golden, 1993; Mamaloni, 1992; Saemala, 1983). Independence was welcomed with the motto "To Lead is to Serve" engraved at the bottom of Solomon Islands Coat of Arms. This simple slogan suggests the importance of leadership dynamics in Solomon Islands.

From being a British colony, Solomon Islands adopted the Westminster system with one house of parliament incorporating the Government and the Opposition. The Parliamentary system gives women the opportunity to compete equally with men for positions of leadership in the Parliament which so far has proven difficult. Women's active participation in parliamentary leadership has been essentially limited to their voting rights at the constituency level. Given that both the Government and Opposition comprise all men, women are absent from the highest decision-making body. Women's attempts to secure a seat in the national parliament since the post independence period (1980-2006) have been unsuccessful with one exception. An argument advanced in this thesis is for a planned strategy for fair gender representation in parliament. Further discussions on gender and Parliamentary leadership will be covered in chapter six.

### **Thesis Aims and Objectives**

The general aim of my thesis is to conduct an integrated study of the presence and absence of women in past and present leadership roles in Solomon Islands, including barriers to women's leadership and factors influencing leadership. Most leadership positions within 'Are'Are society, the SSEC and Parliament are held by men. This representation extends to leadership positions within the government, the churches and other non-government organisations both in the rural and urban setting in Solomon Islands more generally. However, while men dominate almost all of the

national leadership structures, women dominate the leadership positions at the informal and community structures.

This thesis has three main objectives. The first is to examine to what extent women exercise leadership in the 'Are'Are society, the SSEC and the Parliament. The second is to study the issues that contribute to women's limited access to formal and national leadership roles and the third is to examine whether it is possible for women to make a difference. The questions asked are: whether the roles women perform in both the private and public spheres and the formal and informal structures are leadership roles? Should women's leadership roles be confined to the informal spheres, community leadership and their women's groups? Should their roles warrant them leadership positions within these three leadership spheres? Should their roles accord them the title "leader"? Are women satisfied with their current roles and position within the three leadership spheres? Is it possible for women to be leaders as well at the formal and national level? In order to answer these questions, I will begin by examining the different leadership styles practised in Melanesia in chapter two.

### **Researcher Framework**

The data for this research were gathered in Solomon Islands in 2003 with further consultations made with various Solomon Islanders in 2004 and 2005. However, this presented challenges to me as an international doctoral student based in Wellington, New Zealand. In particular, communication with and identification of chiefs of 'Are'Are and the leaders of the SSEC West and East 'Are'Are Associations was problematic and limited to word of mouth and hand delivered mail. The use of telephone and email was impractical. This is because such facilities are limited to the privileged few in Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands

In order to conduct the research for this thesis, I had to depend mainly on my local knowledge and networks. As an insider I understand the key features of Solomon Islands and Honiara. I have a good knowledge of the people within the SSEC, the Parliament office and the 'Are'Are leaders. For example while waiting for a boat to travel to Malaita, I met with various 'Are'Are men and women and joined the street

walkers (lius<sup>3</sup>), using the “coconut wireless<sup>4</sup>” network or “corridor talk” (Warren & Hackney, 2000) or “snow ball method” (Knight, 2003). I was well received by family, friends and the leaders I interviewed. On the other hand, because it was widely known that I reside in Wellington, I was perceived also as an outsider who does not live in the community or in Honiara.

All the while I engaged in the building of relationships with host families, interviewees, friends, older men and women as I conducted the research for this thesis. We shared food together, exchanged ideas and performed household chores together. Building relationships has enabled me to carry out my 41 face to face interviews without difficulty. The importance of this is linked to the fact that within the 'Are'Are culture, face to face private conversation between men and women is considered unacceptable and can result in some form of compensation being necessary. In addition, the 'Are'Are cultural practice of reciprocity for a good will visit must also be observed. In order to address these issues, I held my interviews in places where people were aware of our presence and what our conversation was about. Most of my interviews were conducted in homes, either in the kitchen around the fire place, in the lounge where the family relaxes, in the church, under the trees or under a raised floor house where we could talk but in the public eye. There were a few occasions in which either the wife, an older male or female was present but sat quietly and listened to the interview. There were two incidents in which the older male and female contributed and backed up the conversation which is acceptable in the 'Are'Are culture.

'Are'Are, as an oral society, welcomes and encourages open discussion, contributions and sharing of ideas from knowledgeable men and women. For me, interviewing is founded on building relationships, trust and respect and empowering the respondents. At the end of each interview, I would say thank you verbally and shake their hand, but in addition to that, I would give them any of the following foods as gifts: a packet of sugar or tea, navy biscuits (crackers), rice, tinned fish or a few dollars for tobacco. One of the respondents asked for kerosene for his lamp. It is

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<sup>3</sup> Lius – a Solomon Island term for unemployed people who roam the streets everyday

<sup>4</sup> Coconut wireless – a Solomon Island term for passing of information by word of mouth from one person to another

important to note that such gifts are respected, valued, acknowledged and could be reciprocated in different forms in the future.

While in the village, I was able to conduct one to three days workshops for the women on simple skills such as sewing, macramé and dyeing. Usually I conducted my interviews in the morning or in the evening when the respondents were not busy with their daily work. I was able to assist and attend two funerals that occurred in the surrounding villages and I preached two sermons at churches, one at Surairo village and one at the SSEC Kukum Campus church in Honiara. The interviews with the SSEC leaders and Members of Parliament in Honiara were conducted in their offices. Further personal conversations were also carried out with some knowledgeable people in 2004 and 2005. As a result of my experience, it is clear to me that this research was enriched as a result of me being a knowledgeable insider. Further discussions are provided in chapter 3.

Partnership in leadership encourages leading together either by gender, culture, church and politics. The next chapter will provide a general overview of leadership literature relevant to my thesis in Melanesia.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gender and Leadership: A Melanesian Approach**

#### **Power corrupts**

It's a disease of leadership  
It develops very easily, very quietly, very assiduously

As a leader grows in confidence  
The disease finds a host

When a leader thinks of himself  
And puts self and self-interest  
Before others and others-interests  
The disease takes root

When a leader himself gives himself an over-sized self-  
image/self-worth. The disease is home to stay

When a leader gets to the state, where he loses his humility,  
thinking he is so good, so clever, so powerful, having rights  
not to be questioned, acting and behaving like the Almighty,  
That is proof that power has corrupted.  
(Molisa, 1992: 31).

#### **Introduction**

This thesis examines the three leadership spheres of 'Are'Are culture, the SSEC and the Parliamentary leadership. In order to compare and contrast leadership roles by gender within Solomon Islands, research literature from the Pacific in particular, Melanesia were most useful and relevant for my discussion. Leadership in Solomon Islands and throughout Melanesia is associated with leadership titles such as "big man", sometimes referred to as "great men" or "chiefs". These titles though different, are interchangeable in the way they are applied and the roles they play in tribes, communities and societies.

#### **Gender and Leadership: Melanesian Perspectives**

Gender and leadership issues such as women's under-representation in leadership, their invisibility, male domination and women's lack of access to resources are

common leadership concerns in Solomon Islands and its Melanesian neighbours. Women's participation in leadership is visible more in the informal sector as demonstrated in community leadership mainly by the churches and cultures. Where women are included in the formal leadership and decision-making structures, they tend to be clustered around the lower paid positions such as cleaners, gardeners, secretaries, teachers, clerks, administrators and nurses which often relate to the welfare profession. This is not to underestimate a significant number of women who have made it to the top senior positions within the government hierarchy as well as within church leadership.

Leadership in the Pacific is complex and varies accordingly. Geographically, the South Pacific region is inhabited by three broad groupings of people. Generally the Polynesians inhabit the islands of Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, Niue, Cook Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia, although they are also found in the Melanesian group of islands. The Micronesians inhabit the islands of Kiribati, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Palau, Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia. The Melanesians inhabit the islands of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia (Bellwood, 1993).

In assessing traditional leadership in the South Pacific Societies, Douglas (1979) discusses the two assumed stereotypes of leadership in the South Pacific. The first which is predominant in the Polynesian Islands is based on hereditary rank (ascribed status) and the second which predominant in Melanesia, is based on achieved status through egalitarianism and competition. Douglas argues that while this generalisation is accepted throughout the Pacific, each Pacific Island society is different and unique as the inhabitants of these islands are of different languages, cultures and have different leadership styles. She adds that leadership in the Pacific also takes into account many other issues such as kin group, descent and power, status, social interaction, age, personal attributes, territorial areas and political systems. Another perspective is presented by Narokobi (1983) in his article on "The nature of Melanesian leadership: power to build or abuse". He discusses the nature and dynamics of Melanesian leadership in a changing environment as experienced in Papua New Guinea, arguing that the influence of the business leadership, church

leadership, political leadership and that of the “big man” leadership, shapes and influences the people’s behaviour, attitudes and values.

Big man and chiefly leadership dynamics in the Pacific is complex. The diverse cultures and the various roles gender has in these two types of leadership cannot be fully discussed in this section. However it is important to have a brief overview on big man and chiefly leadership in Melanesia.

### **Big man leadership in Melanesia**

The “big man” leadership system practised in Melanesia varies according to different cultural groups but is commonly founded upon the three fold model of Warrior, Feast giver and Priest roles. White (1978: 80-92) describes the “warrior” as being successful in a number of raids performed and the ability to fight and kill through headhunting and on the battlefields. “Feast giving” refers to the hosting of a significant number of feasts, considering the sizes of the feasts which may include the amount of food consumed and the number of pigs killed and eaten at the feast. “Priestly roles” refers to the relationship which the leaders have with the supernatural powers which connect them to their ancestral spirits to be successful in fighting, fishing and hunting (Barnes, 2000; Burnes, Cooper, & Wild, 1972; Coppet, 1995; Douglas, 1979; Godelier, 1986; Keesing, 1968; Lemonnier, 1991; Naitoro, 1993; Oliver, 1955; Otter, 2002; Stanley, 1996; Starzecka & Cranestone, 1974; White, 1978). Elaborating on leadership in Melanesia, White (1978) highlighted that personality attributes are a key component of leadership in Melanesia. In his analysis of the big man leadership model, he looked at three studies that were carried out in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands on the personal attributes of big man leaders. In the first study, Read cited in White (1978) conducted with the Gahuku-Gama big men in Papua New Guinea, discusses character types associated with weak and strong personalities. That is weak personalities tend to be:

non-assertive, non aggressive, content to let others lead, eschews the limelight, reluctant to wrangle, no desire to dominate and does not seek admiration while the strong personalities include characteristics such as

assertive, aggressive, not likely to defer, proud, quick to take offence, a desire to dominate and likely to resort to force (White, 1978: 71).

Here he argued that a leader leads with a combination of personality attributes from both types. This is based on maintaining a relationship between the weak and the strong personality types which is reflected in the relationship between leaders and the followers. Read called this personality type the “autonomous” personality type which comprised some attributes from both the weak and the strong personality types. Combining personality attributes from both implies that leaders and followers need each other in leadership.

The second study by Valentine cited in White (1978) was carried out on the Lakalai big men in New Britain, Papua New Guinea. Valentine presented a similar picture classifying two sets of personality traits which the Lakalai people believe to be present in individuals. The first set includes characteristics such as,

man of anger, man of play, man of movement, man of diffuse attention and man of sexuality while the second set includes man of shame, man of silence, man of good conduct, man of knowledge and man of art (White, 1978: 74).

Valentine argues that the Lakalai people believe in these two sets of personalities which provide the platform for the selection of leaders. However he notes that each individual possesses attributes of both sets and big men leaders lead by combining traits from both sets (White 1978:73-74).

In the third study, Oliver cited in (White, 1978) researched the Siuai mumi in Bougainville, Western Solomons. In this study, Oliver discovered that aspiring leaders achieve status and prestige through competitive feasting. This implies that a leader gains dominance through the violation of the solidarity of the leader and the followers. Despite the feast competition, the Siuai big men believed quite strongly that any successful leader within the feasting cycle is required to possess the personality traits of “ambition, skills, industriousness and goodness” (White, 1978: 76). A Siuai man with the above attributes would be categorised as a man able to host feasting. Feasting reflects ability, wealth, fame and power in which he could be

very influential in his community. He also presented a similar conclusion in his research on the A'ara big men leadership of the Isabel province in Solomon Islands in which thirty seven personality traits were identified and classified under positive and negative categories

According to Coppet (1995) the 'Are'Are society, Malaita recognises that the "killer and the peace-master" together make up the big man leadership. This is reflected through engaging in warrior activities but at the same time being responsible for hosting feasts to maintain peace with war allies. As observed from the above examples, big men leaders demonstrate leadership "as a process of influence" in their roles as feast givers and priests but also leadership as "power to control" in warring situations.

In the political sphere in Papua New Guinea today, Narokobi (1983) states that "big man" leadership has taken another twist. Big man leaders prove themselves as leaders through distribution of wealth and a caring attitude towards their people. In return for their charity and generosity, they gain status and reputation. The "big man" leadership system in the modern political sphere could be used as leverage for gaining political power and wealth accumulation.

A big man leader through feast giving, warrior and priestly roles has tremendous power and influence over his tribe. Such influence extends over his tribes' wealth such as food production, pigs and shell money. He builds strong relationships and connections with other big man alliances of other factions and tribes. Because of his position of leadership as a man of influence and power, he is able to attract followers, supporters and material goods. He is able to acquire great wealth through the hosting of feasts which in turn gives him more wealth and status. The more feasts he hosts, the wealthier and more powerful he becomes, but it must be noted that he distributes his wealth to his tribes and followers through feasting. Feast giving is not only seen as showing kindness and distributing of wealth to the followers but a process of wealth and power accumulation (Burnes et al., 1972: 105-109). This system can be a form of exploitation if it is not properly administered. Followers, who have little material wealth, give what they have towards feast giving, making the big man even wealthier.

It could be argued that the big man leadership system is strongly associated with masculinity, strength, power and wealth and therefore leaders are expected to be men. A big man leader proves his strength, his capabilities to lead, his knowledge of culture, his wealth and achievements and his dignity in order to attain that leadership position (Kabutaulaka, 1998: 138-139). In this case a big man leader is placed in a leadership position where he can exert power over his followers but also an influencer who protects and shares wealth and food with them. While women play a major role in feasting such as pig raising, food production, cooking and serving food in Melanesia, women's role in big man feasting is rarely discussed in literature.

Big man leadership has some merit in its ideologies. A big man title is earned only through hard work and demonstrated leadership skills, not by birth. He is selected amongst others as a leader by consensus. He is not necessarily of a chiefly lineage but an ordinary man who could relate to the ordinary people. His leadership is characterised by courage, aggressiveness, strength, love, service, knowledge, hard work, health and fitness, a good personality and relationship with people. He becomes a big man leader because of who he is and what he has achieved.

There is little discussion on women leaders with "big woman" leadership title in Melanesia. However, a significant amount of literature are on women's leadership in their church women's groups, women's roles in reproduction, food production and women's influential position in Melanesian society (Barnes, 2000; Douglas, 2000; Godelier, 1986; Jolly, 1989; Jorgensen, 1991; Keesing, 1987; Narokobi, 1980, 1983; Pollard, 1997, Scheyvens, 2003). Though the title "big woman" does exist in different cultures in Melanesia, for example in 'Are'Are, *keni paina* means big woman, such discussion has not been documented. As a Melanesian woman, I believe that women play a crucial role in feast giving, warrior and priestly roles. In feast giving ceremonies, women are responsible for almost the entire feast such as food production and harvesting, pig raising, collecting firewood, cooking the food and feeding the crowd. While Melanesian women are not involved in warfare, they engage very much in peace making. They also play a crucial part in priestly affairs such as rituals and association with their ancestral spirits which is reflected in good health, high yield food production and good animal husbandry.

Little discussion on women in big man leadership highlights the “absence argument” in which Sinclair (1998) points out that women do lead but their leadership is invisible. In addition, Virginia Schein cited in Sinclair (1998) argues that men and women do not so much lead differently but are perceived differently. An example of this is offered by Keesing (1997) writing about women of Kwaio on Malaita, Solomon Islands. He states:

They are the central agents in the reproduction of their society and culture. A woman, standing in the centre of the clearing, the middle of the Kwaio social universe, astride the generations with powers of life and death in her hands, creates and perpetuates order, maintains the boundaries which the unseen spirits police. Feeding and teaching, quintessentially social and cultural acts are key symbols of a woman's life (Keesing, 1987: 39)

Kwaio women's roles in reproduction do not only refer to their biological role in reproduction but also to the reproducing of food and other resources in the home. Keesing further reiterated that women take charge of matters such as household chores, pigs, money, properties and the general upkeep of a village. Their leadership is demonstrated by leadership “to influence” and the “power to empower” their family and community livelihood rather than in actual titles of leadership.

A different basis for gender power relations emerges from Godelier's (1986) research of the New Guinea Baruya society. Here men have ownership over land and resources and this privilege gives them accessibility to occupy key decision-making positions within the formal agricultural sector as key players in cultivation and gardening for the family and the community. This represents a unique situation as in Melanesia it is women who are generally responsible for food production. However the women of Baruya did not perceive the men's roles as having ultimate power over their lives. Instead they demonstrated that the power women exercised while different was stronger in other ways. This was because women,

had a monopoly over pig breeding whose meat plays an essential role in establishing and maintaining alliances, good neighbourly relations, mutual



help, and so on. They had the monopoly of their own initiations and of course they alone brought new children into the world, in an area socially forbidden to men. In the few weeks following childbirth, they had the power of life and death over their child. If they accepted it, they kept it, otherwise they killed it and buried it beneath the shelter in which they had given birth (Godelier, 1986: 142).

A similar argument is made by Jorgensen (1991: 258) who adds that in big man societies, women through their roles in animal husbandry are the key producers of the wealth (pigs) on which relationships are maintained and men's reputation are upheld. This places women in positions of power as women can sabotage men's plans through refusing to cooperate. Wolkowitz argues that women's domestic identity can be a source of fame and political power (Wolkowitz, 1987). In the big man's analysis of leadership, it is assumed that men's success and status depends on women's cooperation and manual labour. However, as I have earlier argued in Solomon Islands,

a Solomon Island woman is proud of herself and her supportive roles, she knows that the success of husbands- as of men in general- is simply a reflection of the success of their wives, and of women in general (Pollard, 2000: 4).

The complementary roles men and women play in the home, within the family clan and big man leadership require cooperation and dependence on each other.

While in Bukip and Sausa society, Papua New Guinea, women are neither superior, inferior nor equal to men, they are different from men. Narokobi (1980) argued that women's leadership in Bukip and Sausa have more influence in the home and the family unit compared to the men. When they are married, they retain their own names and are not addressed by their husband's name. Leadership as "power to empower" within the domestic sphere has led to analysis such as that by Judy Rosener (1990) that women and men are different and therefore lead differently. According to Rosener cited in Still (1996), men tend to be transactional leaders while women are essentially transformational leaders (Still, 1996: 66). The differences in



these two types of leadership mean that men's leadership is action-driven whilst women's leadership influences and empowers through a range of peaceful activities. An example of this is evident in Havini's (2004) and Sirivi's (1998) writings on the Bougainville armed conflict, 1988-1998, in which women survived those dangerous years using a range of strategies. These included living in caves and the jungles whilst others risked their lives by crossing the Bougainville/Solomon Islands border in dug out and motorised canoes. Bougainville women did not attempt to participate in the conflict and their experiences during those dangerous years led to the formation of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom Organisation. Further they were very involved in the various peace talks held in New Zealand and Australia (Miriori, 2004: 125). The leadership demonstrated by women in this dangerous situation was through peaceful and influential means of survival.

Similar strength of purpose was demonstrated by the women of Solomon Islands during the civil conflict of 1998 to 2003, when we immediately mobilised and established the Women for Peace (WFP) group within a week of the coup. We rallied and went through blockades, met with the leaders and commanders of both militia groups, visited the militants' camps and performed activities such as singing, prayers, feeding, giving words of wisdom to the militants and advising them to return to their families. We also met with the Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, the Governor General, Sir John Ini Lapli and launched our plea for a return to normalcy. We were also present at the ceasefire talks but were excluded from the Peace Agreement talks held in Townsville in 2000 (Liloqula & Pollard, 2002). Women's absence at the Townsville talk was merely a result of a decision made by Solomon Islands government and both the militia groups' leaders who are all men.

Generally we were calm; felt empowered and committed to our mission. We dug deep into our pockets to finance our work. Amidst the work that we were doing, we felt vulnerable and insecure. Clearly women demonstrated leadership "as a process of influence" and "power to empower" in this warring situation.

Applauding and recognising Pacific women's roles in peacemaking, Wainwright (2004) praised the women of Bougainville and Solomon Islands for bravery, confidence and promotion of peace amongst militia groups and their leaders.

Another important feature that is visible in Melanesia is where descent is passed down through the women. Within matrilineal societies, women have influential roles over land and land is passed down through the first born female line although land is still owned by the clan and not the individual (Siwatibau, 2005; Tetehu, 2005; White, 2004). In Nagovisi, Bougainville for example, a knowledgeable and respected firstborn female becomes the head of the clan and has the final say over land allotment, marriage of young members and properties belonging to the clan. Men on the other hand move to their wives' hamlet or settlement upon marriage (Oliver, 1989). In Guadalcanal and Savo in Solomon Islands, women become head of the clan and land ownership is traced through the women's lineage (Hogbin, 1964).

Women in Melanesia, despite little being documented about them in the big man leadership structure, display empowering and influential leadership. Such influence is displayed through their roles, word of mouth, participation and decision-making either in their families and communities or sometimes at the national level. Obviously, the functioning and the success of the "big man" leadership cannot be achieved in isolation but depends upon the relationship between gender, production and exchange of wealth as well as intentions of good will.

### **Chiefly System in Melanesia**

Another leadership title that is commonly used today throughout Melanesia is the title "chief" or "traditional chief" and "paramount chief". It is widely used for respected leaders and elders in clans and local communities instead of the "big man" title. Generally one of the significant differences between "big man" title and "chief" title is that chief is hereditary (ascribed) throughout the Pacific region. While anthropological research has documented a significant amount of literature on the big man leadership as discussed earlier, that title is slowly being phased out in general discussions, usage and respect in the communities. The title "chief" has become popular in the last few decades in Melanesia although it existed well before colonisation and Christianisation in the nineteenth century (White, 1991, 1997). The way Melanesians used the title chief and the way it is structured varies according to different cultural groups.

Based on his work and knowledge of the Cheke Holo people of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands, White suggests that the term “chief” or “*sift*” in Pijin, once meant “a traditional leader knowledgeable in custom, history and local practices for resolving conflicts” (White, 2004: 4). Traditional leadership is vested in the knowledge of and the power of the people. He argues that today as in the case of Santa Isabel, chiefs are not always associated with traditional leaders. It could also be used for men with educational qualification and leadership experiences.

Historically, chiefs in Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian societies were influential in the introduction of Christianity. Chiefs retaliated and were hostile to Christianity in the first instance, making the work of missionaries difficult and challenging (Atkin, 1982; Koskinen, 1953: 38-47). It took the missionaries some time and effort to convert the islanders. As in the case of Santa Isabel in Solomon Islands, the missionaries strategically converted the chiefs first, for example, chief Soga. It was noted that through the influential roles of the chiefs, the conversion of the islanders to Christianity was easy (Macpherson, 1997; Thornley, 1993; White, 1991, 1997). Women too played a significant role in Christian conversion as evident in Ranonga, Western province, Solomon Islands, where Takavoja, an old renowned woman, cried and protected a male local missionary from the warriors’ attacks. She provided a safe haven for him and encouraged him to establish a church in Pienuna village. In this case, senior men and male priests resisted Christianity at the first instance (McDougall, 2003:65-66). Similarly in Roviana, Western province, the people without any form of standing in society such as the war captives, orphans or ordinary people embraced Christianity first (Early 1998:47). White argues that the integration of the roles of the chiefs, Christianity and Europeanization greatly weakened the chiefs’ status, roles and identity. This impact on the chiefs’ role and influence is visible at the higher or regional level which is outside of the family and descent group (White, 1991, 1997, 2004).

Over the past few decades, a significant shift has occurred in relation to the role of chiefs, except Fiji where the Council of Chiefs has been in existence since the late nineteenth century. In Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, there has been an igniting of the spirit of cultural identity and cultural power as both governments and

communities recognise the value of traditional leadership. In Vanuatu and Fiji, National Councils of Chiefs have been created and traditional leaders as legitimate leaders has been recognised in constitution while in Solomon Islands, National Council of Chiefs is yet forthcoming (Bole, 1992; Lindstrom, 1997; Ngwele, 2005; White, 1997).

In `Are`Are, Kwaio and some parts of Malaita, Ulawa and Makira in Solomon Islands, the strengthening of chieftainship was linked to the Maasina Ruru movement in the 1940s and early 1950s against the colonial rule. Maasina Ruru was catalysed by the presence of the World War II USA soldiers. It was an anti-British movement and a unification movement for Malaitans. The movement involved in garden and building projects, collected taxes and codified custom law, all under Malaita control. There were strikes by plantation workers and elements of civil disobedience. Headmen, big men, church men and chiefs worked together in this movement (Fifii, 1989; Keesing, 1992). They conducted meetings and made their requests known to the colonial administration (Laracy, 1983). This radical move by the Maasina Ruru movement resulted in the incarceration of its leaders, but the British colonial rule responded favourably to some of the issues raised (Alasia, 1989; Saemala, 1983). Leadership during the Maasina Ruru movement demonstrates “power to empower” the indigenous people as well as to influence the colonial leadership.

Chiefs who are in leadership positions are influential in Solomon Islands but are limited to the tribal, community and societal levels. An exception is the Isabel province which has developed a functional role for chiefs at the provincial level. The Isabel province has adopted a “tripod” leadership model which encompassed the church, the provincial government and traditional chiefs (Marau, 2002; White, 1997).

For other provinces, chiefs’ representation is absent at the provincial policy decision-making level nor do they receive any logistic support to implement their programmes (Keesing, 1997). This situation was lamented at a recent `Are`Are chiefs meeting conducted at Waisisi in Malaita province in March 2004. `Are`Are chiefs strongly argue that their existence is recognised by the government merely by words but without any concrete assistance. Community activities are solely financed and

implemented by communities and their leaders and chiefs. Generally, women dominate community fundraising activities.

Development of the chiefly system and their roles in Vanuatu is in contrast to Solomon Islands' experience. Here chieftainship is recognised by the church and the government of Vanuatu, not merely by words but by action such as the construction of a ceremonial house for the National Council of Chiefs at Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu (Lindstrom, 1997; White, 1991, 1997). Douglas Ngwele (2005) adds that the National Council of Chiefs known as the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs is the umbrella body for all council of chiefs and is given the power to make decisions on cultural issues such as land. They also empower Vanuatu chiefs to play a greater role in maintaining social harmony at all levels of the society (Ngwele, 2005: 6).

In addition, the Vanuatu government in consultation with the National Council of Women established a Women's Cultural Project in 1990 at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Women believed that their knowledge of kastom (culture) and history was being ignored, was absent and dominated by males' knowledge and history. Women of Vanuatu thought it important that their knowledge of kastom should be documented and taught nationally (Bolton, 1994). Furthermore, areas such as in Ambae, the Shepherds and Malekula, women can achieve chiefly title and rank. In the Uripiv village of Malekula, Madlaine Regenvanu was honoured with a chiefly title as the first ni-Vanuatu woman for her role in the Church, culture and community through education and leadership (Moldofsky, 2001).

The Fijian chiefly system is organised and structured from the clan level to the national level. The chiefs' roles are rooted in Fijian history and tradition of leadership. In the Fijian traditional leadership structure, a chief cannot be dismissed from his leadership position in his clan until death. The strength and cohesion of the Fijian traditional leadership (Fijian Council of Chiefs) was proven in the 1987 coup where they were involved in finding alternative solutions to the Fijian political crisis (Bole, 1992; Lawson, 1996). In Fiji, the 1970 constitution gave the Great Council of Chiefs the privilege to be represented in the Senate and was given powers to handle customary issues and affairs (White, 1997). Women in some parts of Fiji are given

chiefly titles as well, for example, Adi Kuini Speed, a former leader of the multi-ethnic Fiji Labour Party and leader of the indigenous Fiji Party inherited a chiefly title (Leckie, 2002; Singh, 2000)

Within both the big man and the chiefly leadership systems in Melanesia, gender roles in leadership were well positioned. Douglas argues that in some societies in Melanesia, men are fearful of women's reproductive powers which they believe to be weakening and polluting, for example during menstruation and childbirth. She adds that in matrilineal societies women have high status and possess considerable power to influence decision-making and action (Douglas, 1993). While women and men hold positions of leadership in both the big man and chiefly leadership, the influence of Christianity has impacted quite significantly on their roles and leadership. For example in SSEC 'Are'Are, communities, menstruating women live together with their families and are no longer confined to their menstruating huts.

### **Christianity and Traditional leadership**

The people of the Pacific Islands practised their own traditional religions, involving a rather unique relationship between them and their supernatural deities. Their religion pervaded almost every aspect of daily life. Men and women with priestly roles performed spiritual rituals as mediators between the people and these deities. Supernatural deities manifested themselves in different forms such as in snakes, eagles, crocodile and their ancestral spirits (Bennett, 1987; Fugui, 1989; Thornley, 1993).

In some Melanesian societies, women were excluded from religious rituals while in some areas, selected women perform religious rituals. Usually in Melanesia, sacred men conduct religious rituals on behalf of the clan and the community. There were some exceptions observed in Nagovisi in Bougainville where women with high rank and chiefly titles performed rituals on behalf of their family. Generally, in the Pacific Islands, religious rituals are considered males' domain (Forman, 1984).

The introduction of Christianity into the Pacific Islands has drastically changed the religious practices and leadership (Tepari'i, 1994). It has further introduced an

element of division and confusion in peoples' minds. While Christianity is compatible with the Pacific Islands principles of communalism and Christian emphasis on compassion and caring for each other, very few of the early European missionaries appeared to practise it (Fr. Lini, 1981).

Christianity in the Pacific Islands can trace its origin back to the Europeans as they become overwhelmed with the discovery of the islands in the Oceania region. Special mention is made of the Catholic priests who accompanied Spanish explorers in the Western Pacific in the sixteenth century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Protestants and Roman Catholics were keen to spread the gospel to the Pacific. While the scientific and liberal opinion at that time in Europe would have preferred to leave the "noble savage" alone and untouched, the evangelical religious groups were not of the same mind, instead desiring to bring Christianity to the Pacific to counter the disturbances that was already taking its toll on the people by the earliest traders, whalers and adventurers. The two missionary organisations that were known for their initial effort and commitment in spreading Christianity in the Pacific were the London Missionary Society (LMS) which begun work in Tahiti and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) which started its work in New Zealand. In 1810, the Congregational Church established the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and they started work in Hawaii. Later on the Catholics took over missionary work previously carried out by the Spanish explorers and expanded their work throughout the Pacific (Forman, 1978, 1984; Koskinen, 1953; Thornley, 1993).

The Roman Catholic missionaries were ordained male priests. The LMS and the Wesleyan missionaries were of the lower middle classes, a few clergy men and devout mechanics, carpenters and plumbers who had the skills to be more useful in the field.

As missionaries became acquainted with Pacific Island society, they were horrified by the various customs, attitudes and behaviour of people in relation to what they termed *sin* which included activities such as cannibalism, human sacrifice, sexual acts/polygamy and murder. Their perceptions of the "native" spiritual and cultural values were seen as evil and received little or no respect (Fr. Lini, 1981). Thornley



(1993) notes that it was the missionaries who were the first white people who purposely aimed at changing the customs of the land. From the outset, they presented a “power to control” leadership between the European culture and that of the Pacific Island cultures as well as their powerful God to that of the Pacific Islands gods. The missionaries’ religious power and welfare assistance was well received and respected by the people (Jansen, 1972). Furthermore, Fr. Lini (1981: 245) laments that Melanesian social and spiritual values were outlawed by the Christian religion. It brought confusion, division, disaffection and alienation of the people from their traditional concepts of values and leadership

Many missionaries flooded the Pacific, resulting in a large number of conversions to Christianity (Forman, 1978, 1982, 1984). Tahiti was the first island where Christianity was preached and established by the LMS in 1797 (Ernst, 1994: 134). The LMS also spread Christianity to Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Niue, the Loyalty Islands and the South Coast of Papua. The Methodists established churches in Tonga and Fiji and later in the Western Solomons and east of New Guinea. The Catholics followed suit in New Caledonia and Wallis and part of New Guinea. The denomination which arrived much later was the Presbyterians who concentrated in Vanuatu and the Anglicans who were centred in Solomon Islands and part of New Guinea. It was also noted that the missionaries’ attitude towards indigenous cultures at this time was slowly changing as they learned to appreciate the diverse cultures and work hand in hand with indigenous missionaries in presenting the gospel (Forman, 1978, 1982).

Early (1998) argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, as in the case of the Methodist church in the English speaking world, the shift of focus was from one of punishment for sin to one of care and social improvement. This resulted in an increased number of women in church congregations as well as in the mission fields as nurses, teachers and administrators (Early, 1998:101-102). Leadership demonstrated by the missionaries was one of “power to control” and also as “a process of influence” and “power to empower”, particularly for women. Christianity gave women freedom and empowerment to lead and engage in community and church leadership.



### **Women's grouping and church leadership**

Today, there are approximately two thousand church women's groups established throughout Solomon Islands by the mainline churches which are the Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Sea Evangelical Church, United Church and the Seventh Day Adventist. These women's groups provide an excellent vehicle for development programmes from the national level to the local communities (Pollard, 2003). In analysing women's roles in the churches in the Pacific Islands, Forman (1984) described the leadership roles women play at both the leadership level and at the congregational level as crucial to church continued existence. In his article titled "Sing to the Lord a new song", he pointed out that the initial establishment of the major churches presented a strongly masculine image. Most of the first missionaries sent by the Methodists, Lutherans and Presbyterians were men, accompanied by their wives. The early Catholic missionaries were unmarried priests and brothers, thus presenting a male-dominated image. As the churches continued to develop, male missionaries took charge of the work in the islands while their wives had no formal position. Women at that time were not ordained to ministry and therefore were kept to the private sphere. This provided few opportunities for the island women and few role models as far as women's participation in church leadership were concerned.

On the other hand Forman (1984) adds that an alternative participation model was developed for indigenous women in which they were able to share in weekly church activities such as worship and prayer. This development marked a significant step for women in leadership in the Pacific island churches. Even so, this development is different from that of the religious rituals of the island societies. Forman calls it a "tamer affair of praise, thanksgiving and ritualistic sharing in freely given divine gifts" (Forman, 1984: 156). The Pacific Island women did not embrace this development without critiquing its implications for their lives and their roles within traditional society. Women were quite reluctant and embarrassed to come face to face with the men in the same building. Women's active participation in the churches was limited to quiet prayers and worship.

Gradually island women developed their skills in prayer and worship alongside the missionaries' wives. The churches later on established schools for training island

pastors and their wives for pastoral ministry in the field. The women were taught the skills of crafts, nutrition, sewing, family care, leading women's church meetings and hygiene. These skills provided the initial steps in equipping women for leadership in the churches but were still limited to the domestic sphere. In addition, Jolly argued that these skills did not resemble the Melanesian women's roles in agriculture, fishing, weaving, collecting firewood and childrearing which are in the public domain as observed in Vanuatu (Jolly, 1989: 233).

The late nineteenth century era saw an influx of single female white missionaries to the field. The single female missionaries dominated the leadership positions in education, mainly in schools for girls, health and administration in the islands. Island women were educated to a greater extent and were given new opportunities. The pastors' wives were courageous and became role models in teaching women to be good house wives. Both the pastors' wives and the women missionaries paved the way for women's greater role in church leadership from women's welfare profession as helpmate, home maker, peace maker, administrator, teacher and nurses. Women's roles in the mission fields were influential and recognised within the church. Women were slowly making headway in church leadership in the islands (Forman, 1978, 1982, Early, 1998 ).

Recently, Melanesian women have held senior positions within the United Church and Roman Catholic as observed in Papua New Guinea. For example, the number of Catholic sisters grew to more than a hundred and fifty after 1950. Papua New Guinea was also recognised for selecting the first indigenous Mother Superior in 1966. The Catholic sisters also extended their services into other professions such as teaching and nursing (Forman, 1982, 1984). The initiative taken by ordinary island women in establishing church women's groups demonstrated women's influence and empowerment in leadership at the community level.

The establishment of church women's groups played a major role in advocating and equipping women in leadership. Through their weekly fellowships and programmes, regular meetings, workshops and Sunday services, women receive support and encouragement to take a more active role in the church and their community leadership (Douglas, 2000; McDougall, 2003; Scheyvens, 2003; Waiko, 2003).

Reiterating this further, a male pastor of the United Church from Pienuna of the Western province, Solomon Islands said that,

The United Church Women's Fellowship (UCWF) is strong...they have a structure in their movement...We say, the UCWF is strong, they are strong, but why? They climb with something to help them climb, but we have no ladder to climb – The youth have no ladder, men's fellowship has no ladder (McDougall, 2003: 68).

Throughout Melanesian churches, women's influential roles as leaders are significant for church survival. Their power is such that without them, church related activities in the villages would die a natural death (Pollard, 2000). Such influential leadership was demonstrated by the Catholic Women's groups in Malaita who were united, organised workshops, discussed issues, and recognised their sense of dignity and self-esteem. They spoke out about their issues of concern to men/husbands and responsible authorities within the church. Similar sentiments could also be accorded to the United Church Women's Fellowships in the Western Province (Scheyvens 1995:218-223, 2003: 24-40). In addition, Waiko (2003) also noted that the church women's groups enable the women to travel beyond social and cultural boundaries, an opportunity that was not possible in their indigenous cultures. The church women's groups in Bougainville played an influential role in peace building, addressed human rights issues and established the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (Sr. Garasu, 2004). In Solomon Islands, it was the church women's groups that established an effective network from the national level to the community level for training and communication linkages. It was the church women's groups that knit the different churches together at all levels in Solomon Islands. It is the church women's groups that bring together women of different culture/island groups together. In many churches throughout Solomon Islands, governance at the village level is dominated by women while governance at the national level is dominated by men (Douglas, 2000). Recognising women's participation in the church, Tu'uholoaki (1986) in her article "Man Alone is not Good" discusses the biblical narratives of the creation of men and women, both of whom need each other, minister to each other, serve each other and work together at all levels. She adds that ministry and leadership has the role of serving rather than

being served. Women in the church, through their position of leadership demonstrate both powerful and influential leadership roles at the community level.

Similarly, Forman (1984) refers us to the changes that are already taking place in the Pacific Conference of Churches. He witnessed two important elections that took place in the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), one, at the 1971 conference in which Fetaui Mata'afa, the wife of the then Prime Minister of Samoa was elected to chair the organisation, a position that was previously always held by men. Secondly, six years later, the secretariat was taken up by Lorini Tevi from Fiji, yet another post that was previously and always held by men. These two changes signalled a transformation taking place in an organisation that was previously dominated by men and where women had played minimal roles in formal leadership position since its inception in 1961.

In addition, the Pacific Council of Churches committed itself as a driving force behind the changing roles of women in the churches, granting them permission to hold their own meetings on issues affecting women in the churches and to be represented at the Pacific Council of Churches conferences (Forman, 1986: 139-144). It has been noted that although men have dominated the missionary field and the church decision-making positions, the impact the churches had on men's groups has been minimal while church women's groups have continued to flourish throughout Solomon Islands and the Pacific. Christianity is seen as a liberating force for women in leadership not only at the local level but also at the national and regional level. Another force that is impacting on gender and leadership in Melanesia is parliamentary leadership.

### **Gender and Parliamentary Participation in the South Pacific**

On the political stage, prior to colonisation, the Pacific Islands societies were governed by traditional leadership systems as discussed earlier on in this chapter. The discovery of the Pacific Islands by the outside world which subsequently led to colonisation, introduced different systems of governing which were alien and complex. The progression of colonial rule spread out unevenly with the annexations of some of the Pacific Island nations during the nineteenth century. Late nineteenth

century, formal colonial rule was limited to New Zealand, French Oceania, New Caledonia and Fiji by their colonial powers namely France, Britain and the United States (Munro, 1993: 114).

In the mid 1880s, formal annexation and partitions by colonisers gained force and increased throughout the Pacific Islands especially in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Hawaii, Vanuatu and almost the entire Pacific region. Colonial rule involved a "power to control" leadership over the islanders. This complex situation encompassed other issues such as exploitation, inequality, unequal power base, land acquisition and trade and business development. The traditional leadership structure in the Pacific Islands was subverted in the whole colonial process (Munro, 1993: 118). The colonial system of governing continued into the twentieth century until the Pacific Islands nations negotiated their independence. Western Samoa was the first country to gain its independence in 1962. Since then, many of the Pacific Island nations have followed suit and gained their independence in the 70s and in the 80s except for Tahiti and New Caledonia, which have some degree of legislative autonomy. Decolonisation comes in different forms such as independence and free associations with the coloniser. With a few exceptions in Belau and Vanuatu, this process has been smooth without much resistance (Fairbairn, Morrison, Baker, & Groves, 1991; Levine, 1982; Naidu, 1993; Tepari'i, 1994; Trease, 1995).

The new political power processes practiced by the independent Pacific Island leaders in governing their own nations after independence was no different from their colonial masters but a translation of the colonial power structure. While it was thought to be a democratic process and perhaps the best for the Pacific Islands, it was a formal system that was hierarchical, male dominated and under which power rests in the hands of a minority group. The most common governing system operating in the Pacific regions is the Westminster system which adopted a number of key objects such as a constitution, a national flag and a national anthem. The other political systems include the Presidential type and territorial administrations (Naidu, 1993: 126-128). These systems made allowance for some of the key factors of the traditional systems such as land, chiefly representation and cultures but is still inadequate. Such a political system makes it difficult for fair gender representation at all levels of the decision-making processes in the political system. It not only affects

fair gender representation but Souder-Jeffery (1989) said that it also does not allow women broad participation, equal representation or shared decision-making.

Contrasting the current political systems to the traditional leadership systems in the Pacific, one can draw some similarities such as that the chiefs were overwhelmingly males, and some of the attributes of their leadership were associated with strength and warfare which are masculine. It is observed that even in some matrilineal societies, chiefly leadership is still held by men. I argue that men draw their strength from women who are influential behind the scene

Pacific Island women's participation in parliamentary leadership has been a recent development. The political arena has always been associated with men. Women had been on the periphery as their right to vote and nomination as candidates has come about only in the last few decades. Their efforts and their achievements in the political process have been minimal. Research into women's participation and women's political representation in national legislatures in the Pacific Island countries in 1994 showed that women's eligibility to vote and stand as candidates for Parliament varies between countries. These privileges came at different times; for example, Northern Marianas, in 1965, Guam, in 1931, Fiji, in 1963 and Solomon Islands, in 1967 (Drage, 1994).

In Melanesia, it is noted that women have had little success at the polls except for Fiji. Prior to the 1987 coup, women were vocal and participated actively in the democratic election processes but were reluctant to be candidates. That mentality changed after the 1987 coup in which a significant number of women were nominated to the town councils seats, even to the council mayor's position. Women's performance in the councils' positions was proven to be successful. Women at the community level became very active and were accepted by the wider community. A few have courageously offered themselves to participate in leadership at the national level (Vakatale, 1993: 60-61). There were three out of seven women candidates elected into the seventy one seats of parliament in 1994. In 1999 and 2001 national elections, women won eight seats and five seats respectively (CAPWIP, 2000; office, 2001).



In Solomon Islands, women were eligible to vote in 1967 and their participation in politics went little further than voting. Lily Poznanski was the first elected female in 1965. In the post independence period, women started offering themselves as candidates at both the provincial and national level. For example in 1993, ten women candidates contested the 1993 national election; only Hilda Kari gained a seat out of the forty eight seats. In the 1997 and 2001 elections, fourteen women contested in each year's national elections and only Hilda Kari regained her seat in 1997 and none in 2001 (Editor, 1989a, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 2001).

In Papua New Guinea, although eighteen women stood for the 1987 and 1992 elections, no women were successful for the one hundred and nine seats. Maria Kopkop of the National Council of Women in Papua New Guinea described it as a disgrace that no woman could gain a seat in parliament (Drage, 1994: 164). In 1997, fifty five women contested and two were successful while in 2002, seventy four women contested and one woman, Lady Carol Kidu retained her seat (Aire, 2005). The number of women contesting in each national election continues to increase as well as some women were given leadership positions in political parties even in an unfavourable political environment, but the number of successful women candidates still remains low (Sepoe, 2002). Despite such a picture at the national level, Sepoe (1998: 273-286) heralds the active participation of women's groups at the grassroots level in community politics. Sepoe adds that women's collective voice and participation in community politics has brought changes to women's lives and that is where the majority of women remain.

Speaking at the Regional Training in Nadi, Fiji, on the topic of Transformative Citizenship and Leadership and Positioning Pacific Women for Progress, Politics and Peace in 2003, Dalesa (2003) of Vanuatu commented that in Vanuatu, women are a political asset to political parties if they are endorsed by the parties, given the right political training and have community support. She recognises that any woman running a political campaign as an independent candidate found it expensive and ineffective. She recalls the 2002 national election in Vanuatu in which Hon. Isabel Donald was successful at the polls because of her active involvement at the grassroots level with the communities at Epi. She notes that women's under-representation at all political levels is due to such attitudes as women having a lack

of political will, opposition by both men and women and lack of support from political parties for women candidates. The overall picture of women's participation in parliamentary leadership in Melanesia and their participation in decision-making is still minimal (Drage, 1994; Griffen, 1975).

Melanesian women's participation in national parliament is weakened by various factors such as culture, Christianity, geographical isolation, male domination, competitive political processes and structural barriers. The greatest barrier lies within the political parties and their candidate selection (Drage, 1994). The concept is new within the Pacific political arena and is not yet fully understood. The public still need to be educated about the political language and systems to avoid being misled by political leaders. Ill-informed political leaders often favour individuals, their clan and the local interests rather than the national interests.

Although women's participation in parliament in Melanesia may look meagre, Greuel (2002), says that there is hope for the future as more women become engaged in leadership and continue to advocate for active participation in politics, alongside men. The establishment of the "Women In Politics Pacific Centre" where in 1995 with the aim to encourage women's participation in leadership and the public arena is already having some positive impact throughout the Pacific. Recently, "Women In Politics" committees are being established in each of the Pacific Island nations (UNIFEM, 1995). The number of women standing for elections continues to rise in spite of unsuccessful attempts in previous elections. The national women's organisations in each of the respective countries continues to provide training and awareness programmes about politics with assistance from international organisations such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). For example in Solomon Islands, the National Council of Women and the Women In Politics committee organised a one week workshop for female candidates and their campaigners on campaigning techniques prior to the 2001 and 2005 in preparation for national election.



In addition, more women are now being educated and entering into non caring professions. Crocombe (1994) observed in Polynesia that women are slowly becoming involved in leadership, which are owed to the experiences, seniority, confidence and achievement made in the caring profession. As more women are being made aware of the importance of women's representation in the parliamentary leadership, more women will take up the challenge to participate in that arena.

## **Conclusion**

Generally, gender and leadership in Melanesia through the big man and the chieftain leadership reflect that men and women do lead but their leadership styles differ from each other. The absence of women's leadership in literature does not cancel out women's practice of leadership. In Melanesia, women do lead and have a significant influence over leadership in their domain such as food production, reproduction, community responsibilities both in the private and public spheres. Although they are not placed in any formal position of the decision-making process, they are still influential behind the scenes and at times at the fore. Their peacemaking roles often place them at the fore but not to the extent that they become an integral part of the formal national decision-making processes concerning peace plans. While women in matrilineal societies have some power over their families and clans, men often become the head of the households and dominate the formal leadership positions in the communities, the church and the government. This is due to the changes that separate gender spheres for families were altered by Christianity and colonial government policies.

Grassroots women's groups in Melanesia and the Pacific generally have been renowned for improving women's lives and have become incubators for women's leadership, culturally, religiously and politically. Such initiative begins from mastering skills in the women's welfare profession. The establishment of women's initiatives at the national and regional level such as CAPWIP is a positive step towards women in parliamentary leadership.

Generally, both genders possess leadership attributes. It is acknowledged that men still dominate the leadership positions in the public arena compared to females. Our perception of gender is evident by our association of men with leadership and the public arena and women with the private sphere. In the next chapter, I discuss the approach and methods used in collecting data to inform this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Just as language reflects and establishes power relationships, all knowledge is gendered (Warren & Hackney, 2000: 1)

This chapter is divided into two parts. In part 1, I discuss the purpose of the research and research framework for this thesis as a knowledgeable insider but also an outsider who has some understanding about academic research methods. This research framework was based on my past experience, relationships, local knowledge and networks, published work and cultural knowledge. In part II I discuss the methods used in executing the research for this thesis.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of my research was to conduct an integrated study of the presence and absence of women in past and present leadership roles in Solomon Islands, including barriers to women's leadership and factors influencing leadership in 'Are'Are, SSEC and Parliamentary leadership. The study also looked at the linkages, differences and overlap between these three spheres at the community and national levels.

Women are under-represented in formal and national leadership structures in Solomon Islands at all levels. This imbalance raises questions such as: should women be involved in Parliamentary leadership? Can women make a difference if they are represented at the national leadership level? Should they remain at the community level where they are active and influential while men continue to dominate the national level? Considering these questions, this study sees it necessary to understand the key issues that are pertinent to leadership in Solomon Islands.

As I progressed with my research project, several changes occurred in my views of certain concepts. Firstly, my understanding of the word "leadership" altered from being only "leadership" as positions of "power" to understanding it as "a process of influence". Leadership encompasses both "as a process of influence" and "power". This distinction assisted me and shaped my thoughts in designing my questionnaires

and the research process. It also helped me to see a rural woman's roles in her family and community as being leadership which is as important as say the role of the Member of Parliament. Leadership as culturally practiced in the rural village setting encompasses a variety of responsibilities and roles which are played in and outside the home by both genders.

Secondly, while I originally planned to include discussion on the various national women's organisations operating in Solomon Islands and leadership, I decided to leave them aside. This is not to disregard the important role they play at the community and national level in leadership but to focus my study on gender and leadership issues in 'Are'Are culture, SSEC and Parliament.

Thirdly, I planned to use the focus group interview method with some women leaders from SSEC, West 'Are'Are Rokotaniken Association and Gender in Leadership committee. This did not eventuate as the women who turned up at the meeting far exceeded the number possible for a focus group interview. Instead a public forum method was used. One important lesson I learnt was to be flexible in my approach once I was in the field. Flexibility allows for negotiation and respect for other people's views and ideas as well as mine.

### **Selection Process**

The selection process of people to be consulted was based on a personal approach and the "snow ball technique" which involves using one's own contacts and asking them to suggest names of others whose interests and expertise are in the area of research (Knight, 2003: 82). Identification of women and men in some form of leadership position within the 'Are'Are culture, the SSEC and Parliament was the key task. In terms of the 'Are'Are culture, the selection of women or men leaders was based on the following criteria; a person who has a chiefly title or an older person with indigenous knowledge, skills, past experience and is respected within the family, tribe and community. S/he is renowned for leadership in his/her family, tribe and community.

Within the SSEC organisation, the selection criteria for women and men leaders were based on being a member of the executive committee of the West and East 'Are'Are SSEC Association and West and East 'Are'Are SSEC *Fikuanakini*. The executive positions include leaders such as senior pastor, president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and others such as respected retired SSEC pastors or missionaries. The second group of leaders are the employees of the national SSEC head office based in Honiara. These employees include; the president, general secretary, heads of departments, typist and homeopathic officer. The third group of people included the senior pastor for Honiara SSEC Association and the president of the Honiara SSEC *Fikuanakini* Association.

With regards to the Parliament, the key criterion was that the leader must be a current or past Member of Parliament who is willing and available to be consulted, including Ministers of the Crown, members of the Opposition and the Speaker of Parliament.

My initial contact with the clerk to parliament and the National President of the SSEC was through hand delivered letters. Further contacts were made informally by word of mouth and through phone calls for those who had access to phones. While I had available copies of my research summary (Appendix 1) and consent form (Appendix 2) these papers were quite irrelevant in the field for two reasons. Firstly, some of the chiefs could not read and write. Secondly the people are so busy that they were not interested in the details of my research. Their willingness to talk with me superseded any need for formal written requests. As an insider, formal requests were of little importance. In a predominately oral society an explanation of the purpose of my research is more important than formal written requests.

I was not able to tape all my consultations except the chiefs and the SSEC leaders due to financial constraints and the technical problems I was having with my old tape recorder. For those whose consultations were recorded and photos taken, they indicated that they would love to have a copy of their tape and photo.

Transcribing of tapes was done in 'Are'Are language, Pijin and English. It was difficult and problematic to transcribe tapes recorded in 'Are'Are directly to English, as often an 'Are'Are word does not directly correspond to an English word. An

`Are`Are word would only be meaningful by a description in English. Transcribing the Pijin interviews into English was straightforward as they are similar in language and usage. Tapes and transcribed notes will be kept secure in a locked cabinet.

## **Research Framework**

I am an `Are`Are, SSEC woman, raised in a village on Malaita, Solomon Islands. My late grandfather, Samson Maeniuta was an *araha*, a labourer in Queensland converted to Christianity and one of the first SSEM native teachers. My father the late Rev. Jesimiel Maeniuta was an *araha*, an SSEC Minister and a colonial headman. Both my grandparents and parents are from `Are`Are and strong SSEC adherents. I am an SSEC adherent as well.

I was well versed with `Are`Are cultural values, knowledge and responsibilities that underpin the `Are`Are society since childhood. In 1999, I initiated and facilitated the establishment of the West `Are`Are Rokotanikeni Association, an `Are`Are indigenous women's group that cuts across church, educated/uneducated and rural/urban boundaries and promotes unity and self reliance. This women's association has gained publicity within `Are`Are and nationally in the last few years. I am still involved with them, coaching from Wellington.

In 2001, I was selected as secretary to the `Are`Are Law and Order Committee to research into the social problems that existed in `Are`Are after the civil conflict. Given that role and as leader of the West `Are`Are Rokotanikeni Association, I was placed in a leadership position that enabled me to work with `Are`Are women leaders, men leaders and chiefs. I was also given the task to seek financial assistance to finance the `Are`Are Leaders Forums conducted at Kiu village in 2002, Waisisi village in 2004 and the upcoming forum to be held in Masupaa village in 2006. The purposes of these series of leadership forums were to reassess social issues pertinent in `Are`Are and to reactivate the `Are`Are traditional leadership. I continue to liaise with the `Are`Are Forum Committee based in Honiara from Wellington.

I continue to be actively involved and maintain my relationship with the SSEC at the village level in West `Are`Are to the national level in Honiara with regards to



*Fikuanakini* activities. I was involved in facilitating the establishment of the post of a National Women's Co-ordinator at the SSEC head office. My strong connection to the SSEC gives me the opportunities to participate in SSEC activities both at the rural 'Are'Are and Honiara settings.

My previous positions as senior officer and later director of the Women and Development Division (WDD) from 1985 -1999 gave me significant opportunities to represent women on various government and non-government boards and committees at the national level, a key achievement was the development of a national women's policy. In addition, I was a member of the board of Solomon Islands National Council of Women (1988-1993, 1997-1999), member of the Gender in Leadership committee (1998) and a leader of the Women for Peace group during the civil conflict (2000-2002). All these experiences have contributed towards my influential role as change agent with regards to women's development in Solomon Islands.

I have conducted two pieces of research previously, the first was on the issues experienced by women market sellers at the Honiara markets in 1996 and the second was on the changing roles of women at the Waisisi community in 1997. I also wrote a book on women in Solomon Islands in 2000, published by Institute of Pacific Studies. With such real life experiences and insider knowledge, I was well positioned to carry out my third research for this thesis. The approach for this study was founded on three basic principles of connectedness, relationship and insider knowledge.

Connectedness in my view cuts across different dimensions of life. It includes the connection to my immediate and extended family through blood, connection to 'Are'Are culture through language, cultural values and knowledge, interests and identity, connection to SSEC through common beliefs and spirituality and connection to Solomon Islands through engagement with national issues. Connectedness encompasses communicating, sharing, assisting and working with people.

Relationship goes beyond connectedness by maintaining ties/friendships and linkages with people and networks that have been built over time. In oral society,

knowledge is kept within people. Accessing that knowledge is only through relationship. Nagai (2000) through her research experience with the Maiwala community in Papua New Guinea emphasises that the issue of the “bonding and trust relationship” between researcher and researched are essential ingredients in research.

Insider knowledge refers to having a good knowledge in the field of research, the place and the people one is involved with. It also encompasses having a good knowledge of the people’s culture, language, kin relationship and community leadership structure. Without such knowledge, research projects could be problematic. Connectedness, relationship and being a knowledgeable insider were key elements for my research. These are reflected in my personal accounts in the following section.

### **Insider/ Outsider Perspective**

The insider/outsider perspective has been widely discussed by researchers in their own context and experiences (McCormack, 1989; Minh-ha, 1991; Smith, 1999; Warren & Hackney, 2000). In this section, I will discuss my approaches to the research as an insider who is an ‘Are’Are woman and a Solomon Islander but also as an outsider who resides in Wellington and was in the village for a short period to undertake the research.

#### ***The Insider Perspective***

As an insider, going back to Solomon Islands for my research meant going back home. “Home” culturally connects me to my blood relations, people, friends, culture, language and house. It is an empowering feeling of belonging and identity. I felt that I was not a stranger in Honiara and in ‘Are’Are communities. I was welcomed by relatives and friends both in Honiara and in the village. Speaking Pijin and the ‘Are’Are dialect made communication with people easier. I have a good knowledge of Solomon Islands and key features such as weather, transport, food, people, diverse cultures and languages, the government, churches, non-government organisations, social issues and the civil conflict that rocked the nation from 1998 to 2003. I was able to find my way around shops, offices, banks and to find the people I wanted to

see without much difficulty. I was perceived as a friend and not a stranger Warren (2000: 5). In this way I was an insider.

I was warmly welcomed by the Surairo church community on my first Sunday at church on the 31<sup>st</sup> August. During my consultations with chiefs and leaders at different villages, I ate with them and spent the night with them before moving on to another village. I was well looked after and accepted. The chiefs and church leaders were very willing to talk with me even without prior appointments. However, three 'Are'Are SSEC leaders objected to be consulted due to short notice and their lack of knowledge on the topic of my research. The criticisms by some men which I encountered in 1997 were absent. See page 42 of this thesis.

My relationship with people in the field has been built over time. Being part of them through blood relations, culture, language and church affiliation made it easier to carry out my interviews. Being away from home for any number of years does not sever one's connections with the people. Secondly, living with people, respecting them, showing interest in them and what they do and being there as part of their lives cements a very strong relationship and trust. Thirdly, being honest with them removed any doubts about my intentions and presence there. Before each of my consultations, I would briefly introduce the purpose of my presence, my interest in the topic and my interest in them as owners of this knowledge. I told them that I needed their help and without them I would not be able to complete the work I was doing.

Smith (1999) says that insiders live with the consequences of their research for a lifetime which affects themselves, their families and communities. Such reality was important for me as an insider. Accountability and commitment were important aspect of my research. As an insider researcher, carrying out research comes with responsibility and risks.

### ***The Outsider Perspective***

The outsider perspective implies various notions such as being an outsider, a stranger, an alien, a spy, a thief or anyone who does not live in the village. An

outsider could be a person from a different village, or of a different culture, language or of a different race. Rural people critically question the presence of any outsider as to whether s/he is for them or against them.

Although I was an insider, I was also perceived as an outsider and a stranger. I had not met some of the people I would consult with. I did not know their village or their house. I needed inside assistance. I do not reside in the village or in Honiara but in Wellington. My presence in the village at such a time of the year and not at Christmas time was questioned. Questions such as: when did I arrive? When was I going back to Wellington? Why was I with them? What was I doing, demonstrated that I was an outsider. In responding to the above questions, I carefully explained and clarified the purpose of my assignment and why I was there at that time of the year. I outlined to them my programmes for the three months I would spend in the village and in Honiara. I politely requested their assistance for my research as an outsider. I sought approval as a form of respect to cultural knowledge with chiefs and leaders before doing my interviews. As an outsider, building relationships and trust was paramount for my fieldwork as well. Culturally, knowledge is sacred and is within people like the chiefs, elders, leaders and older people. It is not written or stored in computer files. Such knowledge can only be accessed through close relationships and trust as well as gifts. Being an outsider but also an insider, one of the chiefs said to me,

*My daughter, because you are of my blood and one of me, I will give you this knowledge without demanding any pay. If you were an outsider, I would demand some money from you for this knowledge. But my daughter, a block of tobacco would do!*

My presence and a few dollars for his need of tobacco were influential factors. Such perspective was also shared by Gegeo in his research on Kastom in Kwara'ae, Malaita province where he noted that in the past, groups or individuals would ask for kerosene, tobacco or tinned fish/meat as informant fees for traditional knowledge. To his surprise, a visionary leader who was one of his informants adds, that "because we were relatives, I am willing to settle for a packet of Benson & Hedges cigarettes. Otherwise my normal informant fee was a million dollars" (Gegeo, 1994: 53) An outsider is considered to have a lot of money and wealth.

As an outsider, physically I was considered weak, unfit and unable to perform the roles of a village woman or even to carry a bundle of firewood or a bag of kumara on my back from the bush garden to the house. On the other hand, I considered it helpful at times to give the impression of being an outsider. The feeling of being an outsider enabled me to critically explore the gender and leadership issues prevalent in 'Are'Are. It gave me an objective position to critique constructively rather than take sides with any particular group. Being an outsider helped me develop relationships with families I visited. Being an outsider enabled me to visualise culture, church and parliamentary leadership from a new perspective which might help the reshaping of those leadership spheres if possible.

As an insider/outsider researcher, field work was done with an open mind, a listening ear and an understanding heart. I knew that I was on a tough assignment and I would be criticised by some men. I knew that some people I would approach would not be willing to be consulted. On the other hand, I also knew that some people would be willing and interested in my research. The uncertainty existed as to whether the field research would be successful or a failure. The reality of going and doing the research and being there in the field overcame those feelings of uncertainty.

For me, being a researcher means being both an insider and an outsider. From my experience, being an insider helped me to be involved in people's lives. But on the other hand being an outsider has also helped me to step back and be an objective observer. Such a stance has helped me to evaluate myself and reflect on my performance in the field and with the researched.

### **My Personal Experience**

This is my second major piece of research in West 'Are'Are, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. The first was conducted in 1997, where I examined the changing roles of rural women and men. At that time the men I approached were not willing to be interviewed. I was heavily criticised by some men saying that the work I was doing was for my personal academic qualification, big money and a political ambition. Such comments were hard for me to handle and I shed tears on a few

occasions. I was perceived as a challenge to the men's public and academic domain. The focus was on "me" and not "ours", which is not usual within the 'Are'Are culture and generally in Melanesia. The men who are my close kin and of the same community I depended upon did not assist me in this first research.

The women on the other hand were very helpful and welcomed me into their homes, fed me, gave me food to take home and even reported to me what some men were saying about me. Mr. Francis Aniratana, a leader at Nahu village was the only male who encouraged me. He added that culturally, such criticisms by men are seen as a testing ground for strength and perseverance. Giving up was not an option for me. I thought executing the research in my own communities and with my own people and of who I am not a stranger was going to be easy, but this did not prove to be the case. The challenge I was getting from my own male relatives was tough.

The reasons behind such criticisms were not clearly articulated but I am a local woman who is no different to them economically, socially, culturally and politically. Secondly, I believe that there may have been others who had conducted research work in the past who had never returned to see them again, creating a sense of abandonment. I wondered if I had been male or a European, would I have been treated differently?

With these past experiences in mind, I knew that executing this doctoral research project was not going to be easy. Processing my research proposal through the official University ethics committee was not a major concern. Instead my anxiety rested with how I would be received in the village and whether men leaders would be willing to talk with me. I realise that I have been criticised constantly by some men but this is slowly changing as some men are becoming supportive of the work I am doing. These men have encouraged me to move on and put such criticisms behind me.

In handling the challenges of this second field research project, I have employed three strategies. Firstly, I ensured that my research proposal was processed and passed through the ethics committee in good time to enable me to be in the field at the right time. Getting to the field at the right time meant a time when the weather



was fine, a time when communities were carrying out their normal activities such as the women's group meetings. It also meant a time when law and order had been restored to Solomon Islands, and a time when people would be available to be consulted. It would be inappropriate to be in the field around Christmas time when programs cease and families are back in the village to celebrate the Christmas festivities and to have a holiday.

Secondly, I prepared myself psychologically to handle criticisms constructively, whether from men or women. Emotional reaction, debating and arguing over issues would not help. Going back to the same people who challenged me during my first research was possible. I built up my confidence to deal with any challenges facing me and embarked on building relationships and friendships. Being willing to negotiate with people and understanding their perspectives helped me to organise my research on a face to face approach. Above all else, getting focussed on my work and to be there was my key goal.

Thirdly, I packed the basic items needed for the field such as: Bible, recipe book, craft notes, personal clothes and toiletries, questionnaires, diary, writing pad, tape recorder, tapes and camera and departed for my research project destination.

## **Journeying Through the Pacific**

### ***Communicating Across the Pacific Ocean***

Residing in Wellington, New Zealand was a challenge in itself as direct communication with anyone in rural 'Are'Are was problematic. Face to face communication or hand delivered mails were the only options for me as a researcher. One of the advantages I had in this situation was that I could communicate with the people in the 'Are'Are language. Because of the difficulties with the logistics of the research project, implementing the research proposal in the field was quite a different matter from the theoretical expectation outlined for the University. Simply put, I had to be in 'Are'Are to facilitate my own research. Identifying my interviewees by knowing where they reside and whether they would be willing to talk with me was based on a personal approach.

Locating the members of parliament who resided in Honiara and with whom I wanted to consult was much easier. Most of the Members of Parliament had access to a phone and an office. I was able to contact them by phone with the assistance of the clerk to Parliament and secretary to the Opposition who were both females. Such assistance was invaluable. Even so, two appointments with two members of the opposition did not eventuate although the secretary and I kept reminding them while another appointment was postponed until the next day after having waited for an hour when the MP rang to say that he was busy at a very important meeting.

The same scenario applied to the SSEC leaders who resided in Honiara. With all staff housed under one roof, they were accessible and it was easy for me to make appointments.

### ***Travelling Across the Pacific Ocean***

Getting to Honiara from New Zealand is neither cheap nor easy. It takes almost four hours to fly from Wellington to Brisbane and another three hours from Brisbane to Honiara, a total of seven hours. The trip by air to Honiara costs the same as travelling to Europe or to Los Angeles. Once I got to Honiara, the real challenge of getting to the villages in 'Are'Are started. I could get to West 'Are'Are by boat or small plane and then continue by motorised canoe.

As I arrived in Honiara, one boat was leaving for West 'Are'Are within a few days. I was advised not to take it as the sea was really rough. It took me ten days to find another boat to travel to West 'Are'Are. The small MV Florida II (20m) was chartered to do a petrol run for West 'Are'Are and is allowed under Marine laws to carry only twelve passengers. I was fortunate to be one of the twelve passengers to travel on the boat on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August at 8pm, arriving at Waisisi on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> at 1pm; a boat trip that lasted seventeen hours. Tawaihuro village at Waisisi harbour was my base for the rest of my field research. It is my own village where my family resides. My diary notes below record my experiences.

*Although the MV Florida II was small, it was good enough for me to get to 'Are'Are, Malaita. I knew it was unsafe for me and others to travel with the drums of petrol across the ocean but there was no alternative. All of us were*

*considerate to give a space for each other to sleep for the night. We were so squashed that one would not be able to turn around but was content with the little space for the rest of the night. The sea was rough but not so rough that I would throw up. We arrived at Su'u harbour on Malaita at around 6am. The next challenge we faced was unloading the drums of petrol at different ports as the boat made its way up the coast towards South Malaita. It turned out to be tolerable as the drums were unloaded off board into the ocean, entrusting the owners to swim with them to the shore. The unloading of the drums was done manually by male crews.*

As the MV Florida II was berthing at the Waisisi wharf, my brother was getting ready to travel to Masupaa village, East 'Are'Are in an old motorised fibreglass canoe with an old 15 hp Suzuki engine to collect his family. Masupaa was the very village where I wanted to begin my interviews. I understood that organising another boat trip to Masupaa would be complicated so I politely asked if I could travel with him, to delay the trip for the next day and that I would assist with providing the fuel for the canoe. The idea was favourable.

The boat trip to Masupaa took seven hours, experiencing scorching heat. I did my interview in the late afternoon and we returned the next day. The boat trip back was scary in the bad weather and rain with no life jackets in an old fibreglass canoe. The engine died a dozen times. Such boat experiences are common in the islands and on most of my trips. Motorised canoes were the best means of transport for long distances while paddling is good for trips closer to home. In a few instances I walked with a relative to consult with a chief or an SSEC leader. Walking from one village to another was not problematic, except when crossing the Siua River as it has no bridge. In such a situation we either swim to the other side or use a canoe if one is available. If it is raining heavily, it is not advisable to swim across the Siua River. My diary below records one of my experiences.

*There was one incident when after spending some time at Kiu village I had to walk back to my base. My aunt offered to walk with me as it is a long way to walk alone and crossing Siua River can be dangerous at times. It was around an hour's walk from Kiu village to Siua River. Arriving at Siua River, we searched for a canoe but could not locate any. We finally made a raft out of drift wood for our bags and swam across the river without being attacked by crocodiles. The journey went on for another hour, walking and paddling a canoe to the base.*

From my experience, travelling in the islands in executing any research project has been motivating but risky. Accidents can happen at any time. Experiencing backache, sore bottom and sunburn are common. Relying on expert relatives or local people for assistance, whether travelling in a motorised canoe, paddling or walking long distances is necessary.

### **Researcher/ Researched Power Relations**

The power relationship between the researcher and the researched depends on what angle and lens are being used. From my research experience, both the researcher and the researched are influential on each other. As a researcher, I realised that the researched are quite influential in the sense that they had information and knowledge I needed for my research. They are the gatekeepers of information. They have the “power to control” which information is to be given and which information is to be withheld from me as a researcher. They have the right to refuse or accept my appointments. They are in their comfort zone, going about their daily activities as usual. I realised that I was in a disempowered position. I needed them and their knowledge for my research. I knew that without them, my research would be incomplete. I had to travel many hours to reach them. I had to negotiate with them to access their knowledge, resources and time or even to consult with them. It was a time consuming and costly exercise for me financially, physically and socially.

On the other hand, as a researcher, I was placed also in a “power to control” position over discussions and the information required for the writing of this thesis. I was in a power position having directed them by my questionnaires and questioning technique which could have overpowered and guided their response. Being there with them may have compelled them to be interviewed. Refusal to be interviewed without any good excuses was difficult. Secondly, as an insider and one of them by blood relationship, I benefited because they were required as chiefs and leaders to pass on knowledge to those who needed it. It was their cultural duty to pass knowledge to the younger generation and not to withhold it.

I did not perceive the researched as mere participants, but as leaders with respect and dignity. In fact it was I who felt inferior and insignificant when approaching chiefs

and national leaders such as the National President of the SSEC, Ministers of the Crown and Speaker of Parliament. I gained confidence and improved my approaches as I came face to face with each of these national leaders. All the leaders that I consulted were very kind and cooperative with me. I was addressed with kind phrases such as *my girl, what can I do for you* or *keni paina* meaning in 'Are'Are language "big woman". Such sentiments demonstrated "power to empower" leadership shown by national leaders towards me.

### **Indigenous/ local Knowledge**

According to Arce & Fisher (2003: 78), the knowledge people hold is associated with terms such as "local knowledge", "traditional knowledge", "indigenous knowledge", "indigenous knowledge systems", indigenous technical knowledge" and "rural people's knowledge". They argue that these different terms demonstrate the wider interests by researchers globally on indigenous knowledge and how it can be appropriated into the modern context of learning. From a participatory approach, they argue that indigenous knowledge should be placed at the forefront of any development programmes for local people. Local people's knowledge should be recognised as expert knowledge. The indigenous people themselves such as in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania, see it as an important part of their lives.

The issues surrounding indigenous knowledge and its benefits in the academic environment continue to be debated by researchers and scholars. Yet, scholars argue that it is worth taking the risk as indigenous knowledge is a powerful and useful tool for learning. Semali and Kincheloe (1999) argued that the academic environment still faces the challenge of deciding how indigenous knowledge can be produced, archived, retrieved and distributed. They express the view that while indigenous knowledge is useful and can contribute positively to students' educational experience of learning and knowing, it is faced with the question of whether it can be accepted and recognised by the academic gatekeepers as normal science. What indigenous knowledge is, its values and usefulness in a community was further debated at two conferences conducted in April 1996 and 1997 at Penn State Campus, organised by the Inter-institutional Consortium for Indigenous Knowledge. From these two conferences, the educators, scientists and students realised that indigenous

knowledge “does not exist in a vacuum and that it belongs to a community, and access to this knowledge is gained through contact with that community” (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999: 5).

From my research experience, indigenous knowledge in `Are`Are culture is sacred and belongs to the `Are`Are people and is within the people. It is not written or archived. Similar sentiment was also raised by Gegeo (1994) in his research on the Kwara'ae kastom, Malaita where he points out that Kwara'ae people are shaped by a “body of knowledge” stored within people and is passed on from one generation to another. Such knowledge can only be accessed by living in the community, building relationships with people over time, practicing the skills and communicating through word of mouth. The method of passing indigenous knowledge and skills from one generation to another was by performance and word of mouth. This important task is called *ha'ananauha* in the `Are`Are culture which is performed by parents, grandparents, elders, chiefs, uncles and aunties to children and grandchildren, very early in life until they are married and able to raise their own families.

`Are`Are indigenous knowledge is being challenged by the Western education system and Christianity (Pollard, 1997). Its absence in the education system in Solomon Islands and the way SSEC has only minimally embraced its importance in society has created a new generation who may lack indigenous knowledge and who may feel alien in their own society. The `Are`Are chiefs who were interviewed emphasised that parents, community leaders and chiefs alike must take this responsibility seriously to counteract the many social issues that are apparent in the youth population both at the community and urban centres today.

Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez cited in Semali and Kincheloe (1999) point out that “indigenous knowledge is a rich social resource for any justice-related attempt to bring about social change” (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999: 15). It is identified as a useful, rich central resource for academics in all walks of life. They conclude that academics should “soak themselves in this knowledge” which goes beyond Western academic learning.



## Gifts and Reciprocity

The practice of giving and reciprocity is very common in Melanesia and other cultural groups in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. It is a two way relationship. Hendry (1999) discusses her experience in the Japanese context in which meeting neighbours with a small gift opens up opportunities for relationships and friendships. Hendry emphasises that relationship is also important for communication and understanding people's lives and movements.

Gifts are given voluntarily or in exchange for a kind gesture. Mauss cited in Hendry (1999) argues that while gifts are given generously and voluntarily, it is also based on obligation and self-interest. The three obligations he identified include: the obligation to give, the obligation to receive and the obligation to repay. Mauss adds that the exchange of gifts,

may often be between whole groups, through their chiefs, and may involve not only goods, wealth, and property but also courtesies, entertainment, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances and feasts Mauss cited in (Hendry, 1999: 49).

In my research with the 'Are'Are women and men leaders, gifts, exchange and reciprocity were important ingredients of the 'Are'Are culture. Giving is taught early in life through *ha'ananauha* (the giving of words of wisdom). Reiterating this further, the 'Are'Are culture teaches its people to learn the art of giving in ways such as the following:

*If you are carrying a basket of kumara for example, and someone meets you on the way, give him some kumara from your basket.*

*If you are cleaning your basket of kumara at a stream and someone meets you there, give him some kumara.*

*If someone meets you in your garden, give him some of the food produce from your garden.*

*If your household is having a fish for dinner, share a portion of that meal with your neighbours.*

*If you are having your family meal and someone walks past your house at a distance, call that person in and give him some food.*

*If you slaughter a pig, share it with the entire village*

*If some one asks for a drink, cook a meal for him.*

The act of giving in the 'Are'Are culture is not an obligation as discussed by Mauss but is a cultural value that depicts sharing and caring for each other as a form of social relationship and respect towards each other. Gifts and reciprocity are intertwined into and reflected through people's daily lives and activities and come mainly in the form of sharing food, helping each other with garden activities and house construction.

Gift giving and reciprocity were demonstrated in my research by families, women and men opening their homes and sharing food with me without any cost. Women would cook a meal to share with me or prepare a basket of food for me to take home after my interviews. The women would ensure that I had a nice meal while I was with them. On two occasions, the husbands left aside their work for the day and went fishing for our meals.

I responded to these kind gestures in various ways. Firstly, I purchased some rice, noodles, tea, sugar, tinned fish and meat and shared them with families or individuals as a gift in exchange for their hospitality. These imported foods are seen as prestigious as they are rarely eaten because of the cost. Two chiefs preferred tobacco while one older man wanted kerosene for his hurricane lamp. As I had no access to kerosene in the village, I had to make some arrangements to refill his 20 litre container with kerosene in Honiara and ship it back to his village. For those that smoked, I gave a few dollars to buy their own tobacco. Such small gifts were given after our interview as a way of thanking them for accommodating and sharing their homes with me and assisting me in my research.

Secondly, I rendered assistance as a resource person with two women of the West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association in conducting four workshops for women of zones 1, 3, 4 and 5. The workshops were funded by the European Union (EU) under their micro-projects scheme. Thirdly, I assisted the West 'Are'Are SSEC

*Fikuanakini* Association at their two fellowship meetings conducted at Heo village and Surairo village. At the Heo fellowship meeting, some of the women went with me in the motorised canoe, free of charge, as I was heading the same direction to do my interviews. In addition, I was able to assist with cooking, shared meals; I slept with them in the same room, attended church with them and attended their discussion meetings. I was able to contribute constructively with some ideas to improve their programmes and activities at the village and Association level.

At the Surairo women's convention, I assisted the Waisisi women in organising and cooking the first welcoming meal, floral arrangement for the church and delivered a speech on behalf of the West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association at the official opening of this gathering.

Fourthly, I was invited to preach in church on Sundays on two occasions, one was at Surairo SSEC church and the second was at Kukum Campus SSEC in Honiara. While I was in the village, I attended and assisted with two funerals out of five deaths that occurred in the surrounding villages.

In Honiara, I taught the Rokotanikeni Association women how to make pizza, fruit punch and glazed beans during a one-day workshop. I facilitated a one-day forum for the Women For Peace Group who was preparing to carry out a national survey on how the civil conflict had impacted on women.

Gift-giving was not observed with the SSEC leaders and Members of Parliament in Honiara nor did I spend a night with any other families except where I was staying. These leaders have access to imported foods on a daily basis and were on a comfortable salary. Should I have had sufficient funds, gift giving would also have been important at this level.

As an insider, my strong connections with some chiefs of 'Are'Are, West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, the SSEC *Fikuanakini* and the Women for Peace group made it easier for me to conduct my interviews. My availability and accessibility to be fully utilised by various groups in their ongoing activities made me valued and useful in the field. I was used more for their advantage even than for my research. I

considered my personal involvement in assisting groups and communities where possible to be a more important contribution to them than any personal gain. For me it was an experience and a reciprocal process as opposed to simply accumulating information for my personal research.

While gift-giving and reciprocity is important in many cultures and in the field, it is not catered for in the Faculty Research Grant scheme, administered by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington. Each individual researcher has to devise how gifts can be handled in each of the cultural groups. In a society where livelihood depends on sharing and caring for each other, giving and receiving is paramount for researchers' knowledge and awareness.

### **Research Limitations**

In executing my research, I experienced various issues and constraints similar to any insider or outsider researcher. These issues and constraints include physical weakness, some language barriers, researcher/researched power relations, expectation from the researched, bad weather, unreliable transportation system and limited finance.

From the outset, the Wellington lifestyle presents a different image from that of a rural village lifestyle or even the Honiara lifestyle. The Wellington lifestyle which offers many choices such as what food to buy, which shop to go to, what mode of transport and which system of communication to use makes life and work easier and faster. Accessibility to electrical appliances and technology speeds up work performance both in the home and in the office. Even small things such as accessing receipts for goods purchased and the wide range of choices of goods in a single shop make a great difference.

The Honiara lifestyle where power cuts were regular and could last a whole day, and where telephones and emails were for the privileged few, made communication with people difficult, slow, time-consuming and limited largely to word of mouth. The pace of work in the rural setting was even slower in the absence of electricity, telephones and transportation. Foods were collected from the garden almost on a

daily basis and were cooked over open fires. Firewood was collected and used daily. Laundry was done manually and lighting was provided simply by a kerosene hurricane lamp. Those families who could not afford to purchase kerosene for their lamps would go without lighting, unless they could be assisted by another family or could get some kerosene on credit from a village shop. Moving from one village to another occurred by walking, paddling or motorised canoe. Physically, I was unfit, tired and worn out after each day's work. The geographical location of the villages of chiefs and leaders I consulted with was a challenge in itself. Spending long hours at sea to get to the next village was exhausting.

Although I am an insider and can speak the 'Are'Are language, I am not completely fluent in speaking it and especially communicating with chiefs who speak it with real fluency and power. My 'Are'Are language speaking is called "baby talk", and includes some English and Pijin words. This easily lead to confusion and misunderstanding by both the researched and researcher. It could be meaningless to chiefs and leaders of high standing. I made a significant number of mistakes in speaking 'Are'Are fluently especially when preaching or giving a speech during official meetings. However, I had no problem with the Pijin.

Power relationships between the researcher and researched in many cases were marginal meaning that I was well received but reciprocal. I was in a powerless position as it was the researched that were in the position of power. Titles of people with leadership positions such as chiefs, presidents, directors, Ministers of the Crown and Speaker of Parliament are titles that carry power and status. These leaders have both "power to empower" and "power to control". Having the student/researcher title carries the notion of inferiority and low status but could demonstrate leadership as a process of influence. I would argue that the dynamics of the power relationship between researcher and researched depends on the topic of research and the context in which the research is being carried out.

Financial constraints were an important issue for me. Executing research in another country and in a rural setting was expensive. While a research grant of NZ\$1,000 made available by the School of Humanities towards my research is acknowledged, the cost of the entire research far exceeded that amount. It was an expensive exercise

not only in terms of time and family commitments but I also incurred huge personal financial costs. However, I conclude that the privilege I had in living and talking with people through this research project were rewarding.

## **Part Two: The Research Methods**

I have opted to employ qualitative methods which include: semi-structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, participant observation, focus group interviews and archival research (Hall & Hall, 1996; Kidder, 1981; Letherby, 2003; May, 1993; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Wadsworth, 1984). Brizuela, Stewart, Carrillo and Berger (2000: xix) stated that qualitative research aims at producing knowledge for various purposes and a wide range of audiences. They add that the act of qualitative research involves a significant amount of reading, doing and writing which is part of a complex process as an act of inquiry which hopefully will bring some meaning into the lives of people among whom the research is being carried out. In analysing qualitative and quantitative methods used in feminist research, Letherby



were former male politicians, three from the opposition faction, the Speaker of Parliament and seven government ministers. Accessing the SSEC leaders and politicians was straightforward.

Face-to-face interviews with 'Are'Are leaders were conducted in the 'Are'Are language. I conducted my interviews in the mornings, evenings and Sundays as people were busy with their daily duties at other times. I preferred to adjust my programme to fit into theirs rather than forcing my programme onto them. Pijin and English were used with leaders of other languages within the SSEC and Members of Parliament. I held my interviews in areas where people were aware of my presence with my interviewee and what our conversation was about. Most of my interviews with 'Are'Are leaders were conducted in homes, for example around the fire place, in the lounge or under the trees where we could talk but still be under the public eye. My interviews with the SSEC leaders in Honiara and Members of Parliament were conducted in their own offices as each of them had access to office space. This was different from the 'Are'Are villages where there was no such thing as an office or an individual space.

The 'Are'Are scenario is quite interesting because in some of my interviews, family members such as the spouse, children, an older male or an older female were present during the course of the interview. They were also contributing to the discussions when and where necessary. 'Are'Are as an oral society values, welcomes and encourages such open conversation and discussion. In this context, confidentiality is a non-issue. Each person is given the opportunity to contribute and share ideas with each other, acknowledging that knowledge is owned by everyone. My interviews were carried out with sensitivity, respect and humour. It is founded on relationships, trust and respect for each other. Secondly, saying thank you verbally and with a small gift and a handshake at the end of each interview is a form of appreciation in the 'Are'Are culture.

### **Participant Observation Method**

I was fortunate to observe women and men's participation in leadership on several occasions. They were the West 'Are'Are SSEC Women's Association combined

fellowship meetings at Heo and Surairo, Surairo community work day, the 'Are`Are chiefs' forum, the Honiara 2003 annual women's week celebration, the Rokotanikeni series of workshops and the Women for Peace group seminar. It was unfortunate that while I was doing my research, there were no meetings organised by and for men exclusively. Therefore I was not able to observe any men's meeting either by 'Are`Are men, SSEC *Lifurongo* and Men's Band or a Members of Parliament meeting. These various activities presented three key features of women and men's leadership which are discussed below.

The first was that women demonstrated strong commitment towards their programmes through self-financing, planning and decision making, praying and giving of their time and other resources. They travelled on foot and by canoe for hours even if it meant crossing rivers, climbing mountains, going in rough seas and bad weather. This is highlighted by one of the women at the Heo discussion meeting as saying *our government is broke financially and so are we, yet we are still here and committed to move on and fulfil our responsibilities towards our Fikuanakini*. Women's commitment, voluntarism and sisterhood are core strength for their activities both in the rural 'Are`Are and in Honiara.

The second feature is that men assist in women's programmes through providing moral support, advisory roles, logistic support, prayer and guest speeches at the opening or closing of the women's activities for the year. Men and women work together in community activities and projects. Men's support is best described by Pastor Cornelius Siriurao, a retired pastor and native missionary of Ta'arutona village below.

*Men go with women to their meetings, not to guide them, not to take over their responsibilities and not to lead their worship. Men go with the women to steer their canoes in bad weather and rough seas and to swim with their baskets across rivers and flooded rivers.*

Men's support was also reflected by one of the fathers who provided childcare for a two months old baby while the mother attended the Kopo Rokotanikeni workshop. He says, *I paddled my wife and others every day for these three days and baby-sit so*

*that my wife can attend the workshop. But it is not easy for me to come and sit here all day. Being here shows my support to my wife.* In the villages, men provide support in numerous ways towards women's activities. In Honiara, men assist women's activities in the technical fields such as installing and managing electrical, plumbing and sound system responsibilities.

The third aspect is that financial assistance is sought to co-finance national programmes, training and forums such as demonstrated by the Women for Peace group seminar, Rokotanikeneni workshops, 'Are'Are leaders forum and the Honiara women's week. To date, West 'Are'Are SSEC *Fikuanakini* have been self reliant financially for various reasons. One, they lack the knowledge and the skills to write project proposal for funds. Second, their programmes have focussed on spiritual and social/fellowshipping dimensions rather than addressing other wider women's issues and finally their programmes were not beyond their financial capabilities.

I have observed that women provide overall management of their programmes and demonstrated leadership not only as "a process of influence" but also as "power to empower" and some sense of "power to control". While women leaders serve, their power over their various events allows them to command men, women and youth to perform for the smooth running of their programme.

### **Focus Group Interview Method**

I conducted meetings with the West 'Are'Are SSEC *Fikuanakini* Executive, the Honiara Rokotanikeneni group and the Women in Politics group.

### ***West 'Are'Are SSEC Fikuanakini Executive, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2003***

The meeting was attended by men, pastors, women leaders and women in general. In response to a crowd of more than a hundred people, I changed my strategy to addressing a forum instead of a focus group. I presented a brief summary of the development of SSEC *Fikuanakini* in 'Are'Are and posed a few questions to bring together their perspectives on gender and leadership in the SSEC. At the completion of my session, I was asked to chair the general business discussion of the work of women in the SSEC in West and East 'Are'Are.

The key outcomes of this meeting were that many women gained knowledge about the historical account of the development of the *Fikuanakini* in 'Are'Are and the responsibilities it places on them into the future. The forum was timely as women search for their role and position in 'Are'Are SSEC leadership. Leadership was highlighted as a key issue to be addressed through training in the next few years. Further more, the men were challenged and eventually leading to the reactivation of the SSEC Men's Band in West 'Are'Are village churches in 2004. They held their first men's weekend meeting in October, 2005 at Koruha village.

***Women in Politics Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2003***

This meeting was attended by twenty women from the national women's organisations and other interested women. I presented an overview of the Parliamentary leadership and raised some questions to obtain women's views on gender and leadership within this system. Women were able to share their views and experiences, especially the women who had stood as candidates in the 2001 national election. The women are of the view that educational training and awareness on Parliamentary leadership is lacking in Solomon Islands especially at the rural level. The lack of information on Parliamentary leadership generally by the majority of women had affected very much women's voting practices during provincial and national election. Such training will have to be fashioned and approached from Solomon Islands context.

***Honiara Rokotaniken Group, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2003***

Some women asked me to teach them how to make pizza. Pizza is a new introduced dish used purposely for income generation. I thought it was a good opportunity for me to do my focus group interview with them then rather than setting another time. Thirty five (35) women turn up for the session. As usual, I conducted a brief discussion on women in 'Are'Are Society and posed some questions to the women on how they see gender and leadership in 'Are'Are culture.

In response, women shared their views on the important role that women play in 'Are'Are society and that without them, 'Are'Are would not have existed. The sense

of 'Are'Are women reclaiming their rightful position within their society was expressed strongly in the sentiments raised by the women and supported by Chief Paul Aitai who was one of the two males amongst us. The Rokotanikeni Association leaders have taken on the women's call for leadership and are working closely with the 'Are'Are chiefs.

### **Archival Records and Literature**

I was able to research into available written literature, books, articles, records, pamphlets and journals from Solomon Islands National Museum, Solomon Islands Archives and the Solomon Star Daily Newspaper. Having access to the library at Victoria University of Wellington, and the Alexander Turnbull Library in the National Library of New Zealand, also located in Wellington was an advantage. A significant number of literature resources were collected from these two libraries. Accessing the internet was also helpful.

### **A Diary**

I kept a diary with much difficulty. Recording daily activities in the field was demanding but very helpful. Each day, I would fill in my diary with key experiences and activities. However, documenting the details of the days' activities was not always possible. The field lifestyle was busy, tiring and lacked such resources as good lighting.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Ethics and validity in qualitative research is essential and complex. Erickson cited in (Brizuela et al., 2000) commented that there is no single set of ethics or criteria for validity, that is suitable and applicable across the board. Each research project is unique and different in nature as it is shaped by the researcher and the environment in which the research is undertaken.

While confidentiality and secrecy are key elements in research and emphasised by the Ethics Committee of the School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, the practicality of such an emphasis was different for me on the field. In most of my

interviews with chiefs and older men and women in the home, the spouse, young children and other older men or women were present. They too were contributing their views to the discussions. This demonstrates that in an oral society such as 'Are'Are, open discussion and sharing of indigenous knowledge by word of mouth is encouraged. Confidentiality and secrecy as emphasised by the Ethics Committee were given little consideration. In addition, all the people interviewed wanted their names to be referred to should they be quoted in the thesis. Those whose interviews were taped wanted to have a copy of the interview. Most of the chiefs, older men and older women wanted to be acknowledged and named in the thesis as owners and givers of indigenous knowledge. It is also worth noting that having information sheets and consent forms were of little necessity. Instead, being present and having face to face dialogue surpasses written papers and correspondences. The information sheet and consent form were vehicles to facilitate the research process, more-so from the academic perspective.

Feedback of the research will be presented to the 'Are'Are leaders, the SSEC 'Are'Are and Gender in Leadership group at separate forums. Bound copies of the thesis will be given to SSEC headquarter, SSEC 'Are'Are Associations, Vois Blong Mere and the Solomon Island National Museum.

## **Conclusion**

A television advertisement by Air New Zealand proclaiming that "being there is everything" captures the essence of my research not as a tourist but as an insider/outsider researcher who went to the field to work and not to have a holiday. I went to the field to organise and implement my research rather than by remote control from Wellington. My presence in the field involved activating personal relationships, personal approach and personal contacts which were effective means in the research environment. Emphasising personal relationship is embraced and encouraged from my own personal experience but is also supported in feminist research and cross-cultural research methodologies (Parker & Langley, 1993; Warren & Hackney, 2000). It bridges the researched and researcher divide, gender divide, class divide, race divide, educational status divide and rural/urban divide. In a rural community where technology is absent, personal relationships, connectedness and

insider knowledge become the driving force behind research processes to obtain data and knowledge.

Personal relationships draw out personal experiences which are crucial for developing new theories and methods appropriate for women researchers in the academic environment. It encompasses indigenous knowledge and sometimes responds to the needs of the researched. Furthermore, utilizing multiple methods rather than a single method in research allows greater opportunity for researchers to access information and knowledge from different people groupings with different perspectives. Carrying out research does not only involve taking knowledge and information from the researched but is also concerned with the giving back of knowledge and the process of reciprocity practiced in many cultures.

In the research processes and methods used, relationships remain as an essential component for the interviewing process, observation and group interviews. Developing relationship with communities and the researched creates trust and confidence in each other. While relationship and trust are essential values in a research environment, they do not happen overnight. Instead they come with commitment, living with the people, coming down to their level, understanding their issues and working with them. By being in partnership and developing respect for each other, the researched and the researcher can work together and their needs be incorporated into the research as part of an ongoing process.



## CHAPTER FOUR: `Are`Are PAINAHA (LEADERSHIP): COMPLEMENTARY BUT SEPARATE

*If a big fish goes rotten, it begins at the head and slowly makes its way to the tail. (`Are`Are saying, quoted by Sir Peter Kenilorea, 2000).*

### Introduction

I acknowledge that writing about `Are`Are culture in its totality is the most acceptable norm. In that regard I would like to clarify to my `Are`Are readers that my research was focussed only on one aspect, namely “gender and leadership” in `Are`Are. In addition, the academic requirements of limited number of words necessitated a narrower focus in this thesis.

I am also aware that in the process of translating an `Are`Are word into English, it may often lose its significance from its original context. Translations in this chapter are my attempts to find the best equivalent in English but it remains true that `Are`Are concepts are best used and understood in `Are`Are itself. In that regard, the translation of `Are`Are words is in brackets while key `Are`Are words and people’s comments are in italics.

`Are`Are as an oral society does not have one version but many versions of its history. This means that different `Are`Are individuals have their own versions of cultural knowledge which at times disagree. This cultural knowledge about the past is passed on from one generation to another within their clan groups by *ha`ananauha* (word of mouth) (Naitoro, 1993: 25). This means that information provided in this chapter is drawn very much from my consultations with `Are`Are men and women and the limited unpublished materials they have available. Some of the information is also drawn from my own experience and observation as an `Are`Are woman who was raised in the rural setting of Waisisi. I have drawn also from my active involvement with the women of West `Are`Are in their various meetings during my consultation period in 2003 which are discussed in the previous chapter on methodology. There is very limited literature available on the topic “gender and

leadership” in `Are`Are. In this regard, the only useful literature that was available and accessible was the thesis submitted by John Houainamo Naitoro for Master of Arts in Anthropology degree at the University of Otago in 1993 entitled “The Politics of Development in `Are`Are”. I consider John Naitoro to be the first `Are`Are man to have written about `Are`Are. For me, this chapter is important as it is the second piece of work written by an `Are`Are person but this time by a woman, presenting a gender perspective.

I am aware of the many different cultural groups in Melanesia. However, the discussion about `Are`Are in this chapter does not include a comparison or contrast between them. It is based on traditional knowledge lived and practiced from one generation to another. *`Auaapuha*, the `Are`Are leadership for women, is neither formally organised nor structured. On the other hand, *arahana* leadership for men is semi-structured and organised for two possible reasons. Firstly, men came into contact with missionaries, anthropologists and colonial administrators much earlier than women, therefore acquiring skills in writing, speaking English and formal administration. `Are`Are women were late-comers and had to catch up with men regarding familiarity with formal or colonial work practices. I believe this chapter will open up new opportunities for `Are`Are women to organise *`auaapuha* leadership and to write their own stories. Secondly, men have been assigned with the overall leadership and traditional knowledge over tribes, genealogies and land while women have been assigned the overall responsibility for the daily livelihood and social fabric of the family. In addition to this, you will also note that most of my informants were in fact men. This is because women’s knowledge is focussed on all the different aspects of family livelihood rather than the wider issues.

*Painaha*<sup>5</sup> (leadership) is a critical concept in the `Are`Are culture. Good leadership provides the foundation on which the `Are`Are people have developed and conducted themselves in the past and is still necessary today. Good leadership has enabled the `Are`Are people to live in harmony and have respect for one another. Good leadership also models how a young `Are`Are man or woman may become a

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<sup>5</sup> *Painaha* comes from the Are`Are word *paina* meaning “big” in terms of size of a person or any objects. It also refers to a person of status, aged and titles of respect.

leader. Good leadership depends on the practice of traditional knowledge that the older generation pass on to the younger generation.

The history of Solomon Islands recorded some 'Are'Are men known for leadership "as a process of influence", as "power to empower" and "power to control". These men are the late paramount chief Alick Nono'ohimae and the late Nori for their pioneering work in the Maasina Ruru movement; Sir Peter Kenilorea, who led Solomon Islands into independence in 1978; and Sir David Kausimae, a chief and a long time political leader. There is no such list for the 'Are'Are women as their role in leadership has focussed on leadership "as a process of influence" and "power to empower" whose concerns were for the livelihood of the family and community which may be considered as the "ordinary" roles. 'Are'Are women's participation in leadership is undocumented and not given any public recognition.

Although the number of notable men is easily identified for their public performance at the national level, such recognition for great women is yet to be forthcoming. For example, during the recent conflict, 'Are'Are women (both rural and urban) without formal qualifications or even formal titles demonstrated their influential leadership with women of other cultural groups in stabilising the conflict when at its height. They did this by visiting the militants, crossing the blockade, advising the militants to return home and touring West 'Are'Are in two motorised canoes. Men on the other hand were slow to respond and took time to sort out their strategies while the women took an upfront approach and confronted the situation. Women's strength in such circumstances raises the question whether what women do and the roles they play at all levels is leadership and is worth national recognition. This chapter hopes to explore discussions regarding this question from the 'Are'Are cultural perspective, paying particular attention to women and men's leadership roles and the challenges they face.

This chapter covers three broad areas. Firstly, I will provide a brief introduction to the 'Are'Are people as a unique traditional societal group and some of the key features about them. Secondly, I will discuss the two traditional leadership structures by gender as practiced in the 'Are'Are society and finally examine some of the gender and leadership issues pertinent to 'Are'Are culture.

## The `Are`Are People

The `Are`Are people whom Naitoro referred to as the “greater `Are`Are” (Naitoro, 1993: 26) derived their name from two basic concepts which are; the common usage of the word *`Are* in their daily language and the reference to *warato`o* “the power of the word” which will be discussed later in this chapter. `Are`Are is characterised by its two leadership structures of *arahana* for men and *`auaapuha* for women. As Chief Benedict Paurara (2003) of Honoa village says, the three key words for the existence of the `Are`Are people lies in *`Are`Are*, *arahana* and *`auaapuha*. These three words are significant, rooted in the history of `Are`Are in its existence according to oral history and provide the structure for this chapter.

`Are`Are society inhabits the southern part of Malaita, with a smaller population on the eastern part of Guadalcanal known as the Marau Sound and historically, internal migration prior to the twentieth century was also evident in the northern part of Makira known as the Arosi group. Naitoro adds that the `Are`Are language group belongs to the larger Austronesian family of languages which allow them to understand and converse with the other ten languages spoken on Malaita (Coppet, 1995; Naitoro, 1993). `Are`Are was administratively divided into five sub-divisions known as the Aiaisi, Are/Mino`o, Raroisu`u, Mareho and Tai group according to cultural and social differences.

The *arahana* leadership system is divided into three houses of chiefs namely, the *namoaraha*, which covers the Aiaisi and Are/Mino`o group, the *hahuarahana*, which covers the Raroisu`u and Mareho group and the *arahanimane*, which covers the Tai group. Leaders and in particular the women, present at the Waisisi leaders forum held in 2004, were of the view that a fourth leadership, that is the *`auaapuha* leadership, should be established for the women in order to specifically address women’s issues in the whole of `Are`Are.

Economically, the `Are`Are people depend on a subsistence economy, growing their own food such as sweet potatoes, yam, cassava, taro, local vegetables and fruit, fishing and hunting for their livelihood. Although today, imported foods such as rice,

noodles, buns and ring cakes are readily available and consumed. Generally, women dominate the subsistence economy while men dominate the cash economy which involves mainly copra, cocoa and logging. As the need for cash by families is slowly increasing, women also take an active role in the cash economy, giving them additional responsibilities on top of their normal household and food production chores. Men spend a lot of time on meetings and decision-making on family and community affairs while women spend more time in both the subsistence and cash economy.

Historically, the 'Are'Are people were a politically autonomous group. This autonomy was demonstrated from the late 1940s-1950s during the Maasina Ruru movement that challenged the colonial powers. The Maasina Ruru was orchestrated and spear-headed by key 'Are'Are leaders such as the late Namo Harisimae, the late Nori and the late paramount chief Alick Nono'ohimae, and was supported by other leaders such as the late Timothy George of Small Malaita and the late Jonathan Fifii of East Kwaio. The Maasina Ruru movement was seen as the first step towards Solomon Islands self government (Fifii, 1989; Laracy, 1983; Naitoro, 1993). While these men were given credit and their story documented for the historical role they played in the Maasina Ruru movement, women's active participation in the movement has been ignored. Women played a crucial role in the movement. They attended Maasina Ruru meetings, participated in discussions, headed women's activities under Maasina Ruru social organisation, worked in the farms, cooked and fed the crowd. Maasina Ruru reaffirmed 'Are'Are women's role and position in their society and gave them the opportunity to organise and take a leading role in 'Are'Are affairs. Yet their story is absent in literature. Imprisonment of Maasina Ruru leaders by the colonial power weakened this indigenous effort towards self autonomy and self government.

From 1966 to 1976, the 'Are'Are Maasina Company Ltd, a traditionally based organisation, was established by ordinary 'Are'Are people, leaders and chiefs in order to address 'Are'Are self autonomy issues and promote economic development for the 'Are'Are region. Sir David Kausimae emerged as a new 'Are'Are leader and become the leader of this new venture. With the experience and lessons learnt from the Maasina Ruru movement, the 'Are'Are Maasina Company aimed to foster self-

reliance and self governance politically and economically. For the 'Are'Are people, the 'Are'Are Maasina period provided a real sense of hope for development. They built their first boat, MV. 'Are'Are Maasina in 1969 and bought their second boat, MV. Haruta'i Maasina in 1975 to provide regular transport services for their products to the main market in Honiara. The organisation implemented some very good development projects such as operating trade stores, shipping, cattle farming; subsistence farming referred to as *kapani* and increased copra production. Women also participated at meetings and organised women's work but were more involved in the implementation process. Today, this organisation is non-existent due to mismanagement and misappropriation of its resources by some men leaders. This has shattered the people's hope for further development and better service delivery (Naitoro, 1993; Paia, 1983).

### **The 'Are'Are Traditional Society**

'Are'Are places great emphasis on educating its young generation. Passing of traditional wisdom and knowledge to the younger generation known as *ha'ananauha* is the paramount task for elders, parents, older people and leaders. More than anyone else, women are the key players in this role as wisdom givers while men play a minimal role. This passing of traditional knowledge and wisdom is done in various ways such as hands on skills, verbal conversation, genealogical story telling, sacred chanting, legends and myths.

The importance of word of mouth is not only seen as a medium of communication but traces its connections to the 'Are'Are myths of origin, their historical past and their religious ideology. The 'Are'Are people traditionally believed in and worshipped their ancestral spirits. According to (Naitoro, 1993), Jack Kenioma, chief Benedict Paurara and chief Paul Aitai, the act of ancestral worship is founded on the two basic concepts of *warato'o* (the word) and *rioanimae* (common ancestors). The 'Are'Are people believed that their livelihood and their perception of their physical, social and cultural world revolved around these two basic concepts.

### **`Are`Are myths of Origin and Ancestors**

To understand the position gender and leadership has in `Are`Are culture, I will begin by discussing the myths of origin in the `Are`Are history.

The `Are`Are people are believed to have gone through different phases of their existence and with different ancestral categories. Andrew Nori (2003) in his version of the existence of the `Are`Are people merges two stories, the *Rau`ahu* story and the *Warato`o* story. Below is a brief discussion of the *warato`o* story of creation.

The *warato`o* story is divided into two processes, the spiritual and the creative evolutionary processes. The spiritual process acknowledges the divine and supernatural power of the word. The concept *warato`o* in the `Are`Are tradition refers to the “power of the word”. Daniel de Coppet, an anthropologist cited in Naitoro (1993) describes it as “the word that hit and created” while Naitoro describes it as “the word with spontaneous power to do both good and evil”. *Warato`o* is neither masculine nor feminine. According to the `Are`Are myths of origin, *warato`o* spoke and every being (male and female) and spirits in the air, on land, in the sea and every language came into existence. *Warato`o* spoke again and *awairaa* a spiritual entity existed. Nori says that *awairaa* could be heard amongst the forest, the valleys and the streams but was invisible. *Warato`o* spoke again and the *ma`arau* came into existence. *Ma`arau* is said to be semi-spiritual and semi-material. They could be seen but would disappear again (Nori, 2003).

The second process of this creative and evolutionary process according to Nori (2003) involved the creation of *taitainusu* as the first human entity.

*Taitainusu* were small creatures that lived in holes in the ground. They were small in size but were able to procreate and survive the environment. Over a period of time, the *taitainusu* slowly underwent some biological changes and became bigger and more skilful. As *taitainusu* grew, they moved into caves and became semi-humans known as *ma`ehunu*. *Ma`ehunu*, the first half human beings came into existence. They were described as hairy giants with long finger nails. There were both male and female. They were given special power, wisdom and blessing to nurture and care for creation.



The second human entity was the *ma'ehunu taritau* category that looked more like humans, both males and females. They ate anything such as leaves, insects and snakes. They searched for knowledge and made new discoveries such as the stone axe, fire from rubbing wood together, building houses and the making of law and order. Men and women realised their biological differences as well. It was seen as an era of experimentation which gave 'Are'Are its knowledge, wisdom and history. Chief Paurara (2003), chief Aita'i (personal conversation, 2004) and Ropoau (personal conversation 2003), the wife of the late paramount chief Alick Nono'ohimae pays tribute to women's knowledge in this important discovery era. They outline four important women who were influential leaders at this initial stage of development. These women were *Puari'i* the woman who possesses the power of the word and speaks with authority, *Nahaneira* the woman who instructed two brothers to shape the posts for house building as a dog's head, *Teakeni* the woman who discovered *nasi* (sharp stone) for cutting trees, making wooden drums (oo'o), music (panpipes) and introduced gardening skills, and *Kawaha*, the woman who introduced law and order and separation by gender in 'Are'Are. The evidence of women's knowledge at this important phase gives recognition to women's role in 'Are'Are leadership. The *ma'ehunu taritau* category of ancestors then gave birth to the *ma'ehunu kiramo*.

The *ma'ehunu kiramo* category of ancestors was the third and consists of humans of both sexes and with knowledge. They were huge, strong people. Some of them lived in houses while others lived in caves. They were nomadic. They made gardens, hunted for wild animals for food and cooked over a fire. However, they were known for creating wars, theft, trouble-making and the beginning of cannibalism. Out of this category came *rioanimae*.

*Rioanimae* were wise, knowledgeable and understood family relationship and marriage. Law and order were formulated and central to their communal living. They paved the way for social, political and economic organisation in 'Are'Are. From *rioanimae* were four children whose names were *Araha*, *Namo*, *Rea'animane* and *'Auaapu*. The 'Are'Are people placed their leadership into the hands of these four children of *rioanimae* which forms the four houses of chiefs in 'Are'Are today

namely; the *Hahuarahana*, *Namoaraha*, *Arahanimane* and '*Auaapu*. The *rioanimae* category of ancestors is considered to be the ancestors of the current 'Are'Are generation.

Naitoro (1993) and Houhaaru (2003), argue that *rioanimae* the common ancestors of the 'Are'Are people gained prominence as the head of the living descendants, were represented in genealogy and were the original guardians of land used by the present descendants. They add that while *warato'o* was considered to be an individual, *rioanimae* was considered as multiple and diverse. This diversity is reflected in *rioanimae* as common ancestors of *noni* (people) but also as ancestors in the following: *rioanimae* as a snake, the guardian of the land, *rioanimae* as a crocodile, the guardian of the river mouths, *rioanimae* as a shark, the guardian of the sea and *rioanimae* as an eagle, the guardian of the sky. At the spiritual level, all common ancestors (*rioanimae*) have equal power and are treated with the same respect. They have an important and practical role in the social and traditional aspects of the 'Are'Are society, especially in relation to peoples' spirituality, peoples' relationships, leadership, knowledge and wisdom, feasting and land custodianship. *Rioanimae* is significant for the social, political and economic structure of 'Are'Are society in the past and even today.

## **'Are'Are Traditional Social Structure**

### ***Family Households***

A household would consist of the immediate family (father, mother and children) and would sometimes also include members of the extended family. Family relationships and responsibilities were based on the instructions handed down from *rioanimae*, encompassing 'Are'Are values such as respect, knowledge, hard work and servanthood. The father was responsible for leadership of the family, the tribe and the community while the mother was responsible for their survival. These gender roles are still practised today but have integrated with each other. Each family or tribe lived in a small hamlet on their land and were taught to behave and respect each other. The family house would have two doors, one for the men and the other for the women. Both genders live separate lives. Boys above the age of eight are attached to their fathers or men while girls are attached to their mothers or women. Crossing the

boundary would result in payment of compensation. Changes to these cultural arrangements due to the influence of Christianity and civilisation are discussed in chapter seven. Living separate lives by gender is also reflected in the *nima paina* concept which is discussed below.

***Nima Paina (big house or common house) Concept***

A big house traditionally signifies friendship and relationship, meeting place and the ability to accommodate and entertain visitors and strangers. The big house had two doors, one for the women and one for the men, with an imaginary demarcation line drawn from the front to the back of the big house, creating men's side and women's side and giving equal space for both genders. Chief Paul Aitai adds that women were kept to the left side of the house while the men were kept to the right side. It was forbidden for either men or women to cross the boundary line or to use the other gender's door. They were strictly advised to remain within their boundary.

The *nima paina* concept also allows other women's houses to be built on the left side in the following sequence: the *hare* (menstruation hut) is built closer to the big house, then *sisiopa* (mid house) and then *nima ni ha'ahutaha* (birth house) which is built further away from the big house in the forest. Men were forbidden from the vicinity of the women's houses. Women on the other hand are not allowed near the men's house except to bring their food to a certain spot where they can be called upon to collect. For men, the *tau*, (men's house) is built on the right side of the big house and further into the forest is the place for *tereha* (offering sacrifices and prayers) which was performed by priests. The gender social structure derived from the big house concept does not allow men to rule over women nor vice versa but is based on a system of "complementary but separate" spheres for men and women.

The women built their own huts by themselves without men's input. They had the skills in house building and participated actively in all processes of building any family houses. The women's houses were built a small distance from the main house but close enough for people to hear women's voice if they were attacked by an enemy and to hear the baby's cries to ensure that the baby and the mother were safe and secure. Separate houses catered for women during menstruation and childbirth as

blood from women's body was believed to be polluting and disempowering for men. Arguably it would be also for health and cleanliness reasons.

The big house concept is demonstrated in Figure 4 below.

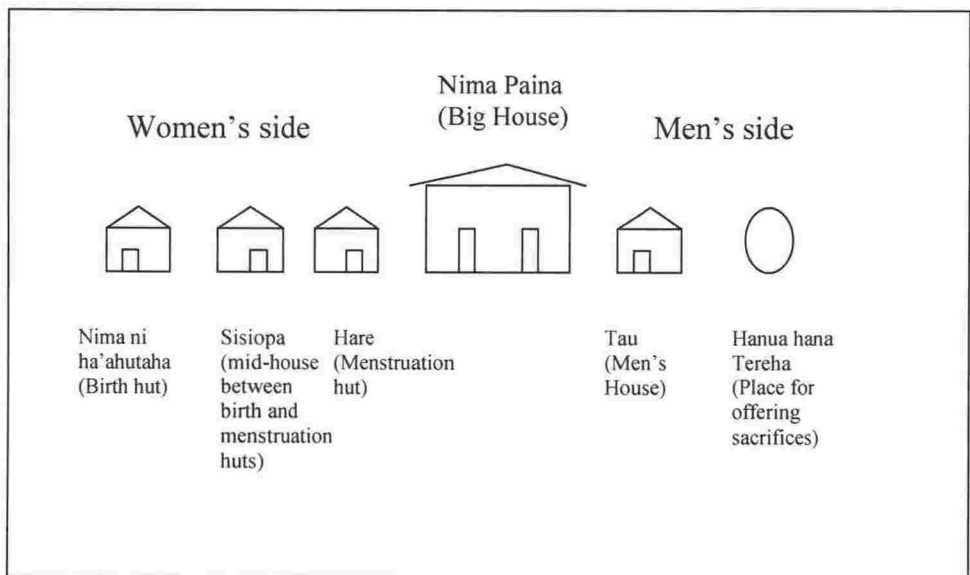


Figure 4: Big House Concept

#### ***Hutaa –It's the blood that binds.***

Naitoro (1993) explains that the kinship system provides the administrative structure which allows for the effective implementation of the religious ideology of *waratoo* the creator and *rioanimae* the common ancestor. Kinship is very important as it links people to their common ancestors and land through blood relations. He adds that descent from a common ancestor provides the basis for group membership both in the past and the present. This descent group is known as *arata*. Membership of *arata* as a sub-group consists largely of the patrilineal descendants but also of the female descendants. Each *arata* has its own founding *rioanimae* and is considered as a land-holding group of its territorial land handed down from their ancestors.

*Arata* was central for many of the social, religious and political activities that were significant to 'Are'Are peoples' lives such as feasts, marriages and exchange activities. It gave people the sense of belonging and closeness through which these activities were conducted. Its strength lies in blood relation and a common ancestor. In each *arata*, the descendants are distinguished according to three descent lines

traced through the children of the founding ancestor. These three descent lines were *hutaa huu* which refers to genealogies of the eldest son, *hutaa hari* refers to genealogies of other sons and *hutaa keni* refers to genealogies of the daughters.

The *hutaa huu* is the primary line and is expected to provide good leadership for the tribe. From this tribe comes the *arahahuu* or the head chief of the tribe. His roles include the reciting and teaching of the 'Are'Are laws and norms to his tribe, to ensure that the tribe live peacefully together, to establish friendly alliances with neighbouring tribes purposely for security, feasting and economic developments and to lead the tribe into war if need be (Nori, 2003: 18).

The *hutaa hari* sons were given the priestly roles and were responsible for providing spiritual leadership, guidance, sacrificial offerings and protection of the tribe from any attacks from evil forces which are also reflected through sickness (Nori 2003:19).

The *hutaa keni* is the principal line that provides the social strength for the tribe. The tribe's social activities such as feasting, ceremonies and festivals rest entirely in the capable hands of this tribe. Out of this tribe emerge the different titles such as the ceremonial masters, the diplomats and the judges (Nori 2003:19). Women play key roles in peace making and the social wellbeing of the tribes, whether it is feasting, hospitality or caring.

Having one common ancestor makes these descendants regard themselves as brothers and sisters. Each of them has equal responsibilities, rights and equal access to *arata* land and all resources despite the order of their birth or gender.

Chief Paul Aitai adds that another two *hutaa* (genealogies) that exist in 'Are'Are are the *hutaa hura* which refers to tribes who through family and church affiliation have settled with either of the above tribes. *Hutaa uruna'i* refers to tribes who through good friendship and connections with either of the above tribes moved in and settled with the tribe. These two tribes' existence depends very much on their relationship with the tribes of the land.

### ***Tariareha: Shell money and Wealth Ownership***

`Are`Are traditional wealth comes in different forms: through daughters in the form of *huekeniha*, in such food crops as taro and yams, in presentation of pigs and in two forms of shell money known as *ii'a* (dolphin's teeth) and the *pata* (shell money) made from two types of shells. In `Are`Are, both men and women participated in processing these shells manually into half centimetre discs and threaded onto a special bark fibre. The *aru* are the red disc shells which are more highly valued than the *kohu* which are the white disc shells. Pigs, taro and shell money have been very significant for economic exchange, *huekeniha*, feasting, compensations, personal adornment and wealth accumulation. These have been the basis for the livelihood and all that revolved around the traditional life of the `Are`Are society (Naitoro 1993:41-43).

### ***To'omakoha (Land Rights and Custodianship)***

Late Paramount chief Alick Nono'ohimae, cited in Coppet (1985: 81) points out that "...land owns people and people take care of land". This claims that `Are`Are people do not own land, instead the land owns them. People, are custodians of the land and are subordinate to the land. Land is very important for various reasons such as, it is where the ancestors were buried and to whom blood relations remain, it is where the genealogy of each living person begins and it provides the intimate relationship between the next generation and the current generation. According to chief Maepaina and chief Aitai, land is sacred, it is a living being and has both spiritual and physical significance to people's livelihood. It is likened to a human being in which the blood signifies the rivers, streams, springs and lakes, the human flesh signifies the soil of all sorts, the bones signify the rocks, sand, corals and minerals and the hair signifies all the different trees, grass, vines and creeping plants. Any damage to land such as logging and mining is seen as destructive and deadly to the entire livelihood of the `Are`Are people.

Land rights in `Are`Are lie in the ability to trace descent either through male or female links to the common ancestor in any particular territory. Both males and females have equal rights to the land and these rights are passed on from one

generation to another. Land is not owned by any individual but collectively, thus cannot be sold.

### ***Houra – Feastings***

Feastings in 'Are'Are are complex, unique and come in many forms. There are around ten different types of feastings that are celebrated at different occasions. Some of the common feasts such as marriage feasts are celebrated quite frequently while others are celebrated occasionally. There are feasts for celebrating victory and peace making, young men's feasts to celebrate their manhood, feasts to celebrate marriage, funeral feasts to celebrate the dead, big man's feast to celebrate leadership and women's feast to celebrate women's sisterhood. A common feature of feasting is the competitiveness demonstrated through large quantities of food, shell valuables and wealth and the competitive exchange in gift giving by different groups. In all these feasts, women perform all related activities to food production and preparation while men play roles in house construction and related logistics. Here leadership as "a process of influence" and as "power to control" is demonstrated. In understanding the complexities and uniqueness of feasting, the marriage feast (*huekeniha*) as an example is discussed below.

### ***Huekeniha :Marriage***

The word *huekeniha* could be translated as "releasing and exchanging a girl from one authority (family, clan, community) to another" (Pollard, 2000: 57) as opposed to *horikeniha* which refers to trading a girl as a commodity. In traditional times, men and women married at an older age. Men were expected to provide for their families by owning a house, a garden of taro and a fence of pigs before they were considered suitable for marriage while the women were expected to perform household chores, gardening and demonstrate hospitality. Marriage was not taken lightly as a relationship between two individuals (male and female) but a collective effort which involved researching, dialoguing and observation by the parents and uncles of the man. Since marriage was not allowed within the fifth or even the eighth generation of the clan group, it was arranged with a bride outside the group. However, today many 'Are'Are men choose their wives without considering the above criteria. Once a



bride was selected and she and her parents agreed, certain procedures were required to complete the union of the two individuals.

Naitoro (1993) explains that this feast has three aspects to it. The first is the *toraikiniha* which refers to the leading of the bride from her family to her new husband with twenty to fifty strings of red shell money (*aru-pata*). A richer family would present forty or more strings while a poorer family with little kin group support would present twenty or fewer strings of shell money. Acceptance of the shell money gift indicates their willingness to participate in the second stage.

The second aspect of this marriage feast involves two important transactions, the *torana* in which the bride's family brings goods such as pigs, shell money, taros and other food to the bride and her new family while for the husband's family it is the *huekiniha* feast which means "releasing the woman". The husband's family also contribute food and pigs towards the feast. The feast is prepared and distributed to all who contributed and everyone present. The husband's family will then give back to the bride's family the total value (shell money) of all the costs incurred including foods, pigs and labour. In addition, extra money called *pata toto* is placed upon each item of value and given to the bride's family. The bride's family in turn perform *wateha ana keni* which means giving shell money to their daughter (bride) and her children to be born. This gift is significant to prepare their daughter (bride) as a young mother to participate in similar feasts should they arise in the future. This feast takes place at any time after the marriage when the man's family is ready to perform the feast.

The third aspect involves the *orita* which means the reciprocal obligation performed by the husband to everyone who has contributed and assisted in his marriage feast. This reciprocal obligation is treated quite seriously as it is seen as a future investment in terms of feast giving. In 'Are'Are, a woman retains her name after marriage and does not take on her husband's name.

While many 'Are'Are families still practice *huekeniha* today, it is important to note here that it was challenged by missionaries and the SSEC who have introduced a new marriage system called "free marriage" which resembles very much the Western

culture, involving engagement and wedding ring, partying and giving of modern gifts such as china ware, plastic ware and bed linen accessories. For many SSEC adherents including my family, *huekeniha* was given up since the 1970s and replaced by “free marriage”. “Free marriage” over-rides many cultural values and practices that are intertwined within *huekeniha* and is causing confusion and disharmony amongst families in `Are`Are because it breaks traditional cycles of reciprocity.

### **`Are`Are *Painaha* (Are `Are leadership)**

Leadership in `Are`Are society is based on the *arahana* system that governs the `Are`Are people. While other leadership systems established by the government and the churches are also in place, the *arahana* system is still evident at family to societal levels of leadership in `Are`Are.

The exercise of the *arahana* system is complex and varies according to language variation and the different `Are`Are administrative sub-division areas. The current `Are`Are leadership is divided into three houses of chiefs: the *namoaraha*, the *hahuarahana* and the *arahanimane* corresponding with *rioanimae*'s three sons. Obviously the `a<sup>ua</sup>*aupuha* leadership for women which is equivalent in terms of power and rights is undocumented and hidden. I argue here that `a<sup>ua</sup>*aupuha* is lived and practised according to traditional knowledge but was never organised and structured. While men attempted to organise it during the Maasina Ruru era, it never got off the ground in the same way as the *arahana*. I suggests that only `Are`Are women, working in partnership with `Are`Are men and chiefs will be establish the `a<sup>ua</sup>*aupuha* leadership in an appropriate way that blends both the past and the present.

While `a<sup>ua</sup>*aupuha* leadership is not formally established and recognised as the fourth house, their leadership position and power within the `Are`Are social structure continues to be evident at the family and community level. At the Waisisi leaders' forum in 2004, Chief Paul Aitai and Chief Manurapu Irumai affirmed that *unless women participate in leadership with the men, any development in `Are`Are cannot prosper*. Women's presence at the Waisisi forum marked a new era for women's role in leadership and the formal establishment of the `a<sup>ua</sup>*aupuha* leadership as the fourth house to the `Are`Are chieftain leadership. Women were present and participated in

the forum not only as cooks and cleaners as in past meetings but as leaders working in partnership with the men.

To understand the `Are`Are leadership, a further discussion of the two types: *arahana* for men and *`auaapuha* for women gives a better picture of gender and leadership in `Are`Are.

### **Arahana Leadership for Men In `Are`Are Society**

Big man and chiefly leadership titles are both practised in `Are`Are. The title *araha* which means chief in `Are`Are is used for two types of chiefly leadership. They are *Arahahuu*, (ascribed) leader, a chiefly title used for the first born son while *na'oniaraha* (achieved) leader is the chiefly title given to a selected leader by a tribe or community. The *na'oniaraha* could be any man with demonstrated leadership skills. Both titles are used for male leaders (Kenioma, 1975). The *arahana* leadership structure operates at the family level, *arata* level, *komu* (community) level and at the `Are`Are society level. At the family and *arata* level, it is called *arahahuu*, (head chief), at the community level, it is often referred to as *nao'niaraha* or *Araha ni komu* (community chief) and at the societal level, it is referred to as *nima ni Araha* (House of chiefs). On the other hand, the big man title is inclusive and similar to the *na'oniaraha* leader but is earned through hard work and demonstrated leadership skills such as a community leader, a government official, a church minister, a politician, a successful business man/woman and an aged respected man/woman.

### ***Arahahuu (family and tribal level)***

The *arahahuu* leadership title known as head chief within an *arata* is accorded by birth, from *huta huu* (genealogy of the place) of the *arata* which is traced through the first born son. This leadership is transferred through the male (first born son) to the next generation. Chief Paul Aitai adds that in the case in which the first born son is incapacitated, the second or the third born son will lead. In the case in which a son is not born to head chief family, the first born daughter is given power and provisions in terms of land and tribal matters but she cannot carry the *arahahuu* title as the title is exclusively for men. Her first born son will then carry the title. Provisions are also made under the leadership structure of *arahahuu* for family and tribal chief of the

same *arata* known as *araha ana huta*. This tribal chief works under the guidance of the head chief and provides supportive roles for the betterment of the family and the tribe.

Such a chief is expected to provide good leadership and be well versed in issues related to land, tribe, genealogy and law and order. He also attends to the needs of the people he is responsible for and ensures harmonious living with each other and with their alliances.

***Na'oniaraha (sometimes referred to as Araha ni Komu or Mari Kahu)-Community Chief leadership – Community Level***

A community in the 'Are'Are context comprised of different *arata* and or of some smaller communities. These different communities select a chief (*Na'oniaraha*) by consensus that will provide leadership at community level on communal issues. Some of the community issues include domestic violence, promiscuity, thefts, keeping law and order, maintaining peace and harmony, communal feastings and social gatherings. He acts as a representative on behalf of the community on any issues that would affect them and oversees the *arata* chiefs and smaller community chiefs. Such an elected chief is expected to have certain leadership attributes such as the ability to talk and discuss, the ability to make decisions, the ability to lead, the ability to implement decisions made at meetings, the ability to host feasts and gatherings and that he possesses good knowledge of the 'Are'Are tradition. Term of office and functions of such a chief vary according to each community.

***'Are'Are Three House of Chiefs ('Are'Are Arahana) - societal level***

At the societal level, the 'Are'Are has divided itself into three houses of chiefs according to language and behaviour variation. This arrangement did not imply a divided 'Are'Are. *It is not a divided 'Are'Are* according to Chief Dickson Maepaina (2003), Chief Benedict Paurara (2003) and Jack Kenioma (2003). This arrangement of the three houses of chiefs was formalised to assist with simple and easier administration, political boundary and business development. Each of the houses of chiefs takes responsibility for cultural, political and business issues that would

involve the people of `Are`Are at that level. This arrangement is common knowledge in the `Are`Are circle. The three houses of chiefs are as follows:

### ***Namoaraha House of Chiefs***

The East `Are`Are area covering `Aiaisi and `Are sub-division is administered by the leadership of the *Namoaraha* house of chiefs. The term *namo* or *ramo* chief often refers to an executor, a law enforcer and a peace maker leader. As executors, law-enforcers and peace maker leaders, they were known for killings and murders, protection and security, hard work and practical implementation of planned activities. Their roles in peace making were through feast giving. In the past, such a chief was known for strength and the upholding of the `Are`Are religious and social norms in society. This type of leadership depends on personal attributes and achievements such as of a warrior and feast giving which characterises the features of the big man leadership discussed in chapter two. Leadership in this house of chiefs demonstrate “power to control” as well as “a process of influence”.

### ***Hahuarahana House of Chiefs***

The Southern part of the `Are`Are covering *Mareho* and *Raroisu`u* sub-division is governed by the leadership of the *Hahuarahana* house of chiefs. The *Hahuarahana* leadership is hereditary and based on inheritance and often leadership is given to the first born son of the chiefly tribe. A leader is determined by birth and not by personal achievements and demonstrated leadership skills. A leader is born to the position of leadership and recognised as a leader through accumulation of wealth in the form of feasting which involve amassing a large amount of shell money, pigs, food such as taros and yams and other valuables. These leaders become wealthier than the rest of the people. Such leadership demonstrate “power to control” as well as a process of influence through caring and serving.

### ***Arahanimane House of Chiefs***

The West `Are`Are area covering the *Tai* sub-division is administered by the leadership of the *Arahanimane* house of chiefs. As Naitoro (1993) rightly puts it, *Arahanimane* means “chief of the men” and therefore is ascribed for the men rather

than the women. Leadership is founded on personal achievement and demonstrated organising skills, wisdom and good personality. Wealth is not considered as a key aspect of this type of leadership. This leader is known for his peaceful coexistence with his neighbours and is non violent. Much of his work is devoted to business development and demonstrated leadership. This house of chief demonstrates leadership as a “process of influence” as well as “power to empower” followers and ordinary `Are`Are people.

Leadership positions within the above three houses of chiefs are exclusively for men. However, women are represented in their committees and decision making processes. Decision-making by consensus is often problematic and slow. This poses certain challenges for future leadership in terms of forward planning, strategising, decision-making and development which features formal leadership structures. An example was observed at the Waisisi leaders forum conducted in 2004, in which the *Namoaraha* and the *Arahanimane* representatives wanted to pass a resolution of the recommended *arahana* structure but *Hahuarahana* representatives decided to abstain, call for an extension and to bring back the matter to their own chiefs meeting before it could be voted on at the next meeting. Quite clearly there were some signs of dissatisfaction shown amongst the leaders at the meeting as such a decision delayed any future progress for development. There was also a tension between traditional and formal systems of conducting meetings.

*Arahana* leadership is un-structured at the family and community level while semi-structured with a draft simple constitution at the societal level. Leaders work on voluntary basis. Their influential roles during the Maasina Ruru, the `Are`Are Maasina movement and the recent civil conflict demonstrated a strong established traditional leadership system. Traditional leadership working in collaboration with the church leadership maintains law and order at the family and community level.

*Arahana* leadership is both ascribed and achieved leadership. In achieved leadership, men were critically assessed and discussed before being endorsed to a leadership position at the community and societal level. This assessment is based on personality and leadership skills.

### ***Toiha Mane (Roles and Responsibilities of the men)***

At the birth of a boy child, chanting such as *pasi nau* (my bow and arrow), *tereha ma hoata* (offering of prayers and sacrifices), *to'i nimaha* (house construction), *are hana ka torea hutaa* (continuation of the genealogy) and *tohu aiha* (chopping down trees) etc. were made. These chants and many more reflect men's roles. Men form an integral part of the 'Are'Are society and they represent leadership in families, in tribes and communities. They are responsible for decision-making on issues relating to people, land and resources. In addition, they were also responsible for house construction, gardening and feast-giving. Men's roles are interwoven with the *araha* (chiefs)' roles and responsibilities and were summed up into nine key areas according to Houhaaru (2003) of Waisisi community. These roles are transferred from the chiefs to younger men, family, *arata*, and community in two forms: by *arahuna* or *ha'ananauha* (word of mouth or talking) and by *toiha* meaning "practical demonstration of skills through hard work". These key roles and responsibilities assigned to the *arahana* leadership for men are discussed below, not in order of priority:

The chiefs are responsible for ensuring that families and *arata* are well versed with their genealogy. It is important that each child and person in the family and *arata* know their siblings and people of the same tribe. Such cultural knowledge is important to ensure that people of the same ancestral blood, from first to the fifth generations do not marry within the same group. It is socially unacceptable in terms of kin relationships with a common ancestor. Marrying someone of the sixth and above generation is socially acceptable.

It is the responsibility of the chief to ensure that land issues are dealt with appropriately. Chiefs and men generally are responsible for protecting the land from any development that would damage land as it is the life of the people. They are responsible for recording family and *arata* land, allocation of land to family members for gardening activities and ensuring that each member is well versed with which land they are connected to. Knowing one's genealogy also connects that person to land.



Certain chiefs as priests are responsible for the offering of prayers, sacrifices and certain rituals on behalf of the family and the community. This role is specifically performed by a traditional priest who is assigned the job to do it on behalf of his tribe and people. Not all chiefs have the job of performing such sacred activity.

Knowledge of medicinal plants is also important. Often traditional healing is performed by particular men or chiefs who are gifted and knowledgeable about traditional medicines and healing. This role is often associated with sacredness and priestly roles.

The chiefs ensure that the enforcement of law and order within families, *arata* and the community is being observed. The chiefs ensure that the families and the communities are protected, that people respect each other and live together in peace and harmony. Any problems that may arise in the community will be dealt with immediately through meeting and dialoguing. Conflict resolution often resorts to payment of compensation in the form of shell money, pigs and food.

Chiefs are also responsible for *ha'ananauha* (giving of words of wisdom) as a form of educating children, the younger generation, tribes and communities on daily basis. *Ha'ananauha* is a source of wisdom and knowledge (*manataha*). Children are taught to respect, to be well behaved, to offer assistance, to gain skills in work such as house construction, gardening and woodcraft and to embrace a communal spirit. It also strengthens the current form of the education system as a form of knowledge and wisdom.

Men are also required to perform gardening activities such as clearing, cutting down big trees and hoeing. They are encouraged to own a garden of taro as a prestigious crop which reflects status and wealth.

They are also responsible for cash earning to help finance family social activities and obligations. They are to perform in pig raising, feast giving, taro planting, canoe making and any activities that would raise family income. Today activities such as copra making, cocoa, rice farming, piggery and other business enterprises such as retail shops are additional cash opportunities for men.

Finally, men and chiefs provide overall management of seas and river resources. This indicates the role of chiefs and generally men as custodians over land which includes all resources either on land, in the sea and in the rivers.

In summary these nine key areas cover the basic essentials that were culturally important for chiefs and men in the `Are`Are society in maintaining their economic, social and cultural values and norms.

### **Categories of `Are`Are men**

The `Are`Are society has great concern for men as key players in leadership of the society. Men's roles require characteristics of good fatherhood, good leadership characteristics and personality. In this regard, the `Are`Are also categorised men into eighteen different categories as described to me by Chief Ismael Irisitapa'a (personal communication, 2004), Chief Dickson Maepaina (2003) and Chief Maheana (2003). I have divided these categories of men into two groups; the obedient/desirable characters and the disobedient/undesirable characters. They are not discussed in any order of priority.

#### ***Hi mane ni Ro'oha (The obedient/desirable types of men in `Are`Are)***

##### ***1. Namoaraha***

This man is a warrior, a law enforcer and at the same time, a peace maker. He takes responsibility for organising and carrying out attacks on warring enemies. He would be at the front line of attacks or choose which men will be at the frontline of the attack. He plays the commanding role in warring situations. He is known for his hard working spirit and strong leadership.

##### ***2. Pausimane***

This man is a communal person and is full of compassion. He cares for people and shows kindness and hospitality to anyone at all. He is keen to make things happen even without funds. He is very cooperative and leads with sacrificial attitude of leadership. He may be poor materially but his strength lies in his communal spirit and servanthood leadership. The offering of his limited material wealth is used for

the good of the people and the community rather than for himself. He provides leadership as a “process of influence” and “power to empower” others.

### 3. *Arahanimane*

This man attains leadership through demonstrated leadership skills such as having the ability to make decisions, lead and organise. He does not participate or become involved in any warrior activities and theft. He lives a quiet life, minds his own business and is open to new ideas on development. His leadership is gained through achievements and demonstrated wealth.

### 4. *Manemaririu*

He is an obedient man to good advice, good ideas and good plans. He is even obedient to women’s advice and plans. Because of his nature of character he is cooperative, willing and hardworking.

### 5. *Manehou*

This man is renowned with good reputation since birth and has not engaged in any act of disobedience, theft or misbehaviour that will discredit his name or his family. He has not been involved in any act of promiscuity or adultery, instead he respect others, help others and encourage good behaviour.

A good leader in ‘Are’Are leads with a combination of leadership attributes such as obedience, good personality, being visionary, able to organise, lead and make decisions, humility, cooperation, respect, compassion, aggressive and being able to challenge difficulties and warring situations. Men with these attributes make them attractive and fit for leadership. Men as fathers and leaders must have proven character for leadership in all aspects of life either in warring situations, in troublesome situations, in peaceful situations or in a community setting. Men were critically analysed and assessed before they could be appointed to a leadership position. On the other hand, a leader was well aware that his followers expect him to lead. Leadership was based more on personal character and attributes than material wealth. All families desire to see their boys grow up to be men of good character with good leadership attributes.

## ***Hi Mane Hehenoroha (The disobedient/ undesirable types of men in 'Are'Are)***

### ***1. Manepuritai***

He is a self-centred man who is concerned about himself and his own development. He does not become involved in any community discussion/ meeting and activities. The activity that concerns his individual life supersedes any communal activities. He is an individualistic man.

### ***2. Manemamahau***

This type of man is very quiet and does not participate in any discussion either within the family unit or the community. He may participate in community activities but is often silent and speechless. His presence and voice in a community is unheard of although he is given opportunities to speak. In this regard, he lacks constructive thinking and contribution when it comes to family and community matters. He can be heard of only when he has done something extraordinary well or caught in promiscuity or theft.

### ***3. Maneha'apaina***

This type of man is known for pride and a self-praising attitude. He often speaks about himself, his work, his achievement, his wealth, his family and properties. He focuses his discussion on himself and his own issues rather than others.

### ***4. Maneha'atora***

This man does not perform either at home or in a community without being told or ordered to perform. For example, he must be told before he could feed the pigs, go to the garden or renovate his house. He does not have the will to perform any task without being told. He is a lazy man.

### ***5. Manepari***

This type of man refers to a man who does not own the basic necessities according to the 'Are'Are cultural norm such as having his basket of lime, betel nut and leaf. It would also refer to not having household items such as wooden bowl, coconut scraper, axe or bush knife and even food. This type of man survives by asking and borrowing these items from neighbours and other family members.

6. *Maneapui* (sometimes called Namoapui)

This type of man is a killer, a murderer and a thief. He has no respect for anyone and does not adhere to any authority. If anyone reprimands him for such bad actions or speaks about him for bad behaviour, he retaliates and kills that person.

7. *Namoroto*

This man is similar to maneapui. He is a killer, a murderer, a destroyer and nothing good lives in him.

8. *Maneawatao*

This type of man is known and associated with bad behaviours such as stealing, destruction and promiscuity. He is known for a disrespectful attitude. Wherever he goes, he leaves behind traces of disaster and destruction.

9. *Ha'ahehemane*

This man is proud of his wealth. He boasts of his wealth but does not share it by helping with community activities, helping the poor or helping any extended family members.

10. *Nima'iihai*

This refers to a homeless man who does not own a house or a garden of his own as a result of his own laziness, careless attitude and ignorance. Instead, he moves from one house to another to be fed and receive accommodation for the night.

11. *Mahane'irasu*

This man does not cook his own meals but awaits the fire smoke from other houses. Once he sees fire smoke coming out from any house, he would walk to that house as fire smoke indicates cooking food of some sort. It is often a pleasant sight when one is hungry. Certainly he will be offered some food by that household. He survives by moving from one house to another.

12. *Hikuapare*

This type of man befriends resourceful and wealthy people for their money, food, drinks and information. Once those resources are dried up, he then moves on to

befriend another resourceful and wealthy person. He does not own much wealth and lives on other people's resources for his survival. He is lazy and unproductive.

### 13. *Kurumasiponi*

This type of man is likened to a bat (flying fox) that sleeps during the day and roams around at night, searching for food. This type of man is lazy and sleeps during the day. At night he would visit different homes, eating whatever food is offered to him.

Men with attributes such as pride, selfishness, laziness, careless attitudes, disobedience, disrespectful, ignorant, unco-operative, involves in stealing, killing and destroying are undesirable for leadership in 'Are'Are. A man of bad character is criticised and his presence is known in a community. Whether such an undesirable man could be transformed by culture to be a good man was not articulated by my informants. Commonly practised, a man of bad character is transformed through improved personal character, renewed relationships and payment of compensation. This categorisation of men is still widely used among 'Are'Are in their social discourses today. However, I argue that so much emphasis on good and desired character is highly demanded on the girl child/women than boys and men. Two key reasons for this are the *huekeniha* concept where girls/women are exchanged for wealth and performance-based where a girl/woman proves her strength, willingness and industriousness. Much is also demanded from the boys/men to prove themselves but failure to do so receives little criticism from families, tribes and communities..

Jack Kenioma sees a good male leader as someone who gathers his people both great and small and educates them, assists them, listens to them, protects them and respects them without abusing their rights, land, money and power for his own good. He adds that it is the *ta'a masika* meaning the small or ordinary people or followers that place people in leadership. It is therefore appropriate that people in leadership must give heed to ordinary people's issues and care for them (Kenioma, 1975). However, from my observation in West 'Are'Are in 2005, a few men leaders who were engaged in logging operations have abused the ordinary people's rights to land, provided unequal share of financial benefits to people and care little about environmental degradation to people's livelihood, for example, the Waisisi logging. Leadership in

`Are`Are combines leadership “as a process of influence” and “power to empower” as well as “power to control” in certain circumstances.

More importantly, when asked whether leaders with good leadership attributes do exist today in `Are`Are, out of the eleven leaders consulted, only two said *yes*, one said *they exist but we do not recognise them* while the other said *some of them are visible in the church and in education and health sectors*. The other nine leaders said *no*, with the following comments, *there is no one good left, they have all died*.

*There is no one outstanding.*

*It is hard to find a good leader; we have to look for them.*

*We do not have the people who can be leaders*

*There is no one available.*

Such sentiments challenge `Are`Are leadership today and for the future. The question of whether `Are`Are maintains its ideals of leadership attributes or whether they will change due to the changing environment needs to be further examined.

### ***Auapuha (leadership system for `Are`Are Women)***

The leadership system for women is known as *'auapuha* which derives its name from *'auapu* meaning a virgin encompassing morality, industriousness and sacredness. It is not formally organised, structured or documented, yet exists and alive alongside the *arahana* system. It is rarely mentioned and promoted but is used as a reference point by chiefs, elders and leaders, both men and women, when discussing cultural matters relating to women in `Are`Are leadership. Thus in this section, I intend to provide some discussions on the *'auapuha*, the `Are`Are women's leadership system which complements the *arahana* system. It is seen as an empowering mechanism for women in leadership at the family and the community level. Equal to the birth of the *arahana* system from *warato'o* and *rioanimae*, is the *'auapuha* system. *Auapuha* system derives its beginning from *warato'o* through the power of the word, which created both male and female. Through *Rioanimae*, *'auapu* was the fourth child and the only daughter born to *rioanimae*. Both the *arahana* and the *'auapuha* are given equal recognition and power but both operate differently.



*'Auaapu* literally means "sacred bamboo or sacred music". It highlights the relationship between bamboo and music which is 'Are'Are's most prestigious cultural item of musical instrument known as the "pan-pipe made from bamboo. From the 'Are'Are cultural context, both the bamboo and the music imply sacredness. The bamboo plant is a unique and a resourceful plant useful for many purposes as well such as for piping drinking water, storing drinking and cooking water, house construction, fire tongs etc. The concept of *'aupa* title given to women's leadership implies women's sacredness, purity and resourcefulness which is given the same respect and value as *arahana*. Once the *'aapu* (sacredness) of a woman is broken, payment of compensation in a form of shell money is necessary.

Naitoro (1993) best describes the beliefs and the contradictory roles women play in 'Are'Are society in this manner,

Women were believed to judge all humans after they died and decide where their spirits went. It was women who purified men and prepared them to enter the ancestral shrine or the shrine of the common ancestor. Yet women were also subject to the worst kind of impurity because of menstruation and childbirth. Women helped build the common house and sometimes the sacred houses of the family. They were the first to open a house before any men could enter. Afterwards they could never climb the roof of a house and be above men (Naitoro 1993:38).

He adds that according to 'Are'Are oral tradition, women's power and knowledge is demonstrated in the invention of many valuable and important material items such as the traditional drums and panpipes. But when these instruments are played by the men, women merely became spectators and were advised not to touch them. It was women who invented the stone axes, yet it was men who used them for chopping trees and carvings. A woman must lead her husband's extended family when involving in a mortuary feast at her land of birth yet she is forbidden to climb the feast platform when presenting her gifts or giving her speech. Obviously, all chiefs and powerful men are born of women yet their roles, position and power are not publicly known. In 'Are'Are, a woman represents strength, blessing and prosperity. She holds the key to the livelihood of her family, community and 'Are'Are society.

`Are`Are women's leadership as "power to empower", "power to control" as well "as a process of influence" in the society is well demonstrated in their skills and inventions.

### ***Auapu as an Individual Woman.***

Chief Paul Aitai explained that the '*auapu* concept is not transferred through the first born daughter but is a gift from *rioanimae* to all `Are`Are women. In understanding this concept, he describes the processes and power of an '*auapu* as an individual made to be an '*auapu*. Chief Irisitapa'a argues that a girl is selected to be an '*auapu* after having demonstrated skills in leadership such as showing respect, kindness, serving, obedience, being hard working and willing as a small girl. Parents would agree that this particular daughter would become an '*auapu*. Often this family is characterised by wealth, wisdom and with many children and kin group. It begins at an early age as *keni tarenimane*, meaning that the girl child has her strength and power founded on her extended family members support and wealth (shell money, pigs, taros and cultural valuables). She has confidence in herself, her family and family's wealth. The family set her apart to become an '*auapu*, a commitment made by the family. This means that this girl child will remain a virgin until her marriage or death if she is not able to get married. After marriage, she remains committed to only her spouse and no other man. She will receive special care and respect by her family; she will be well fed and often will have the best share, will be well disciplined and taught about cultural values. She will become famous with many valuables, wealthier than the rest and well protected from the general public. Because of her high standing in her family and *arata*, no one is allowed to make jokes of her or have fun with her.

She is not allowed to go to any other houses or attend to feasts unnecessarily. If she does go to a feast, she is decorated with shell money valuables and has her guards with her. Where she sleeps, she is also guarded. She is not allowed to develop friendship with ordinary women and men. She is obedient and lives according to the expected norms. She is hard working and when roasting food on the fire, she sits on a home umbrella made from pandanus plant. She has her own helpers at home. Besides that, she is surrounded by her own family members who are many, strong and

wealthy. She is guarded at home and no men are allowed to come close to where she lives. She is expected to keep her body away from men and promiscuity. She is very powerful by her words and status. No one is to disobey her commands. Any disobedience to her orders will be disciplined and addressed immediately.

She rules and directs with power within her family circle. For family meal times, they will wait until she arrives before the family can have their meal. No one is allowed to sit on her bed. She has her own menstruation hut. No ordinary man can marry her but one of her standing. *Paumauri* is the term used for men who are of the same standing to an *'auaapu* level as having wealth, are wise, caring and has strong support from all family members. He is well looked after and is made wealthier than the rest. He receives the best share and can be made into a chief. He is the only one who is of the same standing in terms of power, status and wealth to an *'auaapu* and could marry her.

An *'auaapu* who does not get married because of her status becomes an *'auaapu nukunuku* (spinster). Chief Maheana (2003) adds that men find it difficult to marry an *'auaapu* because of her status, wealth and power. However, abstention from married life has some cultural implications such as she will be unable to have any children and that her lineage will come to an end (*kumu*). In the past, the concept and practice of *'auaapu* contributed very much towards population control.

If an *'auaapu* cannot live up to the expected norms and values of being an *'auaapu*, she can be dethroned from that position of power and status. However, Chief Ismael Irisitapa'a adds that provisions are made for rebuilding and restoring her life again. She can then become an *'auaapu puri* (a transformed woman) and continues with her responsibilities. She may not be as powerful as before but she is still important in her family and society. Further more she will be used as a resource person for teaching teenage girls and young mothers about her life and the experiences she gained as an example of a woman who does not live up to the *'auaapu* concept yet can be transformed. All undesirable *'Are'Are* women can become an *'auaapu puri*. They are given the choice to be transformed and become a responsible member of the community.

### *'Auaapu as a Collective Concept*

The *'auaapu* concept discussed above presented a model where *'Are'Are* women were expected to follow. They are expected to keep away from men and promiscuity until their marriage and or until death. *'Are'Are* women's influence on their leadership derives its strength from their morality, purity, sacredness, personal values, wisdom and hard work. Jack Kenioma argues that *'auaapu* is not only meant for a selected few instead it is the expected norm for all women of *'Are'Are*. He contends that as long as you are a female, you are an *'auaapu*. All *'Are'Are* women can become an *'auaapu* by protecting themselves and disallowing their bodies to be abused and misused by men. A woman's body is sacred and has power. In addition to her morality, she is expected to be obedient, hard working, hospitable and respecting people. Chief John Houtarau (2003), Miriam Orinia (2003) and Crystal Reresina (2003) add that women must keep themselves away from men except for certain provisions such as husband/wife relationship, grandfather/grand-daughter relationship or uncle/niece relationship. This view is a general consensus in *'Are'Are* as highlighted by my *'Are'Are* informants.

Bethaven Ripiapu (personal conversation, 2003, 2005) of Kiu village and a cultural knowledgeable woman adds that, it is believed that *ha'a'auaapuaana keni* referred to the encouragement and the support given to a girl/woman to be sacred, to maintain her morality before marriage and being industrious brings *nanamaha*, (blessing and empowerment), *wa'ato'oha* and *marutana* (prosperity and sufficiency) and *peataha* (peacefulness) to her life. Upon her marriage to another family or tribe, she will not only bear children to that family but she brings blessing, prosperity, protection and peace to that family as well. She will then transfer her blessings to the family she is married to especially her children to possess those values and pass them on to the next generation. Her family is blessed through her *'auaapuha*.

### *Na'oniken*i Leadership

While an *'auaapu* leads at the family and tribal level, *na'oniken*i leads at the community level. *'Auaapu* and *na'oniken*i leaders are selected based upon their demonstrated leadership skills, industriousness and achievements. Their leadership status is achieved rather than ascribed.

### **Categories of 'Are' Are Women**

Similarly to men, women too were categorised into different groupings. I have placed these different types of women into the obedient/desirable and the disobedient/undesirable groups according to Ropoau, wife of the late Alik Nono'ohimae, Bethaven Ripiapu, wife of the late Abiah Iriru and Chief Ismael Irisitapa'a. While this is not discussed in order of importance, 'auaapu as the first on this list is regarded as the most approved and desired type of woman that 'Are' Are people want for their daughters.

#### ***Ro'oha (Obedient and desirable types of women)***

1. 'Auaapu has been discussed above.

#### ***2. Putaitae***

This type of woman is one who is hard working. She ensures that her house is in full supply with the necessities for survival such as food, water and firewood. She is responsive to the needs in her home. She is thoughtful and reflective of her roles as the provider for her family as well as her community. She carries out her roles without being told or ordered around by her spouse or any family members. She welcomes and greets people, she is willing and obedient, she loves people, respects people, listens and helps people in need, provides hospitality to anyone and she is a decision maker herself in managing her roles, family and other related areas in her responsibilities.

#### ***3. Wara'iapu***

She is similar to 'auaapu in character in which she is a virgin who kept herself away from promiscuity and any other relationship with the opposite sex. She is considered holy, well respected and cared for by her people. No man is to joke with her. She lives a self disciplined and sacred life without involving very much with the ordinary lifestyle of normal women. She marries a man of her own standing.

#### ***4. Na'onikeni***

This type of woman is referred to as a woman leader at the community level. She could also be an elder as reflected by her age, her leadership characters, her position,

her fame and her name in the community or she could be a first born daughter. Such a woman is respected and is held in high regard in her family and community. She represents women in meetings and in her community.

#### 5. *Ha'amara'ohu*

While offering sacrifices and performing sacred rituals were often associated with male priests, this type of woman was responsible for praying and performing sacred rituals on behalf of women for women, their family, garden and houses. However, she was not allowed to offer sacrifices. Offering of sacrifices was only done by men. Given the task of dealing with the ancestral spiritual world, this woman does not live a normal life as other women but abstain from eating certain foods such as coconut with other women. She has her own menstruation hut and take leading role in spiritual aspects of women's other activities such as feasting.

#### 6. *Keni Tarenimane*

This is a wealthy woman not only in terms of material goods and *pata* (shell money)) but also with wisdom, is surrounded by many family members and with morale support. Because of such strong backup, she has the ability to participate equally with the men in decision-making, business activities, cultural feasts and community activities. She is resourceful and always ready to participate and give resources in kind towards family, tribal and community activities. She is quite a powerful woman. She takes on men's characteristics of strength and fitness, confidence and public speaking. She is sometimes referred to as *keni mane* (strong and tough just like the men).

#### 7. *Keni Maritawa*

This woman has the gifts of welcoming and greeting people especially strangers and visitors on arrival in the village. She will not stare at them but will go out to meet them and invite them to her house. She greets, feeds and accommodates anyone whether visitors, strangers or relatives. She ensures that visitors are well looked after at her own cost. She is kind with open arms to people although she may not be good at other areas such as public speaking.

#### 8. *Keni Marihu*

This is a quiet woman who attends to home duties and minds her own business without interfering with other peoples' lives. She is not involved very much in public activities or pay visits to other families/people. She is well disciplined and is not so known publicly. She is only heard if she has done something extra-ordinary.

9. *'Auaapu Nukunuku*

*'Auaapu nukunuku* means a woman who never marries and still retains her virginity.

10. *Keni ni Marapeha*

She is a peace maker. Even in warring situations, she would walk between them and order them to stop fighting. She initiates peace talks and dialogue on peace resolutions.

Women in `Are`Are become leaders with a combination of leadership attributes such as thoughtfulness, wisdom, kindness, sacred, obedience, industriousness, being courageous, confidence, strength and being able to listen, respect, care and perform willingly.

***Hehenoroha Group (Disobedient and Undesirable group of women)***

1. *Keni Sikimaniunu*

This type of woman is not focussed and lacks concentration. She is often unsettled and attracted to many things around her. While she may be responsible for cooking a meal, she may leave her cooking responsibilities and wander around from house to house, telling stories with other women. Her work often results in poor quality with careless attitudes. She cannot be trusted to perform to the best. She lacks consistency and firmness.

2. *Keni Aikiki*

Keni Aikiki is likened to a tree along a public bush track which is exposed and vulnerable to passers-by who leave knife marks on it. This type of woman has no sense of self respect and whose body can be enjoyed by any male folks. She is prone to prostitution.



### 3. *Keni Rehatai*

This type of woman shows no respect for herself. Instead, she welcomes and accepts any invitation for sexual intercourse by any man at all. She may be referred to as a prostitute.

### 4. *Keni Kiuato*

This type of woman is likened to a megapod bird that lays eggs anywhere suitable such as in composts, around rotten logs, around the roots of big trees or in the sand. These eggs will hatch where ever they are or can be handpicked by anyone. This illustration depicts a woman who has more than one illegitimate child from different men. The children are adopted by different people as she is incapable of providing proper childcare.

### 5. *Keni Wauho ni ahea*

This type of woman is likened to an eel-fish in its safe hole along the streams or rivers. However, during flooded waters, the eel-fish is being washed down the river and cannot make its way back again. If the eel-fish does not find a safe haven, it will surely die as the flooded river resides. This type of woman has gone with the crowd, lost her direction back home and at a point of no return to her people and community. She has lost her self worth and connection with her people and land. She settles where she is until her death.

### 6. *Keni Maumauru*

This type of woman is a sleepy and lazy woman. She shows no interest in performing domestic chores, childcare and gardening. She survives on other people's hard work and earning.

### 7. *Keni Owai'i*

This type of woman is likened to a bird called an *Owai'i* that is known for muttering and noisy. This is a talkative woman and her topic of discussions is often unconstructive and unnecessary. She has difficulty with listening skills.

### 8. *Keni Eroero*

This type of woman has no initiative to perform any work whether at home or outside the home. She has no initiative to create or recreate new developments even at the household level. She is a lazy woman. She performs when told to do so. For example, she can cook when asked to cook, she can collect firewood when she is asked to collect firewood and she can go to the garden when asked to go to the garden. She is the opposite of the *keni putaitae*. She performs when told rather than realising that work needs to be done.

#### 9. *Keni Para'aihahia*

This type of woman is very quiet and unresponsive. Sometimes she can be uncooperative. She lacks confidence and does not contribute in discussion meetings. Because of the nature of her character, she follows and accepts any decision made by the majority whether she likes it or not. In addition, she could either take note of what has been said or could totally ignore any wise advice from leaders.

#### 10. *Keni Kakaka*

This type of woman is likened to a bush crawling plant (*kakaka*) that is not selective on which tree it will attach itself to. It can crawl up any type of tree, whether big or small, dead or alive, strong or weak and poisonous or friendly. It had no selection criteria. This reflects that this woman is careless of who she is attached to or to which man she marries. She lacks quality choice or selection criteria on who she marries and follows. She could be categorised as a free and easy going woman.

#### 11. *Mamarunikeni*

This type of woman is not beautiful, wise nor knowledgeable. She is not outstanding in anyway but she is a woman and lives with us. Her presence is acknowledged as part of society.

Women who are lazy, careless, involved in promiscuity activities and do not show respect to themselves or others are often considered unfit to lead in 'Are'Are.

However, as I have discussed earlier, women of undesirable character can be transformed to become a leader. Bethaven Ripiapu adds that during the Maasina Ruru and 'Are'Are Maasina eras, undesirable women were named "outlaw women" and were used as resource people along with 'auaapu and na'onikeni to teach and give words of wisdom to the girls and women. While 'auaapu and na'onikeni share from their experiences as a desirable character leader, "outlaw women" share their experiences as being the opposite character and how they were transformed to be desirable women. Chief Ishmael Irisitapa'a adds that presentation from both sides provides information and knowledge on the advantages and disadvantages of being either a woman of the desirable group or the undesirable group to the young generation. While parents wish for their girls to be of the desirable group of women, the opposite does occur sometimes in which girls are caught in promiscuity, become pregnant and or are lazy. From a leadership perspective, I argue that women of the undesirable group are not beyond redemption. Such women can be transformed and become good and useful persons in society. In reality, it is difficult for women to live up to the expected norms of society. Women can fall into any one of the different types, either desirable or undesirable group in one's life time. The same could also be said about the men.

However, although it is difficult to live up to the expected norm for women in 'Are'Are, mothers strive to teach their daughters to be of good character which will enable them to lead and also to raise their own children when they are married. No mother desires to see her daughter caught in promiscuity, become a social rebel or a target for criticism by the community.

### **Toiha (Roles of Women in 'Are'Are Society)**

At the birth of a girl child, metaphoric chanting such as *kareni ma'e nau* (she is my basket of wealth), *parani kahu nau* (she is my bundle of bamboo of water), *parani ai nau* (she is my bundle of firewood), *haihanariha* (my hostess), *maroitaha ma toiha* (the one who works hard and serves) were often chanted by parents, uncles, aunties, grandparents and relatives. These chants clearly indicated the value and roles of women and their position of leadership at birth and throughout their entire life span.

Leadership as a process of influence was an integral part of women's lives from birth.

Women's roles as chanted at their birth reflect the "power of the word". Through chants and *ha'ananauha*, women are continually reminded of who they are, their roles and their position in their society. *Ha'ananauha* begins very early in life until old age. Similarly to the men, it covers tasks such as knowledge about *mako* (land), *manataha* (wisdom), *hutaa* (genealogy), *waraotootoo* (law and order), *maroitaha* (hardworking and serving) and *totoraha* ('Are'Are cultural norms and values). 'Are'Are women's roles are many and summarised into four broad categories which are wisdom givers, ceremonial masters, diplomats and judges. These include women as peace makers, healthcare givers, teachers, home managers, child bearers and gardeners. Motherhood in 'Are'Are tradition does not limit itself to the private spheres such as in the home but encompasses both the private and public spheres. Motherhood means "mother of all that revolves around life and sustenance of family, community and 'Are'Are". In support of this, Seranta Kauhorosiva states the obvious but profound truth, *without women there is no 'Are'Are*. Such truth provides greater participation for women at all levels of decision-making and leadership.

*Rioanimae* have handed down the following responsibilities to *'auaapu*, ensuring that all women of 'Are'Are play an active role in developing 'Are'Are. Women as peace keepers must ensure that peace remains in families and communities. Even in warring situations, women's speech and words can calm down the situation and provides an environment for peace negotiations and dialogue.

Knowing that women bear children, they are responsible for feeding, caring, bathing and overall care of the children. They should not only care for the physical development of the children but also the "giving of words of wisdom" for the children at an early age. This allows the children to acquire skills in hard work, respect, the art of giving, performing household chores, cooking, aged care, genealogy, good marriages, good behaviour and respect for family in-laws.

*Ha'ananauha* must be performed daily on key cultural issues such as land matters, law and order, genealogy, feastings, rituals and performing activities for cash

income. Women are key players in “giving words of wisdom” compared to men as they are the mother of the family, the community and `Are`Are as a whole.

Mothers continuously brief their children, especially their daughters about law and order of the `Are`Are culture, in particular the separation of men and women, promiscuity and marriage.

Women are also responsible for curing children’s illness; attending to delivery processes and complications using herbal and traditional medicines. Women are the healthcare giver. Women acquire wisdom and practical skills to build their own houses for birth, menstruation and the mid-hut at the right timing without being told. They are also taught to weave the different crafts such as baskets, umbrella and cultural robes for carrying and body decoration. Generally, they are the first educators in the home.

Women acquire skills in all gardening processes from brushing to harvesting, cooking and feeding the household and visitors. Gardening is a woman’s domain and her power, self-worth and skills are reflected in her garden.

Women acquire skills in performing various activities to earn shell money and cash income. These activities include feeding pigs, marketing garden produce, marketing of seashells and weaving of different crafts.

Finally, women manage the river mouth and sea resources for cash and food. These river and sea resources include shells of all kinds and fish of all kinds which are edible. These resources are available and must be protected and harvested wisely. Cash and shell money is important for many uses such as weddings and feasting. Chief Paul Aitai concludes that women hold the key to `Are`Are’s livelihood at all levels.

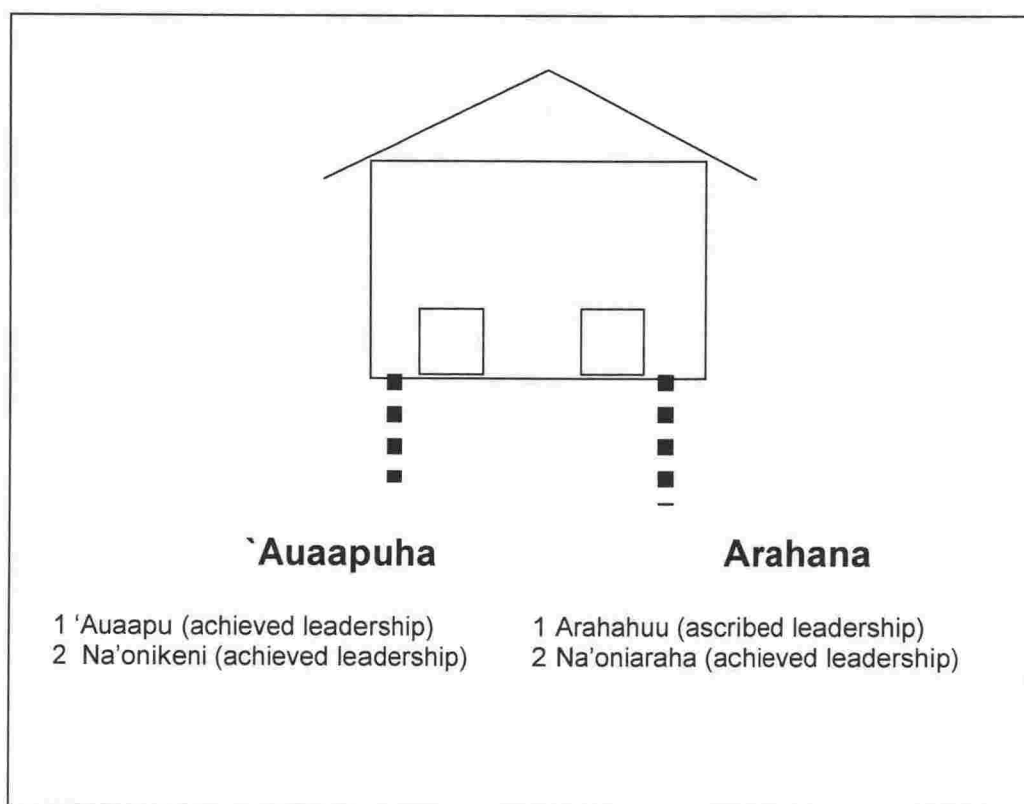
While the *arahana* leadership is ascribed within the *hahuaraha* house of chiefs, it is achieved within the *namoarahana* and *arahanimane* house of chiefs. The ‘*auaapu*’ system is similar in nature but every women of `Are`Are can be an achieved leader.

*Arahana* leadership system could be utilised by the churches and the government in serving the rural population.

*'Auaapu* system is practised and known but is not formally organised. Previous efforts by men during the Maasina Ruru and 'Are'Are Maasina eras failed. I argue that 'Are'Are women did not take the initiative to establish the *'auaapuha* leadership structure at that time when given the opportunities. As Chief Maheana puts it, *we (men) tried our best to assist the women but they refuse to take up the challenge*. On the same note, John Houkuru said that *during the Maasina Ruru days, we established a council for women and appointed women leaders for different areas such as healer, judge, financial controller and community work but it died eventually*. I argue that women were ill prepared and driven by men and from men's perspective to administer an initiative that was not of their making. It was more a directive from the men leaders rather than by consensus. However, 'Are'Are women failed to seize the moment, when the opportunity was given. Recently, the "West 'Are'Are Rokotaniken Association" established in 1999, covering the *Arahanimane and Hahuarahana* house of chiefs' subdivision has been slowly making some headway towards formalising the *'auaapu* leadership in 'Are'Are. This is an initiative by women and for women with little input from the men. This initiative is already gaining momentum throughout West 'Are'Are and generally supported by men, chiefs and church leaders. I believe that 'Are'Are women will see this development through and organise *'auaapuha* leadership in its own timing.

Finally, given the categorisation concept of men and women in the 'Are'Are society, it is acknowledged that both the desirable and the undesirable types co-exist in both genders. A person's character and attributes are influential factors for leadership.

Describing both systems of leadership in 'Are'Are, I argue that both systems are relevant and useful as demonstrated in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Leadership Systems in `Are`Are**

Both leadership structures for men and women are informal and community based.

### **Challenges to the `Are`Are Two Leadership Structures**

Today, `Are`Are traditional leadership structures are being challenged by five factors which may be considered as barriers to their leadership. These includes: absence of good leaders, introduction of cash, rapid social change, political influence and church influence. I will provide a brief discussion and analysis of each of these five factors.

Firstly, the above sentiment by one of the informants, *there is no one good left, they have all died*, recaptures people's memories of the past `Are`Are leaders during the Maasina Ruru movement and the `Are`Are Maasina eras. Leaders such as the late Namo Harisimae, late Nori, late Waiparo, late Alick Nono'ohimae and many others who also have died, leaving a footprint of strong leadership that mobilised `Are`Are men and women in developing `Are`Are. These leaders were all men. The death of the late Paramount chief Alick Nono'ohimae in 1984 signalled the question of his replacement. That was immediately resolved when Sir David Kausimae, his very close relative and an outstanding leader of his time was elected to that position. In addition, Sir Peter Kenilorea, another outstanding leader emerged with Sir David



Kausimae at that time and was recognised by the 'Are'Are people. The 'Are'Are people placed their hope and confidence in these two men and gave them the title *Houra* meaning King of 'Are'Are who will move 'Are'Are forward and provide leadership. To the 'Are'Are people, the leadership vacuum left by the late Nono'ohimae was filled immediately. In the early 1990s, Andrew Nori emerged on the leadership scene, though his leadership has been criticised by many ordinary 'Are'Are men and women for his role in the recent civil conflict.

Interestingly, Sir David Kausimae and Sir Peter Kenilorea became great and famous politicians. The nature of their roles as national leaders required them to abandon the rural 'Are'Are communities physically and reside in Honiara. Sir Peter Kenilorea became the first Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and led the country to independence in 1978 and continued his political career up into the nineties. Similarly Sir David Kausimae became the 'Are'Are pioneer politician since the sixties up until the nineties. He held various ministerial posts in the government during his political years. The third person who emerged on the scene, Andrew Nori, a lawyer by profession became a politician as well and held various ministerial posts during his time. He was vocal as the MEF spokesman during the recent civil conflict.

The active involvement of these three important 'Are'Are leaders in Parliamentary leadership of Solomon Islands was focussed on national issues, but for the 'Are'Are leadership, it meant 'Are'Are people having little access to them for meetings and discussions, 'Are'Are people seeing less of them where and when necessary and their giving less attention to the leadership needs of 'Are'Are people. If an 'Are'Are leader desires to see one of them, he/she will have to travel to Honiara which is costly. The absence of these leaders at the rural 'Are'Are community level created again this leadership vacuum the second time. The leadership vacuum is still in existence today and the search for good leaders to fill the vacuum continues. Quite sadly, some chiefs have followed their footsteps not as politicians but as urban drifters to Honiara.

Secondly, the introduction of cash has distorted and undermined leadership. Cash comes in various forms to the 'Are'Are, either by production of cash cropping such as copra, logging or in business entrepreneurship. Wealth in the form of cash is

becoming an influential force when it comes to selection of leaders. Wealthy men with a significant amount of cash can easily influence the community's selection processes, capitalising on the people's need of cash. In such circumstances, cash greatly influence the decision-making process rather than personal attributes promoted by the 'Are'Are leadership standard. It was also noted that the chief's voluntary roles in the community are being challenged by salaried positions within the formal government and church employees either in the community or national level.

Thirdly, since the 'Are'Are society has come into contact with the outside world, a significant number of changes have challenged 'Are'Are cultural leadership values and attributes. People with high qualification and substantial amounts of cash influence decision-making. Social issues such as alcoholism, attitudinal and behavioural problems are evident with the younger generation. There is also an increased incidence of teenage pregnancies and people are now getting married at a younger age compared to before. The younger generations lack respect for older people while some chiefs also abuse their position. Also individualism is becoming evident instead of communalism. To'ononi, a cultural knowledgeable mother put it this way at the Waisisi forum, *before, we often say our house, our garden or our land but now we say, my house, my garden, my land*. Individualism has undermined leaders' potential to lead. These developments are showing evidence of weak leadership and urban migration.

Fourthly, the political system promotes competitiveness rather than the consensus decision-making system that is familiar in 'Are'Are leadership culture. This competitiveness is reflected in the election process in which different candidates campaigned to attract voters. In the process of campaigning, the candidates rally against each other, make promises, give gifts and hosts feasts. In reality, this practice often confuses people, resulting in enmity and confusion. Cash from politicians also plays an influential role in manipulating rural voters to the candidate's advantage. Election is not by dialogue and meeting but by a ballot paper, a show of hands or "ayes and no's" which have replaced traditional process. Competition is undermining co-operation.

Finally, the various churches operating in 'Are'Are have their own leadership structure which does not always embrace some of the 'Are'Are leadership values. Rightly so, John Houkuru (2003) lamented *that churches will just have to provide good leadership as they now have the population. For us, the heathens in the bush, the population are no longer with us. Therefore we do not have anyone to lead. The population have come down to the coast. It is you the church, the coastal chiefs, educators and doctors (health) must provide leadership. This is important to avoid a generation of insane people.* Churches are faced with the challenge to design a practical mechanism in which church and 'Are'Are culture can work together hand in hand in providing leadership rather than opposing each other.

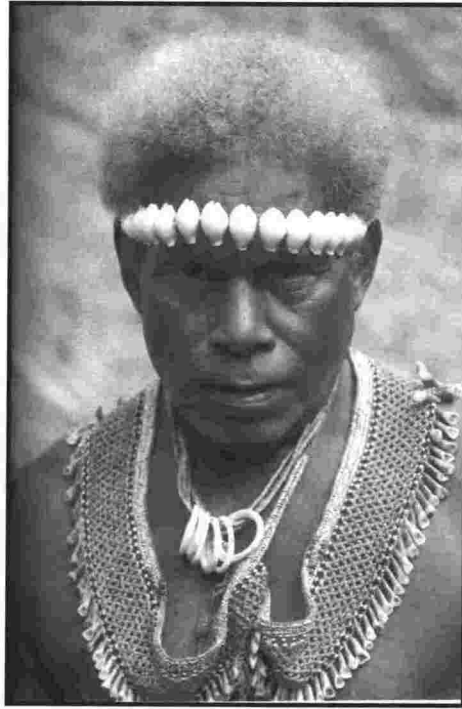
## Conclusion

Leadership structures exist in 'Are'Are for both men (*arahana*) and women (*'auaapuha*). These two leadership structures were developed by and for the 'Are'Are people through historical processes. They feature *Warato'o* and *rioanimae*, through cultural feasting, through gender responsibilities and through the *nima paina* concept. The 'Are'Are society recognises that both men and women play important roles for the leadership and the administration of 'Are'Are. Both men and women are essential for the continuation and development of the 'Are'Are society. 'Are'Are cannot progress forward without women's active involvement with the men at all levels of decision-making nor will it progress without men. In doing so, the *'auaapuha* structure will need support and recognition as the foundational base for women in leadership at all levels in 'Are'Are society. On the other hand the *arahana* leadership structure is intact and operating at the lower level but has remained non-functional for some time at the societal level as expressed at the Waisisi leaders' forum in 2004, stating that the *arahana leadership does not have the teeth to bite.*

In both leadership structures, greater emphasis is placed on good character building and personality which are essential for good leadership. A good leader, according to the 'Are'Are society is a person who embraces attributes such as wisdom, kindness, love, care, servanthood, honesty, hospitality, feast giving, listening, working together and the ability to communicate and address the public without abusing their rights and resources. However, finding a person with these attributes is often problematic

and sometimes a lengthy process. Despite many other issues facing 'Are'Are leadership such as introduction of cash and alternative leadership structures by the churches and government, good leadership is the ultimate goal and the most important commodity desired for 'Are'Are.

According to my survey of the literature, in combination with information provided generously to me by my informants, the gendered leadership models and attributes that I have outlined in this chapter serve as markers and guides for the 'Are'Are amidst changing times. I have not intended to suggest that 'Are'Are culture is static or unchanging, but I hope to have imparted some sense of the values and worldviews of 'Are'Are as they have been communicated to me. While 'Are'Are leadership is founded on the concept of "complementary but separate", Christianity has impacted on this concept. One of the churches operating in the 'Are'Are is the South Sea Evangelical Church and will be the focus of the next chapter.



**Photo 1: Late Paramount Chief Alick Nono'ohimae Source (Coppet & Hugo, 1978)**



**Photo 2: Chief Sir David Kausimae. Source (Coppet & Hugo, 1978)**



**Photo 3: Chief Maheana & Chief Dickson Maepaina. Source: Pollard A. 2003**



**Photo 4: Feasting – Separate Rows for Men, Waisisi. Source: Pollard A. 2004**



**Photo 5: Drum Beating (O'oo) Waisisi . Source: Pollard A. 2004**

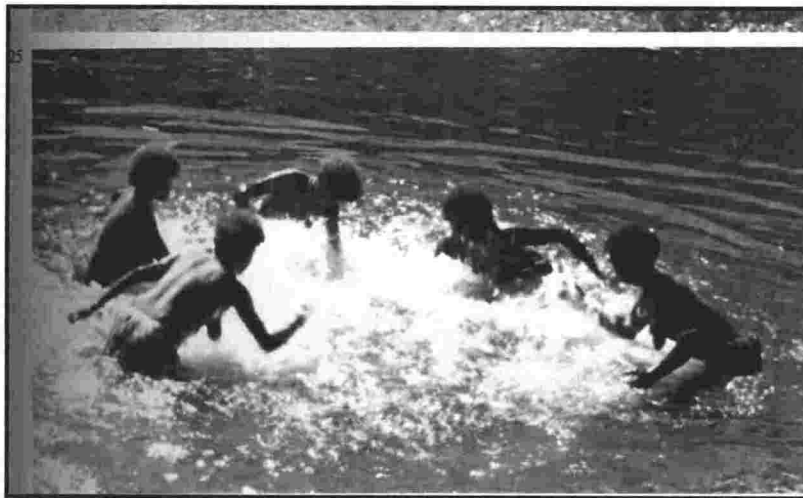


**Photo 6: Meeting house Waisisi. Source: Pollard A. 2004**





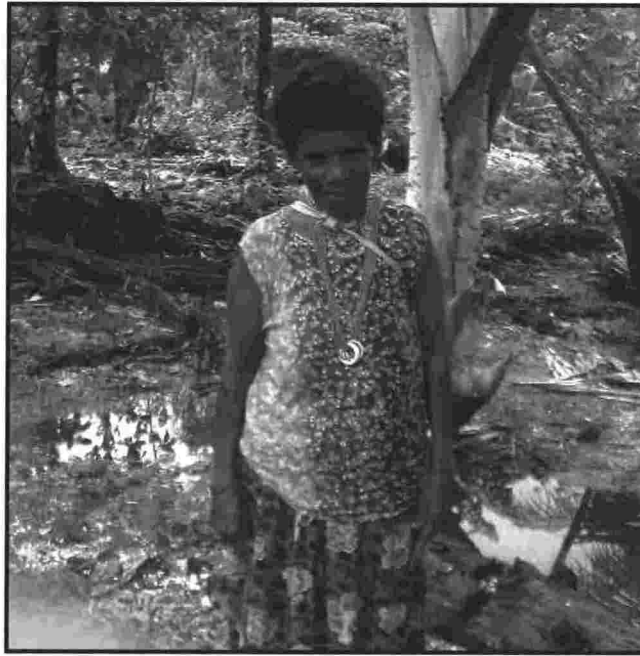
**Photo 7: Women playing Aunimako Source: (Coppet & Hugo, 1978)**



**Photo 8: Kiroha in the river Source: (Coppet & Hugo, 1978)**



**Photo 9: Waisisi Rokotanikeni. Source: Solomon Islands Museum, 1999**



**Photo 10: To'ononi at Waisisi. Source: Pollard A. 2004**



**Photo 11: Feasting – Separate Rows for Women, Waisisi . Source: Pollard A. 2004**

## CHAPTER FIVE: SOUTH SEA EVANGELICAL CHURCH (SSEC): COMPLEMENTARY AND SAVED TO SERVE

*I felt sure that I could go wherever men could* (Florence Young 1926:143)

### Introduction

One of the major forces impacting the 'Are'Are traditional society is Christianity. The dominant denominations in 'Are'Are are the Roman Catholic and the South Sea Evangelical Churches. Over the last few decades both the 'Are'Are culture and Church leaders have worked together in providing leadership for its people. This was demonstrated again during the past five years of the civil conflict in which both institutions played major roles in conflict resolution, peace initiatives and the strengthening of civil society. The churches are a significant vehicle at the community level for community interaction, religious activities, community leadership and essential services which dominate the daily routine of the rural population.

This chapter will explore the issues surrounding gender and leadership in the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC), which comprises 17 percent of the total population of Solomon Islands and is predominantly Malaitan according to Solomon Islands Government Population and Household census (1999). The discussions will cover the following: Background information on the formation of the SSEC, Gender roles of female and male missionaries and their leadership dynamics, Mission schooling, Lifurongo and Men's Bands and *Fikuanakini*. Discussions will focus on how these factors influence the absence and presence of women in the leadership of the SSEC.

There is little documentation available on gender and leadership in the SSEC by Solomon Islanders. There were however, reports, testimonies and writings from

European and native missionaries available from “Not In Vain” the SSEM magazine. Florence Young’s book, “Pearls from the Pacific” is one of the main texts for this chapter. Many of the arguments offered in this chapter are derived from my personal observations and experiences. My grandfather, the late Samson Maeniuta was a converted labourer in Queensland and my father the late Rev. Jesimiel Maeniuta was an SSEC ordained minister. My mother, Crystal Reresina was at one stage president of the ‘Are’Are *Fikuanakini* Association. I was born and raised as a Malaitan, ‘Are’Are SSEC woman and went to SSEC Gwaidingale Girls primary school and attended the SSEC Su’u National Secondary School. I was, and continue to be actively engaged with the ‘Are’Are and Honiara SSEC *Fikuanakini* activities. I am currently an adherent of the SSEC.

Some explanation is necessary for the terms used in this chapter. There are four words that are commonly used. The first word “Kanaka” is used interchangeably with other words such as “boys”, “natives”, “islanders”, “labourers” and “locals”. The terms refer to the indigenous Solomon Islanders or other Melanesian people such as the Ni Vanuatu who worked at the Queensland sugarcane plantations; it is still widely used today for indigenous people. I acknowledge that these terms have negative connotations in colonial discourse but now have been reclaimed and re-valued in decolonised pre-colonial counter discourses. It reflects the indigenous people’s identity and connectedness to their origin and existence.

The second word “teacher”, used in the context of SSEC refers to a principal church leader in a rural village and mission training school, not so much to a classroom or formal school setting. The usage of the word continues to change as the context of community church leadership and education undergoes changes today. The third word “school” commonly known in Solomon Islands today as “sukulu” or “sukuru” refers to bible teaching classes and church services. Later on as the church established training schools, it encompassed both the bible schools’ training, primary/secondary/tertiary schooling and village church services. Today “school” is still used widely for any form of schooling and going to church in a rural village setting.

The fourth word “heathen” in the context of SSEC refers to the people who retain their spirituality in the form of worshipping their ancestral spirits and living in obedience to their traditional rule and standards. They continue to offer sacrifices to ancestral spirits, do not eat certain foods with women and practice cultural rituals. These people live in small hamlets in the bush interior and some in the coastal areas away from Christian and Western influence. I do not use this term prejudicially but recognise the negative connotations it carries.

In order to understand the pre-Christian spiritual and ideological context for the development of the SSEC, I begin this chapter with a brief overview of Solomon Islands traditional religious practices.

### **Solomon Islands Traditional Religious Practices**

The context in which Christianity first came into contact with the islanders was defined by the fact that spirituality and religious rituals have always been central to the way Solomon Islanders conducted themselves. People had some knowledge about the creator, the one who sustains, provides and protects them. People’s belief in their ancestral spirits is at the heart of their indigenous religion (Clark, 1989: 174). Priestly roles such as prayers and offering sacrifices to the ancestors were commonly practiced. Skull sites for offering sacrifices to ancestral spirits by custom priests are evident in different parts of Solomon Islands. The people who were actively involved and operated in the spiritual realm had a strong belief in their ancestral spirits and rituals. Various rituals were often chanted for different activities such as wars, yam harvesting, births and deaths. A significant number of indigenous custom stories have pointed to different gods (Fugui, 1989: 76-77). Different cultural groups have their own names for their gods, for example in ‘Are’Are, *warato’o* means the god that creates through the power of the word, the one who brings prosperity, sufficiency, empowerment, blessings and the god that owns all necessities for livelihood. Ancestral spirits are manifested in the birds of the air, the fish and animals of the sea and various animals on land (Naitoro, 1993: 28-30)

Solomon Islanders’ lives were intertwined with their spirituality. Changing from their traditional religion to another religion was a difficult process. Andrew Thornley

added that the act of conversion, "the renouncing of traditional beliefs and an acceptance of Christianity" (Thornley, 1993: 77), produced significant changes to the islanders' way of life and their traditional religion. The acts of cannibalism, wife strangling and ancestral worship were reduced. He argues that while the islanders were prepared to be influenced by the Europeans in bringing about change to their customs, they did not automatically see those changes to be the influence of the Christian God. Instead many islanders saw Jehovah as a special god of the white people, existing separately from their own deities (Thornley, 1993). Though the aims of the missionaries were initially religious and aimed at conversions based on the Bible, it was accompanied by the attempt at civilising the islanders to some extent (Langi, 1992; Thornley, 1993). In addition, competition for souls was evident amongst the different missionaries and churches (Langi, 1992; Ross, 1978). Kietzman and Smalley (1981) argued that missionaries have been an agent of culture change but these changes are minimal compared to the impact caused by Western business, politics and education.

In the case of Solomon Islands, conversion to Christianity began in the late nineteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church arrived in 1845, due to the murder of Bishop Epalle, the team abandoned Solomon Islands and only returned in 1889. The church of Melanesia came in 1849, Methodism in 1902, the SSEC in 1904 and the Seventh Day Adventist in 1914. Almost 90 percent of the total population of Solomon Islands are closely affiliated to these five main churches (Bennett, 1987; Boutilier, 1978; Ernst, 1994; Forman, 1978; Fox, 1958, 1967; Fugui, 1989; Golden, 1993; Hilliard, 1969; Laracy, 1969; Ross, 1978; Young, 1926).

### **The Formation of the South Sea Evangelical Church and its Philosophy**

The South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) had its beginnings in the Pacific labour trade (Hilliard, 1969: 41) which took place in Queensland from 1870 onwards. Around the 1880s, the labour trade had a firm grip on the Melanesian labourers. Amongst other Melanesian islands such New Hebrides now known as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands was a major supplier of labourers to the Fiji and Queensland

Sugarcane plantations. There were estimated to be around 15,000 labourers from Solomon Islands alone who were imported into Queensland, where an estimated three quarters were from Malaita, the main recruiting ground for labourers. The labourers were mostly men, less than five percent of the recruits from the South Pacific were women (Hilliard, 1969; Moore, 1993).

Various missions such as the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Presbyterian Mission and the Melanesian Mission were already at work in Melanesia in the 1870s and onwards, but the recruited labourers were officially listed as “heathens” (Hilliard, 1969; Young, 1926). This is easily understood when noting that most of the labourers were recruited from Malaita, the island known for violence, cannibalism, murder and which had little or no contact with the mission. Miss Florence Young, the founder of SSEC described the labourers as “merry, warm-hearted and very responsive to kindness” but on the other hand “they were men and not children, men with fierce passions who came from lands where savage murders and cannibalism were freely practised” (Young, 1926: 39). Terminology used by missionaries for the islanders such as “black fellows, dark faces, raw heathens with no knowledge of God, raw savages, darkened souls and swarthy fellows” implied a perception of the need for Christianising.

Florence S.H. Young was born in Motueka, New Zealand, a daughter of a judge and a preacher. She had her education both in New Zealand and England. Florence Young was described as “a wealthy spinster and a member of a prominent Plymouth Brethren family, a woman of determination and drive, stout and bespectacled, with a buoyant Evangelical faith and overwhelming assurance of the will of God” (Hilliard, 1969: 42). She was seen as a powerful Victorian woman who grasped the opportunity to Christianise the “heathen”. Her personal testimony as “passed from death unto life”, (a transaction) meaning an act of spiritual transformation took place in her life at a prayer meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1874 gave her the drive to pursue her new purpose in life.

Within the ‘Are’Are context, in my view, Florence Young would be associated with the *‘auaapu nukunuku* category of women who are of a higher status and quite distinct from ordinary women. She was highly respected, supported by her family



members and was single. Her strength and courage came from her family who were rich, of a middle class and had human resources that she could draw on. I argue that although she was a woman, she was more closely associated with the men's sphere than the ordinary women. Her immediate circle of leaders was men which she was able to train and influence. Being placed in such an influential position with the men gave her the opportunity to influence the decision-making processes. She was also able to work with both men and women at the upper level. The ordinary women were at the periphery and were not able to interact with her on an equal footing due to language barrier.

Ordinary 'Are'Are women or Malaitan women generally on the outer circle would render her their respect not only as a white woman but also because of her status and influential roles with the men. Their access to her was mediated through the island men of the inner circle who knew her language and the proper protocol to approach her. Generally ordinary 'Are'Are women or Malaitan women would recognise her leadership dynamics but at a distance. For ordinary women, leadership skills were acquired through the island teachers in the village schools (Ripiapu: 2004, 2005 personal conversation )

My personal view is that usually the ordinary Malaitan women admired and acquired skills and knowledge from women missionaries who lived and worked with them. The European woman who built relationships with them and identified with them at their level and with their issues became their best role model. The relationship between the European women missionaries and the native women were limited to those who could communicate in English or Pidgin, those who lived at the mission stations and those whose husbands were teachers. From my experience as a daughter of a native teacher, language barrier and the perceptions that the ordinary native women have about themselves as lacking skills in writing and reading, poorly clothed, unclean and unable to speak English made it difficult for both European female missionaries and native women to have intimate relationships. For example, my mother locked up my elder sister in a room when visited by a European missionary because my sister was not well clothed, dirty and could not speak English. My mother perceived my sister as unfit to come face to face with a European missionary. Only native women who were accessible to European women

missionaries were able to develop relationships with them. European women missionaries were closer to the native men teachers, who were trained, spoke English, were well clothed, of a different standing and were in positions of leadership.

Presumably, Florence Young perceived her contact with the Kanakas as the only opportunity to convert them and saw their need for God, while the Europeans had greater access to Christianity. She immediately began a Sunday class with ten boys and one house girl on the Young's estate in 1882 (D.C., 1951; Hilliard, 1969; Young, 1926). The classes were conducted in Pidgin English as the medium of instruction and the Bible as the text book. Later on, regular evening classes were held as the number of converts increased. The islanders were taught singing, reading, writing, praying, cleanliness and the proper dress code. They were also taught to bring a friend through the "saved to serve" principle. There was a deep desire to see "complete change" take place in the boys' lives, as perceived by Miss Young and co-workers, for example, change from "fighting" to "peacefulness", "raw savages to "well behaved and quiet boys", "dark faces" to "happy and intelligent faces" and "dark heart" to a "clean heart" (Young, 1926: 41-45, 139, 151-152).

Such expectation was misunderstood and some islanders tried different methods to bring a friend to school such as by force, struggle or even payment (Young, 1926: 45-46). While many accepted the schooling ideal and the change that came with it, some resisted it and were frightened of it. This was expressed by one of the boys,

Me no want-im school. Suppose me come along school, by-and-by me no savee fight. Me go home long Island, man he kill-im me. Along Island altogether man he row, row, row all the time. Man he go asleep along bed, he hold'im spear, bow and arrow, gun along hand. Suppose he no got-im gun, some fellow man he come, he kill him quick (Young, 1926: 47).

This islander's hesitation to come to school was due to his fear of the change that school would have on him. This change would weaken his heart to fight back his enemy. He knew that fighting and quarrelling were common occurrences in the islands and that men demonstrate strength through fighting and killing. He must

possess weapons such as spears and arrows even when he was asleep. Without spears, arrows and guns, his security was at stake. For him, change as the result of schooling would not equip him to live and survive on his own island. Another group of Islanders added, "we fright along school, suppose we come along school we get sick and die" (Young, 1926: 131). Changing from their traditional religion to another was against the wish of their ancestral spirits and could result in serious illness and death. Some men feared coming closer to the class room or even coming face to face with a missionary.

The islanders displayed fear but at the same time were curious to explore what Schooling was about and what it offered. They needed time to observe and analyse schooling before making their decision to change from their traditional religion to this new religion.

However, many islanders who readily accepted Christianity and changed from their traditional religion spoke highly of the changes and spiritual transformation that took place in their lives. Christianity offered freedom and a new purpose in life compared to traditional religion. But detaching themselves from their traditional religion may also have implied detaching themselves from their people and community. One of them testified,

I gave my heart to Him and He save me. Now I praise God more and more for his power to save a poor dark heathen man like me (Young 1926:130).

Many similar testimonies were shared by the converted islanders. These testimonies also reflected the way the missionaries expressed their perception of the indigenous people (Young, 1926, Sullivan, 1946). The previous quote illustrates, in my view how the missionaries transferred their perceptions of the islanders as poor, dark and heathen and ultimately the islanders viewed themselves in this way. It could also be the way Christians speak about themselves in relation to their God. I add that culturally, it is also common and acceptable for islanders to express such negative perception of themselves rather than positive expressions. The converted islanders' personal testimonies not only reflected spiritual transformation but also the outward physical transformation such as the wearing of clothes and personal grooming. Such

a mindset questions the missionary's perception of the pre-Christian social and individual characters.

In 1886, the Queensland Kanaka Mission (QKM) was formed with the aim that "God may be glorified in the salvation of many souls for whom He gave His only Begotten Son" (Young, 1926: 47). The primary objective was to teach the South Sea Islanders the way of salvation. In fulfilment of this objective, the school was flourishing among the labourers in Fairymead in Queensland with an average attendance of eighty boys at each Sunday and forty at every evening class. The women teachers dominated the initial stages of the mission's activities which involved elementary work at a slower pace requiring patience and perseverance with the islanders, thus showing leadership "as a process of influence". Men became involved in the mission much later and assisted especially in touring and more co-ordinating roles, conducting classes in the evenings at other estates (Young, 1926: 42).

Ms Young had a clear focus for the mission to be based on two principles which were "salvation before education and civilisation", and that the mission be "self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating" (Young, 1926: 39). The QKM was basically evangelical and unsectarian by character. Financial support was along the lines of total dependence on God's wisdom and faith gifts (Hilliard, 1969: 47; Young, 1926).

The "saved to serve" ideology became the driving force behind further conversion of the islanders and the ability to be a teacher in their own work environment. The school and the work of the mission progressed rapidly amongst the labourers. The converted islanders served as teachers in the mission as well as serving as labourers in the plantation. Leadership in the form of serving was ably demonstrated by these native leaders.

In 1900, all Melanesian labourers were to be repatriated back to their islands as the Australian government passed an Act to stop further recruitment of Pacific labourers. The QKM did not welcome the news but saw the repatriation exercise as an opportunity for the labourers to spread Christianity to their own home lands. The labourers did not welcome the repatriation news either. Naitoro added that many

Malaitans had mixed feelings about their deportation and the end of the labour trade. Their preference was to remain in Queensland and work to earn some money (Naitoro, 1993: 54). These mixed feelings are well expressed in a letter written by one of the deported labourers, Mr Jack Malayta to May Robinson of the Selwyn Mission, Mackay, Queensland,

...Why did white people bring us away from our Islands, and teach us a better way of living, and best of all, teach us to love and fear God, if they now want us to go back into heathen darkness again? Are there no kind hearts among Christian white people who, for the love of our one God, will stand by us and help us in this our trouble, so that we may stay in peace where we can have our school and church and serve God, and not be driven back to places where the fear and love of God find no room yet in man's heart? (Laracy, 1983: 44)

Many deported converted islanders searched for an explanation for their deportation. Why were they driven out of Queensland? Had they done anything wrong? Could the missionaries help them in this time of trouble? Mr. Jack Malayta raised the question that if the white people knew the true God as they taught, how can they send us back to our land which was full of sin (Laracy, 1983). The mission was small and did not intervene nor challenged the decision made by the government in this troublesome situation for their converted island friends. In my view the mission could have questioned such a government policy and assisted their island friends. Instead, more preaching, prayers and baptisms were conducted to prepare them to survive the evils in their own islands.

Many native Christians were sent with letters of accreditation so that they could be absorbed by any of the churches already operating in their islands. One of the unique examples was Mr Peter Ambuofa, a labourer from North Malaita who went back to his home in 1894 and started his own school in Malu'u. Although he was challenged by his own people because of this new religion, the women and children were the first to join him while many men opposed him. Some other labourers who returned to their homes started similar schools in their villages while many returned back to their traditional religions.

Women's response to Christianity was swift while men resisted it at first. This could be explained for the following reasons. First, generally, throughout Malaita and even in Melanesia, women's presence is associated with special power that can overpower other spiritual powers. Such power was reflected recently in warring situations, for example in Bougainville and Solomon Islands (Liloqula & Pollard, 2002; Sr. Garasu, 2004). With this new religion, women's presence and power was used to counter this new spiritual power. Bobby Kusilifu, former SSEC president adds that it was a religious power encounter between the new religion and the traditional religion (Kusilifu, 2004: personal communication). In addition, Salathiel Tapuhana of Surairo village said that children are often attached to their mothers. In cases where children were sick with no access to health care, the mothers brought their sick children to the church for prayer and healing (Tapuhana, 2004: personal communication). Furthermore, Andrew Fanasia, vice president of the national SSEC adds that in fact women were already searching for a role in the spiritual arena where men dominate within the cultural sphere. For example, it was the men who fed the sharks and offered sacrifices to the ancestral gods. Women were ready to embrace Christianity (Fanasia, 2004: personal communication).

Secondly, Dr. Kabini Sanga, senior lecturer at the Victoria University of Wellington adds that Malaita men were slow in accepting any changes. Accepting a new religion was at first not possible. Men took time to observe and study the new religion before committing themselves to it. For many Malaitan men, Christianity is still being critically analysed (Sanga, 2004: personal communication). In addition, Andrew Fanasia commented that island men related to God as the white men's God and not of their ancestral spirits. Men took time to assess this new God whom missionaries have presented to be more powerful than their ancestral spirit.

Thirdly, Melanesian or Malaitan men's roles as chiefs, warriors, feast givers and priests allowed very little room for change to this new religion. Their position of power, status and wealth in their traditional religion challenged the Christian leadership principles of humility, unity, love and servanthood. In cases of religious power encounters, priests were often the last men to leave after offering their last prayers for their tribes and community. From the warriors and priests positions, this new religion was seen as disempowering and weakening for Malaitan men. It

stripped men of their power, status and responsibilities. On the other hand, women embraced Christianity as a religion that gave them religious freedom and empowerment. Women who were not involved in ancestral worship such as shark feeding and offering sacrifices were in fact ready and open to Christianity. Christianity was appealing to them as it gave them freedom to move around and lead in church activities. They could enter the church building through the same door as the men and have equal access to the teaching from the pulpit as the men. They could sit near the pulpit and receive direct teaching of the word of God in the same way as the men. They could lead church services just the same as the men. They could make decisions when it came to church activities. Living under their ancestral spiritual powers and expectations was burdensome. Christianity gave women greater access to leadership, freedom of movement and a change of purpose. Andrew Fanasia, in his own analysis of this episode concluded that it was also God's own work of grace that women and children embraced Christianity first compared to men.

In 1904, Solomon Islands branch of the QKM was established and the first Council was formed consisting of eight members, two of which were women. Florence Young was appointed the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the first Solomon Islands Mission branch. Solomon Islands branch operated as the QKM in nature and character (Young, 1926: 141-142). She made her first trip to Solomon Islands, especially to Malaita, in 1904, in response to requests from the repatriated Christians in the islands such as "come and help us" and "send us a teacher". Florence Young responded appropriately and demonstrated leadership "as a process of influence"



White man he go along Queensland, he take-im country belong black fellow, now by-and-by he say, "Altogether coloured man, you clear out. This country belong white man (Young, 1926: 152).

That resentment was softer towards the missionaries. They would say "Yes" to the missionaries but not to other white men. They feared that once given the opportunity, white man would take control of their land, as observed in Queensland.

In 1907, the QKM came to an end but produced around 2484 baptised Pacific Island Christians, out of which 734 were from Solomon Islands, most of which (589) were from Malaita. The QKM was renamed the "South Sea Evangelical Mission" (SSEM). The mission work shifted from Queensland to the islands, based at One Pusu in 'Are'Are. The number of European women missionaries in these early years outnumbered the European men missionaries, and women dominated the area of education, health, community development and administration, while men dominated construction and plantation areas. The number of missionaries also rose from sixteen in 1914 to thirty six in 1939 (Hilliard, 1969; Young, 1926).

SSEC was inaugurated as a national indigenous church in March 1964 at an important conference held at Ambu local church on Malaita which gave greater opportunity for native men and women leaders to map the future of the SSEC in an indigenous fashion that was of their own making. The indigenous church idea was to be embraced based on the principles of "self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating" (Editor, 1975b; Griffiths, 1982). However, William Smalley (1981) argued that the three "self's" were not necessary elements of the indigenous church. To him, indigenous church encompassed living and socialising together as a group of believers, where transformation took place out of felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scripture. The church was managed according to the local context and environment in which the society existed and operated, rather than being controlled by any overseas mission (Smalley, 1981: 495-501). According to Ms Sullivan (1933: 5-8) "indigenous church" was characterised by nine principles which were: trained native human resources, clean break from heathenism, utilisation of local materials, work without remuneration, acceptable dress code, offerings, training, self-sufficiency and discipline.

Historically, the SSEC's main focus was on the spiritual dimension of its adherents, and economic developments were sidelined. Although the Young brothers owned sugarcane plantations in Queensland and a coconut plantation at Baunani, Malaita in 1911, they were not business ventures of the SSEC. It was noted that the SSEC was involved in shipping and small milling (Boutilier, 1978: 146). In the 1970s, the Alliance Training Association of Solomon Islands (ATASI) was formed to relieve the SSEC of involvement in any business activities. ATASI was seen as a business arm of the church and operated logging and timber milling at One Pusu and at Atori, east of Malaita (Naitoro, 1993: 18). The ATASI also operated a supermarket, a hardware shop and a shipping company in Honiara. These business activities were developed to assist the church in its financial commitments. Today, these business ventures no longer exist.

### **Gender Roles: Various But Significant.**

The story of the SSEC comprises various influential roles which missionary women and men, both Europeans and natives, played in the initial stages, in its general affairs and in the overall development of the SSEC. Their roles as mothers/fathers, teachers, evangelists, preachers, administrators, planters, builders, sailors and nurses/doctors, contributed to the historical significance of Christianising and civilising the natives and Solomon Islands as a nation state.

#### **The European Women and Men's Missionary Roles: Partnering in leadership**

The female missionaries took a leading role in the areas of Christianising, education, health, administration and leadership within the mission. They established mission stations and mission schools and as nurses, their role in the health sector reached out to the communities. Women missionaries displayed their leadership capacity from the birth of the mission up until the 1960s when native teachers slowly emerged as leaders at the Association and national level.

Firstly, as pioneer missionaries, women played multiple roles, from management to that of cook. Ms Sullivan was a renowned principal of One Pusu School and the founder of the *Fikuanakini* and Men's band. Joan Deck was another vibrant example.

During her seven years, stationed at Ngongosila, east of Malaita, she travelled with native men teachers to the bush and along the coasts, conducting meetings with the people. She was the first European women who journeyed across Malaita on foot. She was the first principal of Afio Girls School. As principal, she managed the school, supervised building and repair work and applied first aid care to ill students (Boutilier, 1984; Young, 1926). In the 1970s, Dorothea Magor established a programme entitled "Rural Domestic" in which a selected team of island women toured rural communities and conduct workshops for women on various topics such as Bible study, child evangelism, health, cleanliness, first aid and cooking (Magor, 1977: 7). In recognition of the missionary women's roles in the field, James Boutilier (1984) stated,

Female missionaries fulfilled not only their traditional roles as wives, housekeepers, cooks, and educators but also male roles as carpenters, overseers, and supercargoes (Boutilier, 1984: 185).

Boutilier argues that Joan Deck's example mirrored masculinity in many single women missionary activities. However, they failed to demonstrate the expected traditional female roles of a mother as many of them never married or bore children. From my view, the single female missionaries' roles draws equivalents to the *'aauapu nukunuku* roles in leadership. However, *'aauapu nukunuku* play some significant roles in childcare within her family and community. Single women missionaries outnumbered missionary wives and were able to move around the islands freely.

Female missionaries were well positioned to interact freely with island men and women through their roles as teachers, nurses and administrators. In an era marked by the absence of formal education, the missionary's effort in teaching the islanders to read and write was paramount. Although they were faced with some difficulties in interacting with unconverted men due to cultural taboos, the conversion of these men broke down those barriers. Generally, it was the women missionaries who influenced the lives of the island men and women through teaching, as teachers and leaders. On the other hand missionary women and men learned island people's language and ate

local food. This is indeed leadership as “a process of influence” and “power to empower” the native people.

Considering the livelihood of the islanders, the European missionary women gave very little or no attention to the agriculture and gardening sector which were the native women's domain and were the basic essentials for survival, social and economic independence. The native women's lives, roles and leadership were vested in their garden as food producers and reproducers, in herbal plants as healthcare givers and in crafts. The European missionary's lack of interest in these areas distanced them from teaching native women in leadership. I argue that one, female European missionaries lack skills in agriculture and second, the native women were already experts in subsistence agriculture. This re-enforced the mission's aim whose interests were not in gardening, but in Christianising, administration and schooling.

Reading and writing skills were important for the formal education and church spiritual activities, but it was not a necessity for rural survival. Female European missionaries were not directly involved in transferring leadership skills that enabled native women to lead at national level as change agents on national issue. Instead, European missionary women transferred leadership skills to the native men and the few women who were around them in the mission stations and mission schools. Transferring leadership skills to native women was only evident through the native teachers, girls schooling and the *Fikuanakini*. Today as observed at the Honiara SSEC central church, only men and expatriate women are granted permission to preach and stand at the pulpit while native women are prohibited. This picture is different to the other smaller, village churches in which women do lead and preach at the pulpit. This again reflects women's active participation in leadership only at the periphery, the private and the informal structure. Women are often pushed aside in leadership in the formal, central and national church structure. Despite this scenario, female European missionaries have demonstrated great leadership in influencing and empowering native men and women as leaders.

The male missionary roles dominated the area of construction, buildings, engineering and seafaring. They worked with the women in the area of schooling, health, translation and administration. Touring the churches, baptising new converts and

preaching engagements at big church conferences was generally men's domain. Men dominated the public sphere while women's engagement in preaching and as guest speakers was limited to women's conventions and gatherings. Missionary European men demonstrated leadership both in men's traditional areas and working with women as teachers and administrators.

### **Native Teachers' Roles: Laying the Foundation**

#### ***The Native Teacher and Leadership***

The native teachers contributed significantly to leadership in the areas of teaching, preaching, baptising and establishing mission schools and stations as acquired from the European missionary men. They too provided the support mechanism in which the European missionaries operated since the Queensland era (Young, 1926: 127-131).

In the pioneering stage, the native teachers demonstrated leadership characteristics such as serving, courage, strength, perseverance, patience and commitment to Christianise the islands despite hostility and resistance towards Christianity. The native teachers identified sites for mission activities and began schools. They welcomed and showed love to the European missionaries and guided their exploration around the islands. They worked in partnership with the women in taking Christian teaching into the bush interiors to reach their "heathen" families, tribes and communities (Ne'e, 1948). When the work became tough and the seas were rough, native men were always there to assist European missionaries. Native men and European missionaries worked alongside each other even in some bush ministries as well (Hohimako, 1947; Vance, 1948).

Native teachers were seen as the principal men of the village, responsible for caring, ministering, teaching, counselling and helping out in the community life without any pay (Editor, 1975a: 12). They were self-sufficient by growing their own food. One very good example of such leaders was John Maedola whom Mr. Robert Vance described as a man who was selfless, a loyal helper, friend, teacher, advisor, volunteer and a prayer warrior. Mr Vance added that once John Maedola was offered some money for work performed on the mission launch but John replied,

No, thank you. I covenanted with God that I would never take wages for any work I did for Him and this is his work I have been doing (Vance: 13)

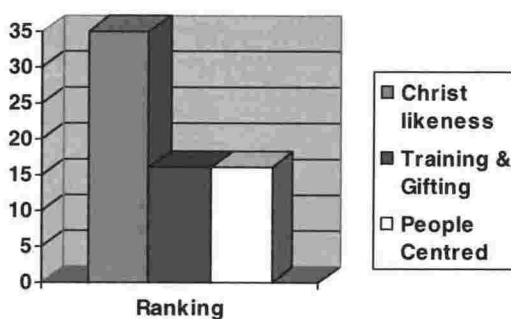
Native men teachers were trained to provide leadership at the village level and Association level on a voluntary basis. Native teachers' roles displayed in touring, teaching, preaching and managing their village church were outstanding. "Saved to serve" was very much the theme of the native teachers' leadership. Their faithful services in such hostile and difficult circumstances were not to be remunerated. Their responsibilities as native teachers which included being an overseer of a village church performing all the church and numerous community activities came at huge costs to the family. While promotion of self reliance and self sacrificial leadership was the key focus, the leader's survival was at stake. In such instances, household and family responsibilities rested heavily on the wife/mother. The "saved to serve" principle was appropriate for a subsistence rural economy but in today's economic environment, voluntarism is challenged by the move into a cash based society. In today's context, whether remuneration is reconsidered for the native teacher's leadership is an issue for SSEC. Native men teachers demonstrated influential and empowering leadership in the work of the church.

In 2003, I had the opportunity to consult with seventeen (seven females and ten males) SSEC leaders mostly from East and West 'Are'Are Associations, Honiara SSEC Association and the SSEC national head office. Two key questions raised with them amongst others were, what do you believe are characteristics of a good SSEC leader and are there such leaders present in the SSEC circle today? The seventeen SSEC leaders consulted were asked to name as many attributes as they could identify which they thought set a benchmark for a good SSEC leader. The leaders identified thirty two attributes.

These attributes were categorised into three groupings. The first group is "Christ like Personalities" which encompasses attributes such as submission, humility, truthfulness, living by example, trustworthiness, fairness, neutrality, Christian maturity, willingness, servanthood, commitment, faithfulness and wisdom. The second group is "Training and Gifting" which encompasses attributes such as

training, decision-making, intelligence, visionary, right gifting for the right job, public confidence, being hard working, being capable, administrative skills and communication skills. The third group is “People centred and Relationship” which encompasses attributes such as responding to and addressing people’s needs, being people centred, having a pastoral and shepherding heart, nurturing the relationship between the grass roots and national level, family commitment, cross-cultural skills, being mature and having a balanced view between spiritual and secular issues.

Figure 6 illustrates how the categories were ranked against each other.



**Figure 6: Preferred Leadership Attributes**

Selection of people for leadership by the church congregation or the church leaders is complex but generally is based on their personalities or the attributes they possess and display as a leader more than any other factors such as educational qualifications and *wantokism*. Who a person is and his/her personal attributes are significant. While personality is preferred, there is also the danger that personality can be easily influenced by poor leadership. It is still necessary that a critical analysis of a person’s skills, expertise and capabilities be carried out. Generally in SSEC so far, a man is preferred over a woman when it comes to selection of people for national and formal leadership. No woman has forwarded herself or nominated by men for SSEC national leadership as yet.

In response to the question of whether SSEC has a pool of people with the above attributes available within SSEC, only two out of the 17 respondents, said Yes, with comments such as *there are potential leaders out there but we have not tapped them*.



It's possible that a natural hesitation to be seen as putting themselves forward as being leaders affected the low numbers of positive responses to the question.

Seven people said No, with comments such as *it is difficult to find such leaders. We have to look for them.*

*No, I don't think we have any. There is lack of them.*

*No, we need quality leadership, one of servanthood with a servant heart.*

*No, I have not seen anyone like that in SSEC*

Eight people said that there are "some" or "only few" or "2-3" SSEC leaders out there who have the above attributes. In support of this, the following comments were made, *there are not enough, we will have to look for them.*

*It is hard to find such a person. It is a rare type of people. I have worked here for nine years but I have not seen such a person yet.*

*There are some but their lives do not stand out clear with regards to national issues at national levels.*

Emphasising the serious perception of a lack of suitable SSEC leaders with the above attributes, Cornelius Sirurao of Ta'arutona, compares his time under the SSEM leadership and how he sees 2003 leaders in his village and West 'Are'Are SSEC Association. He says,

*I cannot differentiate the leaders from the general public because I see that today's leaders do not undertake any training at One Pusu. If they cannot train, how can they lead? Secondly, I see that all the church pastors are not running any courses for their men and women who work and serve in the church.*

*During our time before, One Pusu was always full with students, attending school. Before, there were no school fees but many resources so it was good. For me, I went to One Pusu for training four times. I attended 1 three year course, 2 six months course and 1 one year course. I was called upon regularly to attend courses (ramai ru'u meaning come back again).*

Cornelius's story raised the question of how the SSEC is currently preparing its leaders for leadership. His recollection of the past at One Pusu, where leadership training was paramount does no longer exist.

Responses show that the SSEC has engaged in different ways of preparing their leaders but it is very minimal compared to the One Pusu era. These are: firstly, through training at the Bible schools and Bible Colleges both locally and overseas. Secondly, through attending leadership training courses at the national level organised by the Church, for example, there was a leadership conference held in 2002 in Honiara, conducted by Dr. Robert Orr from Canada. While it was hoped that such workshops would trickle down to the Association and local level, planning and scheduling of such workshops was lacking. Thirdly, women and men were encouraged to participate in leading morning and evening weekly services in their local churches as well as other church programmes such as youth, Sunday school, the *Fikuanakini* and Men's Band. It is noted that although leadership training is a critical area in the life of the national church, little attention is given to it. The women of West and East 'Are'Are at a forum held during their combined convention in October 2003 at Surairo local church called for leadership training as their priority issue. Leadership training is crucial for setting the direction for the future of the SSEC at all levels.

Getting into a formal leadership position within the Church leadership at all levels is by election as stipulated in the SSEC constitution. While in the past much prayer preceded an election, today it is different. It is observed that the Church election processes are conducted along the lines of a political election in which campaigning and lobbying were carried out amongst the candidates and voters. The issue of wantokism<sup>6</sup>, island domination and personality seem to dominate the election processes. Elections are held every four years at all levels. Table 1 illustrates the election for the National President post, in 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2004.

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<sup>6</sup> The social obligation that people have toward their kinfolk found, within Melanesia.

1993 candidates	Votes	1997 candidates	Votes	Yr 2000 Candidates	Votes	Yr 2004 Candidates	Votes
J. Waihura	14	Rev. J Waihura	24	Rev. J. Waihura	46	Rev. F. Suruma	62
B Kusilifu	54	B. Kusilifu	78	Peter Naotoro	6	Rev. J. Kubalua	27
J. Ofea	11	Rev. E. Takila	7	Rev. F. Suruma	26	Rev. S. Ereka	18
S. Ereka	14			Rev. E. Takila	47	Rev. E. Takila	61
E. Takila	w/d						
President won by 40 votes – A big margin.		President won by 54 votes – A big margin		President won by one vote.		President won by one vote	

**Table 1: SSEC President Elections**

From the 1993/97 election, Mr Bobi Kusilifu, from Malaita, won by a big margin. He was a recent graduate from the New Zealand Bible College in 1989 with a Bachelor of Theology Degree. He is married to Lois Aburi'i, the daughter of Beth and Jezreel Filoa. Jezreel Filoa was a prominent SSEC teacher and leader, the first Solomon Island SSEC missionary to Papua New Guinea and a national Superintendent of the SSEC in the early 80s. Bobi Kusilifu stood out clearly from the rest of the candidates. His absence in the 2000 and 2004 election was due to his return to study at the same institution in 2000 to 2003. Secondly, it is observed that the same candidates contest each election. There was little choice of candidates available. Winning by a one vote, in the 2000 and 2004 election, suggests there was no clear choice of leaders. All the above candidates were from Malaita, except for Rev. Jonathan Kubalua whose name appeared in the 2004 election. Rev. Kubalua is from Guadalcanal and Malaita. The post of President, previously Superintendent has been held by Malaitans since the formation of the church. SSEC leadership at the national level has always been dominated by Malaitans. Malaita was the centre of gravity in terms of the SSEC expansion and development. Most SSEC schools were established on Malaita and Malaita was famous for sending out native missionaries to the different parts of Solomon Islands. This reflected Malaita as the most populous island and also the main recruiting zone for the labour trade. According to Solomon Islands Government Report on 1999 Population and Housing Census (1999), 54% of the SSEC adherents are in Malaita. This figure did not take into account the SSEC Malaitan population in Honiara and in Guadalcanal when the census was taken.

In 2003, of the eleven staff that work at the head office, seven of them were directly appointed either by the Church Council, President, or former supervisor. Direct appointment is provided for under the powers of the Church Council which overrides the normal job advertisement of vacant posts within the church. Secondly, out of the eleven staff at the head office in 2003, ten were from Malaita while one was from Guadalcanal. In terms of gender, seven were men while four were women. The women occupied the positions of cleaner, typist, women's co-ordinator and homeopathic officer while the men occupy all the key posts such as President, General secretary, Education Director, Training Director and Mission Director.

Women's participation in church formal leadership structure is minimal. In 2005, there were two women co-ordinators at the national head office while two women represented women in the national executive board. This does not reflect women's roles in the informal structure of the church at all levels. Women have been instrumental in many church programmes at all levels and often outnumber men at the local level. Women's empowerment in the SSEC is demonstrated at the local church level, Association level, *Fikuanakini* ministry and supportive roles in the church at large. Sanga (2005) in his paper on "Pacific Leadership: hopeful and hoping" for the Pacific Leadership symposium held in Suva, Fiji, articulated that at the village level, "women's groups, often church based but also community based in particular are thriving, showing exemplary initiatives, planning and foresight" (Sanga, 2005: 3). He added that at this level, women have shown longevity, perseverance and commitment to their groups' vision and that of the wider community. Women at the village church level are the key implementers of any church programme and it is they who keep the village church alive and functioning.

On the national scene, the native teachers' roles during national crisis were challenged. As demonstrated during the Maasina Ruru movement, out of the nine head/high chiefs of the movement in Malaita, eight of them were prominent SSEM native teachers. The movement became anti-government, anti-mission and anti-doctor (medical) (Hilliard, 1969; Laracy, 1983; Ross, 1978; Tomlinson, 1949). While the Maasina Ruru movement was renowned for causing disruption to the mission work, it was for a good cause in enabling the mission to improve the standard of schooling and the establishment of the Associations in the islands. This same picture

was again depicted in the recent civil conflict in 1998-2003 where Malaita and Guadalcanal men were actively involved, these being the two provinces with a high population of SSEC adherents. While many questions were raised concerning the high proportion of SSEC militants, no clear answers have yet been articulated. Obviously, there is a need for training of the SSEC leaders to demonstrate honest leadership and nation building.

### ***Native Women and Leadership***

Native women were absent from the account of the initial development of the SSEC in Queensland. Moore (1993) argued that very few women, possibly less than five percent, were recruited from the Pacific as labourers to Queensland. Women were left in the village performing both their roles and the men's roles during their absence. Solomon Islands women's roles in leadership were minimal during the initial stages of the QKM. One of the known women was Rhoda Sango a Papua New Guinean, married to David Sango, a Solomon Islander who assisted her husband in establishing a school in Weather coast, Guadalcanal. Women embraced Christianity and were eager to learn and attend schooling. They worked closely with the native men, both at the coastal schools but also in the interior bush communities (J. Deck, 1954; Ne'e, 1948). In addition, women were trained and better positioned to be village leaders as good housewives, a concept that supported strongly the Malaitan cultural standards for women. Good motherhood encompassed attributes such as being hard working, industrious and of good moral standard. In addition to her motherly and community roles, church activities such as leading Bible classes, managing Sunday school, youth and *Fikuanakini* were also implemented. Women complemented the men's roles in leadership at the village level.

Women's leadership role and presence in the overall development of the SSEC cannot be underestimated. SSEC history has shown that women have been active in the SSEC leadership both in the past and to the present. The following women were known for pioneering work within the SSEC. The late Elizabeth Fatangasi, first native woman who assisted Miss Sullivan to establish the *Fikuanakini* in 1934, late Unity Unasi, the first native woman principle at Afio Girls School in 1974, late Hazel Nate, the first native woman teacher at One Pusu Bible College and a

missionary in 1974, Melody Ofea, the first women president for Guadalcanal Island Women's Conference in 1977, Beth Filoa, the first woman missionary to Papua New Guinea in 1959, Jemimah Eteri'i, the first woman president for Malaita Island Women's Conference in 1979 and late Jemimah Tuhaika, the first women national co-ordinator for women's work within SSEC at national level in 1989. Many prominent women leaders who were very outstanding in leadership at the Association level and at their local church level were not mentioned here. Their labour and contribution towards SSEC are acknowledged.

During my consultation in West 'Are'Are, 2003, there were three occasions where women were assigned pastoral roles to lead the local church in the absence of willing and capable men. These were at Ta'arutona local church in which Ms Esther Maepuri pastured the church for two years, at Karu'uu local church by Ms Hirisiko and at Surairo local church where Mrs. Betty Goulo became the Assistant pastor for two years. Women's performances were evaluated as effective and very good. They were faithful in performing their roles. Women were considered as backstop or "standby generators" in times of crisis. In addition, women also played wider roles such as leading church worship, preaching, praying and evangelism with the men. Generally women's leadership "as a process of influence" is evident in women's activities and at local village church's programmes and development.

### **Schooling: Teaching the Unschooled and Leadership.**

The two key terms "teacher" and "school" within the historical context of the SSEC Education system are distinct. A "school" basically referred to a group of labourers, meeting together on each Sunday to be taught "the way of salvation" and "teacher" referred to converted Christians who took the responsibilities of teaching and leading evening/Sunday classes. The Bible was the text book with no additional literature; some Bible verses were printed and pinned to the wall. Reading was learnt by pointing to the first word, repetition and memory. The Kanakas demonstrated keen interest to learn reading and writing (Boutilier, 1978: 145; Young, 1926). The new schooling system was different from the cultural system of education in which parents taught their children skills for life from childhood years. The mother, aunt or

grandmother was teacher to the girls while the father, uncle or grandfather was teacher to the boys.

Ms. Florence Young was the first teacher although inexperienced and assisted by fellow women such as Ellen Young and Ms Buchanan. It was the women who dominated the initial teaching arena. Later on, male missionaries joined. The term “teacher” was used for native men leaders and did not accommodate native women leaders. As this leadership role was transferred by the female European missionaries to the native men teachers, native women were denied the “teacher” title in the village context. Although women were significant in the village context, they were without a title. This again reflected the maleness of the new schooling system. “President” of a *Fikuanakini* would be given equivalent leadership status in a village context.

The primary and core objective of the schooling and teaching were not academic but religious. Schooling and teaching were guided by the philosophy of “salvation before education or civilisation” (Young, 1926: 39). In support of this, Norman Deck, one of the pioneer missionaries, cited in Boutilier (1978), described the underlying philosophy of SSEM training school to the Resident Commissioner Ashley in 1931 this way,

...we missionaries do give education, but such education is secondary and incidental to our main objective which is to preach the Gospel and establish an indigenous church on a knowledge of the word of God, and we are not ashamed of this objective (Boutilier, 1978: 147).

Teaching was focused on spiritual matters, even subjects such as reading, writing and elementary English were based on religious texts. Boutilier further added that the primary function of the SSEM schools in the islands was aimed at training young boys and often men of “proven character” in scriptures to send off to the field to preach and establish village churches as teachers or native missionaries. Training was basic in quality and limited in quantity. Despite this limitation, schools were established in different parts of Malaita, Guadalcanal and Makira.



The mission education programme was improved and changed into a system of graded indigenous schools in 1960s, to address the islanders' educational needs. It was the beginning of better primary and secondary schooling (Editor, 1974b, 1975a). Today SSEC has a total of eleven primary/secondary schools, five rural training centres and two pastoral training centres

### **The Nature of Schooling: Men/Boys and Women/Girls Schools**

During the SSEM era, separate schools were established throughout Malaita, Guadalcanal and Makira for boys and girls, managed by the female missionaries (Bryan, 1961; Editor, 1988; Fey, 1961). To explore further the nature of schools for boys and girls, One Pusu School which was for men and boys while Afio School was for women and girls are discussed below.

### **One Pusu Bible College: The "Powerhouse" of the SSEM**

One Pusu land was purchased in June 1905 and schooling system for the mission took a new turn when One Pusu was developed as headquarter and termed as the "Power house" of the mission. As the "power house", it served a number of purposes. It was the first small boarding school for boys and girls. It was used as a refuge centre for returned islanders who were fearful of being killed if they returned to their own village. It was used as an asylum for refugees from other parts of Malaita. It had a dispensary, a store, a church, a wharf and a coconut plantation that provided employment for many people (Boutilier, 1978; N. Deck, 1954; Editor, 1912; Young, 1908, 1926).

Bringing islanders to One Pusu the "power house" of the mission under the care of the missionaries has impacted quite significantly on the lives of the islanders. Firstly, the islanders were taught subjects such as industrial training, literacy, Bible teaching, singing and cleanliness which were quite new for the islanders but were significant in the process of Christianising and assimilating the islanders to the European lifestyle. Islanders embraced these skills and as teachers, transferred these skills to others in the village.

Secondly, bringing the women and men together into one boarding school broke the cultural norm of separation. Women welcomed this development, but coming face to face with men and people of different cultural group under one roof was not easily accepted. Establishment of a separate school for girls was the accepted norm

In 1911, the training school was transferred from One Pusu to Baunani, a coconut plantation owned by the "Malayta Company" which belonged to Florence Young's brothers, Ernest and Horace Young, 32 kilometres north of One Pusu. It then became a boy's school which allowed students to work on the coconut plantation during the day, encompassing the idea of "industrial training" and attend school in the evening, an arrangement similar to the Queensland Sugar cane plantations.

One Pusu then became a school for the women, young girls and small boys (70 females and young boys) in 1911, managed by Miss Dring and Miss Cross (Editor, 1912). Placing young boys with the women was culturally acceptable as young children are closely associated with their mothers. The women were taught Bible studies, literacy, healthcare and cleanliness which re-enforced the "good housewife" mentality. In 1918, the training school was transferred back to One Pusu again from Baunani as the "Malayta Company" shifted its operation to the Russell Islands (Boutilier, 1978: 146).

From 1918 onward, One Pusu became the main training school for the mission attracting both women and men students (Sullivan, 1954: 8-10). One Pusu's training school became organised and arranged into two departments "the senior" and the "junior". The senior department catered for students undergoing longer training lasting for three to four years while the junior department referred to students undergoing periods of shorter training ranging from one to two years and which also comprised two thirds of the students. The students in the senior department were taught reading and writing in English and vernacular, English dictation and composition and choral singing in addition to religious instruction. It was noted that the academic standard was not very high. A visit to the school by the district officer for Malaita, cited in (Boutilier, 1978: 146) commented that "half a dozen of the students could do elementary sums in simple arithmetic". The students of the junior group learnt reading and writing in vernacular, reading in English by the "Look and

say" method and singing. In addition, practical trade and hands on skills were also taught especially in carpentry and plumbing.

From 1934 onward, One Pusu became a boy's school as Afio Girls School was opened for girls and women. Miss Sullivan was the Principal at One Pusu during the 1930s and 1940s. More boys and men were trained as teachers and pastors. During the Second World War period, most missionaries abandoned One Pusu and escaped the war while the native teachers managed it. The missionaries returned and further developed it into a Regional Bible school in the 1950s and 1960s when single men and couples were trained not only in literacy and Bible teaching but community leadership and pastoral care as well.

Gordon Wilson, Principal of One Pusu Regional Bible School in the 1960s to 1970s stated that a six months course entitled "Leadership training: a Pressure Cooker Course" was also organised for leaders, encompassing subjects such as Bible class, Christian leadership, Stewardship and tithing, Personal Evangelism, Bible doctrines, Indigenous church principles, False cults, Counselling, Evangelism, Sermon preparation, Church history, Archaeology, Elementary accountancy, church administration and Pastoral theology. The women/wives of the leaders were taught Hygiene, Nutrition, Cooking, Sewing, Family education, Sunday school work, leading women's meeting, Youth work, Personal evangelism, Public reading and Weekly Bible study hour. Furthermore, women were expected to acquire skills in developing a high standard of living as seen fit for leaders of Christian communities. With this he says, "their preparation of the meals which are partaken communally, is my opportunity to teach them more in the cooking line and more dignified ways of serving and eating" (Wilson, 1965: 3)

Arguably, from an 'Are'Are and generally Melanesian perspective, communal feast preparation is already a women's domain. Mr. Wilson's view to teach women a dignified way of serving and eating is ambiguous. As a European missionary himself, he had minimal knowledge of island communal feast preparation. Although native men assist in some communal feast activities, women take overall responsibility over the food domain. Preparation of meals, serving and eating manners in island style was simple. Foods are prepared and cooked in the earth oven

and served on clean leaves placed on the grass in rows instead of a tablecloth. People sat on the ground in rows around the food and eat with their hands/fingers instead of using plates, spoons, knives or forks. The island way is easy, environmentally friendly, requires no serviette or dishwasher. The missionary/western communal meal manners proved to be tiresome and expensive in a rural setting. Secondly, food hygiene, cleanliness and family issues were not new topics to the island mothers. Culturally, mothers were well versed with such training but their lack of access to cash hindered them from buying the equipment, tools and materials to perform those responsibilities. Instead, clean leaves and woven trays and baskets were used for serving. It would have been appropriate if the island women were taught skills in weaving, gardening, piggery and appropriate technology as these were directly related to their livelihood.

In 1974, One Pusu introduced advanced Bible and Theological training and was renamed One Pusu Bible College which also encompassed most of the six month course subjects and closely linked to Christian Leadership Training College at Banz, Papua New Guinea. One Pusu was again reopened for girls wishing to undertake advanced Bible and Theological training as Afio was winding down its program (Wilson, 1974: 2). This opportunity allowed a significant number of women to pursue advanced training just the same as the men.

By 1995, One Pusu major training was transferred to Saura, Guadalcanal, a new site proposed to replace One Pusu. It was a site with much fertile land and space for expansion and agricultural development projects to make it a self-sustaining college. According to Rev. Joel Norihiona and Mathias Lima who were both teachers at One Pusu, One Pusu training was slashed back to pastoral block course training from 1996 - 2003, targeting local church pastors, men leaders and women leaders as it was assumed that 80 percent of all SSEC pastors were untrained. In December 2003, One Pusu scaled down its training programme and closed. While One Pusu was renowned for producing some of the key SSEC leaders, its training was tailored towards community church leadership and focussed on spirituality.

### **Afio Bible Girls School: Teaching the “Burden Bearers”**

The perspectives female European missionaries have on island women as “burden bearers” (Sullivan, 1946a: 11) and as the “poor women, degraded and diseased” (Young, 1926: 147) set the direction in which women’s programmes and schooling were to be structured. Such perspectives were central for the formation of Afio Girls School and the *Fikuanakini*. While the ideology of “separation” was not a new phenomenon in Malaitan cultures, setting up separate schools for girls and removing them away from their parents and their village, and putting them in a separate spot under the care of a single female missionary was a challenge. Many parents feared for the safety of their daughters, their protection from promiscuity and the impact schooling would have on them. Their absence in the family, home and community meant increased roles for the mother and the community at large.

From an `Are`Are or generally Malaitan culture, girls are kept at home to learn good motherhood from their mother, their best teacher. A girl is expected to acquire all skills for life and survival so that when she is married into another family, she will be able to perform to the best of her ability rather than being told. Leaving home was associated with promiscuity and laziness, initiating potential conflict between Christian missionary method and indigenous ideals. However, girls also welcomed this opportunity which gave them freedom to be self reliant and develop their skills in leadership and character building.

Looking at denominational boarding schools as in the case for Maori girls in New Zealand, Jenkins & Mathews (1998) argued that removing the Maori girls away from their home and placing them under the guidance of the European missionary and environment was aimed at teaching them new ideas, worshipping their God and assimilating to the European ways. They further argued that European missionaries saw the Maori girls as very important and therefore were to be taught to conform to the European model of an ideal womanhood who will be the future guardians of morality as good mothers and wives (Jenkins & Mathews, 1998: 88). In addition, Fitzgerald (1995) in her study of the schooling of the Maori Nga Puhi women and girls, found that missionaries Marianne and Jane Williams taught them domestic skills and art and that their labour was exploited. She stated that the missionaries presumed the Maori wanted to become Christians and therefore directed their

education towards Christian moral behaviour and taught the women and girls to be obedient, submissive, quiet and engaged in useful work (Fitzgerald, 1995: 192-994). Whether such similarities could be drawn from the SSEC girls schooling in Solomon Islands, Afio Girls School will be discussed next in relation to the major girls schools.

Afio Bible Girls School was opened in 1934 and have undergone three stages of development. First that Afio training was focussed on equipping women to be a good wife and for village leadership. Secondly, women's training was improved academically and focussed on spiritual development and village leadership. The final stage focussed on evangelism locally and overseas. Miss Joan Deck was appointed the first woman missionary principal from 1934 to 1952. Miss Anna Fey, then became the second female missionary to manage the school from 1953 to the early 1960s. Afio training was equivalent to One Pusu as the same curriculum was adjusted to accommodate women and ran as a two year intensive course. The central focus of the training was to equip women to be fit and useful in the village lifestyle and to be good house wives. This covered aspects such as, growing own food under missionary supervision, cooking food, collecting firewood and water, living a self-sufficient life style, being industrious as a woman and being a community leader . The women were assisted by the husbands of married women, especially when it came to performing roles that were beyond themselves such as felling of big trees. Most of the students were very young and described as "completely unschooled, shy, often unpromising, with a very limited outlook on life and no knowledge of reading or writing" (J. Deck, 1954; Editor, 1974a: 10-12)

Similar to One Pusu, Bible teaching, prayer and personal work were emphasised above other responsibilities. In addition, women were taught simple nursing, Christian work at local church level, running a *Fikuanakini*, Sunday school and evangelism (J. Deck, 1954: 17-18). Similar to denominational boarding schools for Maori girls in New Zealand, the graduates of Afio were renowned for their good Christian character as good wives and mothers back in their village. They were involved actively in village life church programmes such as helping the sick, running the Sunday school, Bible class and the *Fikuanakini*. Such demonstration of skills was not different to what mothers desired for their girls culturally. Sullivan (1946) added

that Afio produced women of good character as Christian wives suitable for Christian men trained at One Pusu (Sullivan, 1946b: 7).

By 1964, Afio became a Bible Institute for girls as primary education was taking a new shape in which younger girls went to primary schooling in other mission schools while adult women who were mature and better educated went to Afio. Miss Gruber became the third female missionary Principal from 1964 to 1973. Afio followed the same curriculum and lecture notes used at One Pusu for the men. The teaching was in English. The girls were to converse in English while in the school station. Furthermore, subjects such as mother craft, home craft, sewing, cooking and hygiene were added. Great emphasis was placed on singing, leading women's meetings, Bible classes, taking Sunday school, studying doctrines and books of the Bible and leading prayer meetings. Joan Gruber suggested that the training had positively impacted on the lives of the women, creating within them "heart knowledge" of the scriptures. I argue that less emphasis was placed on agriculture, cultural weaving and knowledge.

In 1974, Miss Unity Unasi became the third Principal and the first Solomon Islander assisted by Miss Mary Bili, another Solomon Islander both of whom were former students of Afio and graduates at the Christian Leaders Training College in Papua New Guinea. Two new developments that were introduced to Afio in the early 1970s were, one, the women organised weekend visitation to nearby villages, participating in programs such as prayer meeting, Sunday school, singing, church service and sometimes Christian Endeavour. This exercise gave practical experience to the students and an opportunity to be part of the surrounding villages while at the same time encouraged the community. Secondly, women were involved in casual afternoon strolls to nearby villages, in which they would present singing and children's story to the children. Such activities created close relationship between the school and the nearby villages.

Although the women originally were taught for village work and leadership, they felt that they could lead anywhere either locally or overseas and at any level if given the opportunity. At the 1971 SSEC General conference, their request was discussed and approved, making it possible for Afio graduates to go any where they felt the Lord would call them to. That opportunity was hailed and implemented immediately.



Graduates paired up and went wherever they were needed either locally or overseas as teachers, leaders of *Fikuanakini* and Youth workers. The girls were influential in their leadership to various communities.

Around 1975/6, Afio ceased operation and was transferred to Kaotave Bible Institute on Guadalcanal in 1977, a place that is spacious and has fertile land for agricultural training. Afio then was turned into a sub-station for the Southern Malaita region under the Malaita province as the land lease agreement between the land owners and the church came to an end.

Similar to any other SSEC girls' school, the girls lived under constant supervision by the staff. They were to adhere to strict school rules for two years. They were taught Christian moral behaviours such as keeping away from men, cleanliness, sewing skills and to be a good and capable mother/wife. In a sense they were domesticated which was not different to the Malaitan motherhood teaching to their daughters. It did offer some useful skills not so much in the area of agriculture but in developing good motherhood skills, Christian principles and community church leadership. Today, many women embraced these sewing and mother craft skills and turned them into economic activities which gives them economic empowerment and independence.

Having separate schools for girls gave them greater opportunity for leadership. The girls took on various leadership roles as prefects, house leaders, gardening leaders and the overall upkeep and management of the schools. They developed their confidence through leading singing and morning and evening Bible classes. Afio Girls School enhanced the girls' potential of self-reliance and leadership.

## **Men's Band and *Fikuanakini*: Two Leadership Pillars of SSEC**

### **Men's Band, Lifurongo Band and Singing Band**

Little is documented about the men's organisation in the church. Men had a wider role in the early stages of the SSEC and dominated the national and formal leadership domain, but men made little initiative and effort in organising themselves

and promoting brotherhood. There were the “Men’s Band” accompanied with a “Singing Band” and the “Lifurongo Band”. The “Men’s Band” started in 1934/1935 at One Pusu along the lines of a “Christian Endeavour”, which means teaching and training men and women to lead and participate in various activities with spiritual application such as prayer, a song, a game, a memory verse and a Bible story. Siriurao added that the name later changed to the Young People’s Band (YPB) which encompassed the above activities but further involved preaching, sharing of personal testimonies and singing. Similar to *Fikuanakini*, it was again renamed Men’s Band (Deck, 1937; Filoa, 1988; Siriurao, 2003). While men were attending training at One Pusu, they would form a preaching band and organised weekend outings to the nearby villages. They would preach and then sing to the villagers (Sullivan, 1954: 9).

As the weekend preaching activities developed, many students even gave up their holiday and would organise preaching and singing bands, touring different villages and Associations. It further developed as some men deferred their marriage, banded together, set apart and were sent in twos to preach in different communities, assisting with Sunday schools and other activities of the church. The “setting apart in twos” and sending them off to a village for a period of six months to a year for ministry is called the “Lifurongo Band” or known as “preaching band”. They were to look after themselves and feed themselves from their own gardens. Only young men who were willing to go anywhere with the Christian message were chosen to participate (Sullivan, 1937: 5).

The “Lifurongo Band” was influential in the expansion of Christianity to many un-reached communities, establishing new local churches and nurturing the different church activities. The Lifurongo would spend six months or more at a village before moving on to another village or further training at One Pusu (Bartlett, 1955: 3-4). Lifurongo and Men’s bands continued on into the sixties but became defunct due to the reactivation of the Christian Endeavour in the 1970s. When asked whether the men still continue with their Men’s Band at the local churches, all of my respondents said “*No, there is no Men’s Band in my local church anymore*”. While both the Men’s Band and Lifurongo Band became defunct, there is still some men’s singing bands that exist today but are facing extinction. Interestingly, during my return trip in 2004, West `Are`Are SSEC men have reactivated the Men’s Band at the local

church level and held their first Association meeting in October at Koruha village. It is important to note here that in the absence of active Lifurongo and Men's Band, very little is being done for ordinary SSEC men. An interesting example is the "Ngongosila Volunteer For Christ" group organised by men of Ngongosila, East Malaita. These men offered themselves freely to assist different communities in any provinces in Solomon Islands in the area of singing band ministry, construction and building. Each of these trips lasts for weeks or even months. While volunteerism by this group is praised, the increased workload it places on women back in the village is costly.

The absence of Lifurongo and Men's Band in the SSEC could be explained for the following reasons. Firstly, often men are organised around, involved with and committed to the national church programmes at all levels through attending to various church ministries, constructions, evangelism and community leadership,. Men were focussed on the formal/national leadership while little attention was given to their own activities. Men's domination of the Association leadership structure and activities made women mistakenly see them as the Men's Association. In reality, it was not and men do not have a Men's Association as yet. The church nationally has neglected the "ordinary church men".. Their needs have been ignored and they lack any tangible programmes that engage their participation at all levels. Secondly, men migrate to Honiara or any other urban centre in search of work for cash to finance the family's cost of living expenses and social obligations. While in the village, they would be fully engaged in fishing and other cash crop activities to meet the family's needs. Thirdly, it was noted as the failure of church leadership. Men were not trained to organise and manage their own programmes; instead, they attend to the overall village church programmes. Fourthly, Men choose to strengthen brotherhood through other means as discussing issues such as logging, politics or national events such as the recent conflict. Finally, with regards to 'Are'Are culture, brotherhood is demonstrated through warring activities against a common enemy and through feasting which are no longer practiced in the church. Absence of such activities dismantled the spirit of brotherhood.

The coming together of men is limited to the church service and church activities.

Having little or no activities for men alone at the local church level disengages them as a group of church men showing brotherhood. On the other hand, having no activities for men is an advantage for the women as it allows men to play greater and supportive roles to women's programmes, youths and Sunday schools. They become free men to lend a hand to other activities of the church and community leadership. Men also demonstrate leadership as a "process of influence" and "power to empower" at the village level.

### ***Fikuanakini and Singing Band***

The beginning of the "Women's Fellowship" of the SSEC initially known as *Fikuanakini*, a Kwara'ae language word meaning "women gathering together" goes back to 1934/1935, similar to the Men's Band (Sullivan, 1937: 5). The year "1934" also marked a special era for women and girls as Afio Girls Bible School was opened as a separate school for girls. While Afio was in progress, the needs of the wives of the men at the One Pusu boys' school remained unattended. Although they were encouraged to join their husbands at school, most did not. They often perceived themselves as mere child bearers and gardeners. They thought the training was geared more towards men than themselves. Sitting and learning with the men was culturally problematic. The need to attend to the children, both inside and outside of the class meant that they were often distracted from the teaching. Ms. Sullivan, then Principal of One Pusu boys' school with other female teachers identified the need to engage these wives in some useful activities rather than the wives becoming idle at One Pusu. It was in response to the wives' need that *Fikuanakini* was born.

Firstly, a crèche was organised for the children in which mothers took turn to care for the children while some mothers would attend to different activities. After weeks of running a successful crèche, it was developed into a *Fikuanakini* along the lines of "Christian Endeavour" similar to the Men's Band. Each week, women met together and took turns to tell a bible story. Often the advanced women (those who can read) would paraphrase a bible story, while other women would take different points for personal application from the story. Someone would pray while another woman would lead in songs. Singing taught in *Fikuanaking* as well as at Afio paved the way for women's singing bands. Every woman participated in one way or another. The

mothers would then retell the story to their children at home. As the women continued in this way of learning and fellowshiping, the *Fikuanakini* progressed rapidly and renamed “Women’s Band”. Elizabeth Fatangasi, a Malaitan woman and wife of Timothy Anilafa, a senior island teacher at One Pusu was actively involved in establishing the *Fikuanakini*. She is referred to as the “mainstay” of women’s work since her marriage (Sullivan, 1946b; 1954: 9-10). Ms Sullivan (1954) commented,

God used this greatly in the spiritual development of the women and today there are, throughout the Islands, *Fikuanakini* where the members have shown great powers of leadership (Sullivan, 1954: 9).

The *Fikuanakini* immediately spread to the nearest village such as Kinapa/Kiu and throughout West `Are`Are in 1935-36 by island women such as Elizabeth Anilafa, Aida Hu`arou and Miriam Nima`ia. It flourished and spread to other parts of Malaita such as in North Malaita by Olive Daefa, assisted by Mrs. Griffiths in 1937. In North Malaita, the *Fikuanakini* was more than just a “Women’s meeting”. It addressed women’s felt needs at that time and was seen as a seed of “grassroots Christianity” that could penetrate into homes and lives of many families. Women of different social standing came together, fellowshiped, shared and taught each other (Editor, 1974a: 10-12). The *Fikuanakini* gained momentum and spread to Guadalcanal, Makira, Rennell and Bellona as One Pusu students with their wives returned to their local churches, taking with them this seed that was planted at One Pusu (Deck, 1937: 3). From 1937 to the 1960s, the *Fikuanakini* was well established with branches created almost nationally and with additional activities such as “Singing band” and the “Sunshine”, meaning attending to the needs of the elderly people, caring for the sick and helping the poor and the disabled. Native women took the initiative to extend the *Fikuanakini* to different parts of the islands. They laboured without remuneration, were outspoken, courageous and established local *Fikuanakini* where needed. Women’s leadership in *Fikuanakini* organisation was influential in SSEC throughout Solomon Islands.

Around 1963, the *Fikuanakini* leaders of various Associations formed *Fikuanakini* Association along the lines of the newly recommended SSEC Association, touring,

encouraging, fellowshiping and establishing new *Fikuanakini* on a voluntary basis, emphasising “saved to serve” principle (Filoa, 1988: 1-2). Such touring experiences is best described below by Olive Daefa, wife of David Daefa, Zone Superintendent of Guadalcanal Island in 1973 and also a leader of *Fikuanakini* in Guadalcanal,

At present, I am going from place to place, visiting different places on this island. The work is hard and heavy, but I thank God for his wonderful promise that He is faithful and He will help (Daefa, 1973: 5)

The formalisation of the Associations cemented the informal relationship that was already amongst women’s groupings and gave them a further push for cooperation. The *Fikuanakini* Association progressed very well throughout the islands of Malaita, Guadalcanal, Makira, Rennell and Bellona and was financed by women themselves.

Having observed again the nature of the SSEC Island Church Conference/convention and the General Conference which are the highest church decision-making level of each island and the church, the women thought that it is important they send representatives to these important conferences. The women’s idea was discussed at the Church Leaders General Conference attended by church leaders, held at Kukum Local Church in 1975. The General Conference agreed that it was wise for the women to arrange and conduct their own Island Conference apart from the General Conference and to appoint male advisors to work alongside the women. The late Japhlet Radoe was appointed the first male advisor to assist Guadalcanal women.

The Guadalcanal Island *Fikuanakini* Associations took the initiative and hosted their first Guadalcanal Island Women’s Conference in 1976 at Kukum Local Church. Their second conference was held at Suhu village at Marau/Rere Association in 1977 in which invitations were sent to the Malaita Island Women’s Associations. They responded positively and sent women representatives to that conference. Guadalcanal Island Women’s Conference elected Mrs. Melody Ofea to be the first President of the Guadalcanal Island Women’s Conference with an additional male advisor Mr. Japhlet Ofea, her husband. It is worth noting that Honiara women’s Association which is under the Guadalcanal umbrella is predominantly Malaitan and therefore

Malaitan women were quite active with Guadalcanal women to spearhead *Fikuanakini* development at the island level.

Jemimah Eteri'i from Kwai, assisted by two male advisors Rev. Jesimiel Maeniuta of 'Are'Are Association and Jeriel Siru of West Kwara'ae Association organised the first Malaita Island Women's conference held in 1979 at Kwai local church. The Malaita Island Women's Conference was established and Jemimah Eteri'i was the first president. This executive worked on a voluntary basis, visiting their particular island two to three times a year, providing encouragement, fellowship, problem solving and collecting funds to support the Island programmes (Filoa, 1988; Magor, 1979; Raddon, 1984).

The Women's Island Conference progressed in Malaita and Guadalcanal. In 1983, the Church General Conference, which is the highest decision making body of the church, held at Kaotave, passed a resolution that the Island Women's Conference be renamed the Island Women's Convention. The main reason for the change was to avoid duplication of roles and functions of the women's conferences and the Church General Conference. This change of name affected the whole nature and magnitude of the activities of the women's convention which was merely focussed on fellowshiping and spirituality. Women's opportunity to discuss issues of concern to them and the church was problematic. Women's access to participate at the annual Church General Conference was limited by the selection processes applied by the SSEC local Associations and was difficult as they are outnumbered by men who dominate SSEC formal leadership. Generally, women were not happy with the change but accepted it and during their Island Conventions, they continued to hold discussions on immediate issues that affect their lives and work in SSEC.

In 1989, the Church Council then abolished the Island Women's Convention and their executive due to church restructuring exercise and financial factors. This has drastically affected the women's work at the island level. Having no women representative at the church council level at that time, gave little opportunity for women to challenge their case. Women leaders of both islands protested as their work were self financed without any church assistance. The Church Council advised the women that they will continue with their Island Women's Convention but



without an Island Women's Executive. Responding to this decision at a women's executive meeting in 1989, Mrs. Abilene Kako, President of the Malaita Island Women's Convention lamented,

*How can a man or a woman survive with his/her head being cut off? In reality, he/she will breathe for a few seconds and die. In the same manner, it is difficult for the Malaita Island Women's Convention to survive without its head, the executive being cut off. Surely it will die.*

Replacing the Island level convention, the women decided to establish regional conventions at a conference held at Kabia local church in Honiara in 2001.

The women did not remain quiet but pushed the agenda for a national women's co-ordinator at the Guadalcanal Island Women's Convention held at Mataruka village, Malango Association in 1986. A small committee consisting of some women leaders such as Beth Gale, Melody Radoe, Melody Fefera, Abilene Kako and Jemimah Tuhaika, assisted by Jemimah Likipu of Honiara Town Council Nursing Division, Joses Sanga of the Public Service and myself as head of the Women and Development Division, prepared a paper on establishing a Women's Co-ordinator for the SSEC. The paper was presented to and accepted at a church council meeting held in Auki, 1989. A national consultation meeting was convened immediately, attended by forty women leaders representing the entire Women's Associations network and Jemimah Tuhaika became the first national women's co-ordinator. This was an additional role to her roles as matron and Home Economics teacher at Kaotave Bible Institute. Furthermore, in 1989, the name "Women's Band" was renamed "Women's Fellowship" as the word "Band" was confusing to the new generation of SSEC women, associating it with various Music Groups in town.

In the 1990s, women continued to represent Women's Associations at the General Conference meeting which is the highest decision-making body of the church structure. Women's representation at the General Conference depends on each Association's selection of participants. All leadership positions of the *Fikuanakini* organisation from the local to the national levels are on a voluntary basis. Yet, women showed great leadership through persistence, commitment, perseverance,

confidence and strength in reaching where they are now today. Their leadership as “power to empower” and as a “process of influence” was remarkable.

During my consultation process in 2003, those whom I have consulted spoke highly of women and their work. Statements such as *Fikuanakini are very active and strong* and that *women are focussed, committed and respected their responsibilities* were made. This reflected women’s heart in their work. David Wairiasi, senior pastor for East `Are`Are Association added *women make the church alive both physically and spiritually*. In addition, Cornelius Siriurao warned, *don’t look down on the Fikuanakini. They are very strong. They are very active. They attend courses and they have men’s support. Men lack these things and do not engage in such activities*. Attributes such as determination, courage, faithfulness, strength, honesty and being active were common descriptions that my informants stated about the women. Once a decision is made, they will do all they can to implement the decision. They do not only plan and talk but practice what they talk about. They cooperate, work smarter and work from the heart. In support of this, Ethel Ura’i, president of the West `Are`Are *Fikuanakini* Association said, *Even though our work is hard, we are not to give up. We will keep going and working. We must stand for honesty in our work*. She further added that it would be good for women at the national level to have the same desire as ours at the local and Association level, so that by working together we can make a difference.

Generally, the SSEC women and *Fikuanakini* at the local and Association level are strong and active. They are fairly represented in decision-making bodies even at the national level. However, I argue that *Fikuanakini* came thus far based on what I call “look and copy” principle which is common in oral society. They observed and copied the SSEC formal structure and replicated it at all levels. It was not based on any study or research undertaken to redesign *Fikuanakini* into the future. I suggest that *Fikuanakini* leaders redesign the way forward and reconsider contemporary issues in today’s changing and challenging socio-economic and political environment.

## Conclusion

The SSEC has come a long way and has demonstrated some features of gender equity in its development, leadership and programs since its inception in 1882. Both men and women are instrumental in the life of the SSEC but men dominate the national and formal structure while women dominate the informal leadership structure. Women's active participation at the informal structure gives them an influential position as change agents. As Andrew Ma'ahoro, president of the West 'Are'Are SSEC Association rightly puts it; *an active and lively local Fikuanakini is an indicator of an active and lively local village church.*

Male domination in SSEC national and formal leadership was comprehensive as it was men who were recruited to the Sugarcane plantation in Queensland. It was men who were first converted to Christianity in Queensland. It was men who were trained as the first "teachers" in the islands. It was men who were seen as the principal man of the village. Although the first teachers were dominated by European women missionaries, the trend reversed as European women missionaries passed on the leadership roles to the native men.

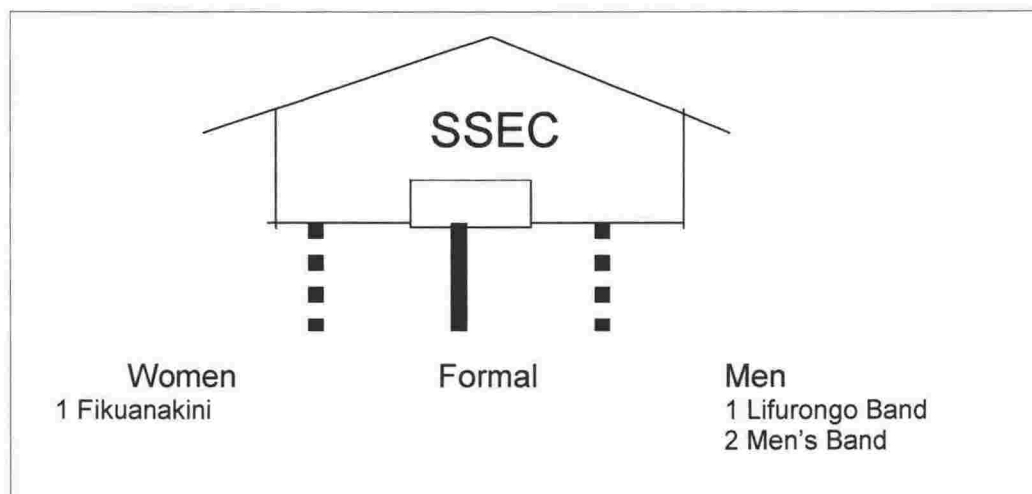
Women on the other hand were given schooling opportunities but were trained to be good housewives, providing supportive roles to the native teachers in addition to managing Sunday school, youth groups, *Fikuanakini*, evangelism and community programs. While women play a major role in the evangelism in partnership with the men, women tend to dominate the implementation domain rather than the decision-making domain. This distinction does change when women through their *Fikuanakini* plan and provide overall control over their program at all levels. Women's leadership skills are well demonstrated in their *Fikuanakini* programmes and in local village church management. They are influential and powerful leaders.

The establishment of the *Lifurongo* and Men's Bands organisations for men and the *Fikuanakini* organisation for women within SSEC gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership potential within the church. Both organisations were initiated at the same time and were effective in strengthening the local/village church leadership. By the 1970s to the 1990s, *Lifurongo* and Men's Bands were struggling

to survive and were lagging behind while *Fikuanakini* was flourishing. Today, Lifurongo and Men's Bands have become defunct and non-existent in many Associations such as the 'Are'Are churches and Honiara Association.

On the other hand, *Fikuanakini* has well over four hundred local *Fikuanakini* and has an effective network that reaches the women of the grass root to the national level. Christianity in the context of the SSEC has been a liberating and empowering tool for women. It welcomes and embraces women of all walks of life and even women of bad character. It gives women and men equal access to church worship through one door and under one roof. It does not discriminate along any lines of race, gender, culture, age, language, character and profession.

The non-functioning of the Lifurongo and Men's Bands for men has resulted in a lack of strong brotherhood and engagement of men's issues at large. Their domination in national formal church leadership structure does not mean they have their own men's association and may accentuate men's domination of the formal structures. Although women do not dominate the national leadership structure, they do play influential roles in church leadership. These two pillars of SSEC as practised in West 'Are'Are are illustrated in Figure 7.



**Figure 7: Pillars of SSEC Leadership**

The *Lifurongo* and Men's Bands were functioning in the 1940s – 1970s mainly at the local/village church level. It has never established itself at the Association level. Young and ordinary men are vulnerable and can be easily influenced and drawn to

social conflict. The large numbers of young men without gainful employment is a time bomb. The *Lifurongo* and Men's Bands' activities which engaged men in the past need to be reactivated and appropriated for today issues experienced by ordinary SSEC men.

The *Fikuanakini* network does not only operate amongst themselves but also inter-denominationally, giving them greater opportunity to influence national church decision-making and national issues. Women have shown real leadership in their *Fikuanakini*.

The church leadership training in the past focussed on servant leadership at the local/village church level rather than the national leadership positions. This made the local/village church become the key building block and strength of the SSEC. Lively local churches are an indicator of a lively Association. Lack of leadership training for the national level leadership poses a great challenge to SSEC national leaders in responding appropriately to national issues.

In the last three decades, SSEC has observed four shifts in its programmes. These are, the shifting of the headquarter from One Pusu in Malaita to Honiara on Guadalcanal, the shifting of One Pusu Bible College to Saura and Afio Girls school to Kaotave, both on Guadalcanal, the shifting of separate schools for boys and girls to co-ed schools and the shifting of church run schools to government run schools. While Guadalcanal has fertile land and space for future development, Malaita has the population. This implies that wherever the church schools and headquarter are established; Malaitans will continue to dominate the staffing positions. In addition, the shifting of separate schools for boys and girls to co-ed schools restricts girls' greater opportunity to learn and provide leadership in schools.

SSEC may need to explore different approach to leadership development rather than the "salvation of the souls" only approaches. Recognising the potential in native men and women for leadership, further training is seen necessary for both genders to lead the SSEC forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Involvement of women in leadership positions where they can perform will best demonstrate their leadership as Florence Young herself has experienced.



Photo 12: Florence Young. Source Young 1926

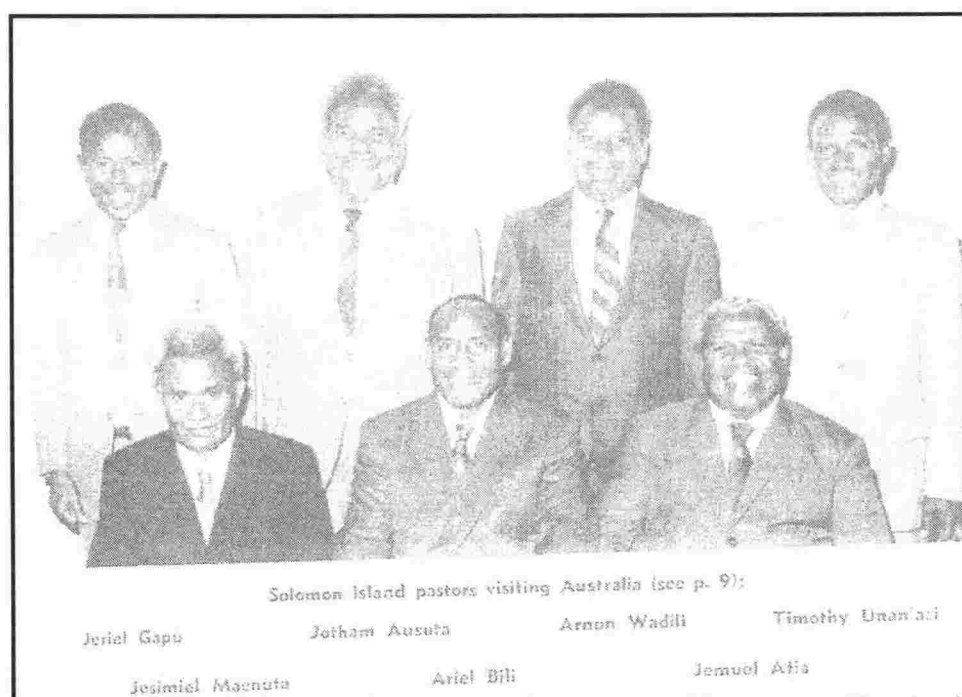


Photo 13: SSEC Leaders. Source Not in Vain March 1974



**Photo 14: Ruth Okoi'a, Miriam Orini'a, Si'ohiri, Ta'arutona. Source: Pollard A. 2003**



**Photo 15: Cornelius Sirurao and grand daughter, Ta'arutona. Source: Pollard A. 2003**



**Photo 16: Pastor Esther Maepuri, beating the drum for church service, Ta'arutona. Source: Pollard A. 2003**





**Photo 17: Combined East and West `Are`Are Women's Convention, Surairo. Source: Pollard A. 2003**



**Photo 18: Surairo Women, Heo. Source: Pollard A. 2003**



**Photo 19: Transport by Canoe, Si'ohiri, Ta'arutona. Source: Pollard A. 2003**

## CHAPTER SIX: PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP: EQUAL IN PRINCIPLE, COMPETITIVE IN PRACTICE

### *Politics*

*A game of words,  
a gamble a risk  
say the right words  
strike the right chord  
choose a sweet melody  
and it will ring in the house for years*

*A good talker makes a good politician  
well versed in making promises  
a clear memory to forget  
crocodile skin to take criticism  
strong stomach to stomach anything  
from beer to strong punches  
and glassy unseeing eyes  
to overlook us  
(Jully Sipolo 1981:20)*

### **Introduction**

The Parliamentary leadership is historically linked to 1893 when Solomon Islands became a Protectorate under British rule and subsequently independence in 1978. It was a new and formal system of government leadership different from the “big man” and the “chief” leadership systems that the islanders were accustomed to. Accession to leadership positions within parliament was through competitive campaigning and lobbying during elections that have been conducted every four years. Although Parliamentary leadership is new and formal, it forms the highest decision-making body of the nation state.

In principal, women and men in Solomon Islands are given equal opportunity to compete for the fifty seats in parliament. However, women’s participation in the Parliamentary leadership has been minimal compared with some of its neighbouring Pacific Island neighbours. Although a significant number of women have stood as candidates in the six national elections held within the post independence period, 1980 to 2001, women have been unsuccessful except for Hilda Kari who won her

seat in 1989 in a by-election, 1993 and 1997 elections. She was unsuccessful in the 2001 national election. The current parliament (2001-2005) comprises men only.

The absence of women in the higher political leadership decision-making levels does not reflect women's active participation at the community level leadership. Grass roots women's active involvement in community leadership is well worth noting. It provides an alternative mechanism where women's voices and issues could be raised and channelled to the national government. However, I argue that this should not replace the need for women's representation at the provincial and Parliamentary leadership levels. It is essential that women's representation at the Parliamentary leadership levels be worked at by Solomon Islanders in a manner that is appropriate.

This chapter examines the Parliamentary leadership of Solomon Islands including aspects of its development. It will also explore gender and leadership issues including gender roles in parliamentary leadership, barriers to women in Parliamentary leadership and mapping the way forward in terms of gender representation. Thirdly, it will also discuss leadership attributes, paying particular attention to the importance of leading by serving which is the motto of Solomon Islands government.

## **Parliamentary Leadership: Stael Blong Solomon Islands (Solomon Islands Parliamentary Leadership)**

### **The Historical Context**

Solomon Islands was declared a Protectorate in 1893 under the British rule along with other colonies administered by the British High Commission for the Western Pacific (Alasia, 1989; Bennett, 1987; R. Crocombe, 2001; Saemala, 1982). The High Commissioner ruled Solomon Islands from a base in Fiji with the assistance of an Advisory Council. In 1897, the High Commissioner became a Resident Commissioner in Solomon Islands and was based at Tulagi, Central Islands with a small administrative staff. From 1922, Solomon Islands were divided into four districts, namely the Western, Central, Malaita and Eastern districts purposely for easier administration. Each district was administered by a District Commissioner and

a small staff team who would tour the district and attend to social and political issues. Keeping law and order was the prime activity of the touring team. Assisting the District Commissioner was the village and district headman who were all men. There was also the establishment of the Native Councils in the 1940s which was structured and worked along similar lines to the European type local government. The Councils were developed upon European ideas and controlled from the top without consultation with the local people. The Councils faced many difficulties and proved unworkable in Solomon Islands context (Belshaw, 1950: 118-121).

It was noted that prior to the Second World War in 1942, Solomon Islanders were absent from the decision-making process of the political administration of their own country. The traditional leadership system (see chapter one) that was in place prior to colonisation was largely ignored by the British administration (Sogavare, 1996). Furthermore, there was very little or nothing done to enable the Solomon Islanders to exercise political power in administering their own country. Emphasising this, Sam Alasia, (1989) a former politician and a Solomon Islands poet states, "their opinions were not sought, their wishes were ignored, they were subject to a government that was not responsible to them" (Alasia, 1989: 140-141). He further adds that the colonial regime favoured a centralised government rather than the traditional consensus leadership system. What he challenged was that an individual who was sympathetic to the white man's way was often appointed as headman rather than anybody recognised by the villagers. Generally women were absent from all processes concerned with the colonial political administration.

The Maasina Ruru movement in 1942-1952 and incidents such as the murder of colonial administration, Mr Bell in East Kwaio, Malaita in 1927 caused political instability in the colonial administration (Belshaw, 1950; Corris, 1973; Keesing, 1968; Laracy, 1983). The government responded immediately by suppressing the Maasina Ruru movement but at the same time they began to recognise the Solomon Islanders' potential for political leadership and development. This was demonstrated in 1952, when the locally-based Malaita Council was established. This was seen as the first step towards the formation of local government in Solomon Islands and a beginning of indigenous political participation in the administration of their own country. By 1964, other local councils had been established throughout the country.

The first state constitution was introduced in 1960 with subsequent reviews and amendments in 1970, 1974 and 1978 (Chai, 1983; Mamaloni, 1992; Saemala, 1983). The constitution was reviewed again in 1988 and 1997/8. The first constitution provided for a Legislative Council and an Executive Council, comprised of both local and expatriate members, responsible for the making of legislation, decision-making and administration of the nation. The first national election was conducted in 1964 by electoral colleges consisting of local council delegates. It marked a new beginning in formally recognising Solomon Islanders at the national level within the political system. Seven Solomon Islanders were successfully elected. Lily Poznanski was the first successful female politician elected in this first election, serving only one term. She was from the Isabel province which is a matrilineal society and was one of the first educated Solomon Island women of her time. In the early 1970s, she served as the clerk to the Council in the colonial administration and unsuccessfully contested the 1984 election for the West Isabel seat.

The second national election in 1967 was the first direct election and also the first in which women were eligible to vote and stand for parliament, no women were elected (Chai, 1983; Chick, 1983; Drage, 1994). Further changes took place in the 1970 election in which the Legislative and Executive Councils were replaced by the Governing Council. The number of members also increased from twelve to fourteen. In 1974, the Westminster model was introduced and resulted in the following changes: The Governing Council was renamed the Legislative Assembly, the High Commissioner was renamed the Governor and the Chairman of the Council was renamed the Speaker of the Assembly. In 1974, Solomon Mamaloni was elected the first Chief Minister of Solomon Islands amongst the members of the Assembly. Reflecting on this time, Saemala commented that "To a significant extent, this was the beginning of real political awakening in Solomon Islands, albeit among a limited number of people" (Saemala, 1982: 70). By 1976, Solomon Islands had been granted internal self government and gained its independence on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978 (Alasia, 1989; Bennett, 1987; Betu, 1983; Drage, 1994; Saemala, 1982, 1983).

The constitution of Solomon Islands provides for a Prime Minister, a cabinet of ministers and a single legislature (the National Parliament). Generally, the winning

party makes up the government which so far have been coalitions. The Prime Minister chooses the cabinet ministers who are responsible to the legislature (National Parliament). The government and the opposition groups form the two main pillars of the parliament of Solomon Islands.

The constitution also provides for an independent group, consisting of individual members who contested the election as independent members and who do not align themselves to any political party. The independent group may be a “middle group” who neither support the government nor the opposition group. They maintain a middle role and act as a “buffer” between the two opposing groups. Individual members could support or reject a government or opposition bill or policy according to his or her conscience as an independent member but as a group; they would align with any government of the day. As one of their policy guidelines, the late Willy Betu, a long time serving politician says, “on policies of paramount importance the independents would be prepared to support the government in the interests of stability and harmony” (Betu, 1983: 112). The independent group is very influential in determining the majority rule and who is able to govern. They hold the balance of power which implies that they could either vote with the government or with the opposition group. As such it could either create stability or instability to the government of the day. The Coalition of Independents is the major coalition partner in the current Government (2001-2005).

According to Peter Kenilorea, the Westminster model needs to be adjusted in order for the system to work within Solomon Islands context (Kenilorea, 1983). For example, it needs to recognise the chiefs and the big man leadership systems that are already in place. I argue that it also needs to recognise the churches as well who have an important structure that connects the rural communities to the national level. The Westminster system needs to sit within the traditional and church leadership framework in order to be effective. Currently the house of parliament has fifty (50) seats. All are held by men.

Solomon Islanders place their hope in this democratic system but lack confidence in their elected representatives. The Human Development report in 2002 observed that the post-colonial government has been politically very fluid as individual politicians

and surviving political parties lack strong voting discipline and party loyalty. Governments have experienced continued changes as a result of fluctuating allegiances in the life of parliament. This has resulted in more than ten changes of government in 23 years of independence (Otter, 2002: 14). The report further highlighted the lack of trust and confidence in the parliamentary leadership in Solomon Islands.

While Solomon Islanders embraced the democratic government system, that system is being challenged in providing essential services to its people at all levels and the question of efficiency and effectiveness through its elected representatives remains.

### **Solomon Islands Politics and the Bargaining Process**

The granting of independence in 1978 was received with mixed feelings and many Solomon Islanders believed there were many unanswered questions about how such a system might operate (Bennett, 1987; Mamaloni, 1992). At independence, Solomon Islands adopted the Westminster system of governing based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, parliamentary sovereignty, an independent judiciary and an impartial civil service (Mataitoga, 1992; Otter, 2002; Saemala, 1982). The Westminster system did not accommodate the traditional system of leadership. The chiefs were excluded from the decision-making levels of the government. Solomon Islanders advocated for a “home grown” rule during the two Constitutional Reviews conducted in the 1980s, the Provincial Government Review Committee and Constitutional Review Committee in 1986/1987 but their views were generally neglected (Mamaloni, 1992). In 1997/98, another constitutional review was conducted in order to establish a system that would be sustainable and practical. Reflecting upon the political path that Solomon Islands has taken, the late Solomon Mamaloni, former Prime Minister and long time politician comments that Solomon Islands is a “nation that was conceived but never born” (Mamaloni, 1992: 14). Meaning that Solomon Islands known as “an island nation” with its own identities and entities was controlled by the British administration and the granting of independence was according to their timeframe and supremacy. Solomon Islands did not fight for their independence.



How the Westminster system operates and what it means to be an independent nation is still not properly understood by ordinary Solomon Islanders, nor the practicalities of how the Westminster system could operate within the “big man” leadership system. This complexity has demonstrated itself in the political leadership since independence. It has been observed that no political party has won with an absolute majority of seats in parliament and no government in power has ruled for its full term of four years. This situation has meant that any government in power has been a coalition government and therefore prone to changing its leadership before the end of its political term. If the current Kemakeza government completes its term as seems likely, it will be the first government in power to have ruled for a full four year term since independence. This achievement is most likely due to the role of RAMSI supported by the Pacific Island Forum and co-ordinated by the Australian government. RAMSI consists of military and police personnel from New Zealand, Australia as well as from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. RAMSI was commissioned in 2003 to bring law and order to Solomon Islands described as the “failed state”. This mission has stabilised the government in the last two years (Wainwright, 2003).

The style of politics which has developed in Solomon Islands during the post independence period has depended very much on the bargaining powers and processes of its Parliamentary leaders. The current Parliamentary leadership, for example has adapted the Westminster system to serve its own means within the context in which it operates. Key factors in this adaptation process have been the political parties, personalities of and relationships between politicians, voting practices and the length of terms served in power.

### ***Political Parties***

The historical context of the development of Solomon Islands political parties dates back to 1965 when Honourable Mariano Kelesi, member for North Malaita and Honourable Eric Lawson, member for Honiara Town Council, unsuccessfully attempted to form, the Democratic Party. Other attempts were made in the 1970s and 1980s. Political parties such as the National Democratic Party, Peoples Alliance Party and the United Party became visible and organised. However, political parties

have continued to struggle to survive. From 1965 to 2001, approximately twenty four small political parties have been formed. Some merged while most have tended to disappear after elections (Chick, 1983; Kenilorea, 1983; Kingmele, 1988; Konofilia, 1993; Nori, 1988; Saemala, 1982; M. Talasasa, 1989; Ulufa'alu, 1983).

Bart Ulufa'alu (1983) suggests that there are three determinant factors influencing formation of political parties. These are denominational affiliations, regional associations and association of persons with similar personalities. Reflecting on party politics, Peter Kenilorea (1983) comments that party politics is a "necessary evil" within the Westminster system. Because the Westminster system is in itself foreign and based on foreign concepts, only a few educated Solomon Islanders really understand how it works (Tara, 1991; Waleanisia, 1986).

This view was reinforced during my own consultation with fourteen (14) former and current parliamentarians in 2003. All of them made the point that political parties are not fully understood by Solomon Islanders and will not work for Solomon Islands in today's political environment. One of the reasons is that during national elections, individuals do not vote on party and policy lines. Instead they tend to vote on individual factors such as personality, educational achievements, family ties, gift giving, chiefly power and influential businesses.

The lack of commitment to a political party ideology results in individual parliamentarians crossing the floor and joining the government or the opposition at any time. Crossing the floor, moving a "vote of no confidence", resignations and sackings often occur from half way through to the end of the term. This situation has created a lot of challenges for the Prime Minister in keeping his team together and maintaining the numbers for the sake of the government. In short, the political game has meant that strategizing the way forward for the country has not been addressed to any significant extent. In support of this, former Prime Minister Peter Kenilorea (1983) comments "Because of this individualism, making personal appeals was a more important way of gaining support in the House than preaching on party lines" (Kenilorea, 1983: 54).

### ***Personality and Relationships***

Political leadership in Solomon Islands is also based on personality. In voting for a politician, personality is one of the key deciding factors both at the community and national decision-making level. Personality choices depend on individual characteristics. These include: who you know, who you are related to, membership in associations, educational qualification, business interests, good track record, whether the candidate has performed and achieved well in his or her locality in initiating village projects such as water supply, clinics, schools and roads, whether the candidate is knowledgeable about his or her culture and whether the candidate has shown an interest in people and community. Academic qualification or professional occupation is rarely a pre-requisite for political leadership. Church affiliations also contribute to how votes are cast. Importantly, *wantokism* and *localism* play a pivotal role in personality choice. *Wantokism* is reflected in the role immediate family members, tribes, village church leaders and village chiefs play in organising and campaigning for the candidates (Alasia, 1989; Chick, 1981; Premdas & Steeves, 1983; Saemala, 1982; Ulufa'alu, 1983)

The personal attributes highlighted by informants of this research in 2003 included the following. A good political leader is someone who possesses attributes such as integrity, godliness, vision, determination, honesty, servanthood, wisdom and love. Leaders should be people centred and of good character, who understands the political system, are educated and aware of global issues. He/she should be a person with a good and proven track record, a decision maker and a leader with good understanding of the traditional leadership values. Whether Solomon Islands have such political leaders in place is unclear. Describing the political leadership today, Honourable Bart Ulufa'alu comments, *leadership is by succession but today leadership in Solomon Island politics is by accident.*

Another issue that is important to consider when examining political leadership in Solomon Islands is money. Logging companies and businesses have a lot to gain from certain government policies and therefore provide financial support not only to some individual candidates but also the formation of the government. Ron Crocombe (2001) argues that corruption has been fast growing in Melanesia in the 1980s and 1990s in the form of exploitation of raw materials such as forests, minerals and fish

which are also sources of revenue for the governments. Foreign and local operators might offer bribes to Members of the Parliament themselves. Recognising this, Tuhanuku (1995) comments,

For a foreign company, corruption can often be the quickest and cheapest route to large profits. It is often easier to “take care” of a minister than ...to comply with a country’s laws, and corruption is “on the rise”(R. Crocombe, 2001: 513).

The money factor has further complicated the current political environment in Solomon Islands through vote buying, financial support to an individual candidate or political party.

### ***Voting Practices***

At the 1980 General election, Premdas & Steeves (1983), summarises that the three parties; Solomon Islands United Party, National Democratic Party and People’s Alliance Party mounted a very good campaign strategy for their affiliated members with financial support and supervision. The independent candidates ran their own campaigns at their own costs. All the candidates’ campaign tactics involved moving from one village to another before the election. This practice continued in 2001 but took on a new dimension.

In observing the voting behaviour of the people in the 2001 national election, Teakeni & Scale (2004) discuss two outstanding features which were observed in a village election scenario. These two features were “block-voting” and “vote-buying”. According to Teakeni and Scale (2004), block-voting can mean either the appropriation of a wad of validated ballot papers for marking outside the polling station, or a pre-arranged agreement by a number of people to vote in a certain way (Teakeni & Scales, 2004: 5). “Vote buying” is reflected in different ways such as the giving of gifts like tobacco, imported food such as rice, axe, bush knives. In my experience as a contesting candidate of the 2006 national election, hard cash was distributed to voters and supporters of certain candidates. Gift giving was also reflected through paying of school fees of certain supporters’ children and sponsoring of coffee nights for the general public in various communities. Gifts are

also given to the male heads of households and chiefs of communities and with his influential position, he instructs all the people living in his household or village to follow his choice of candidate. Crocombe (2001) argues that “gift giving” is a traditional value in the Pacific life style but when it involves huge sums of money and truck loads of goods during the process of campaigning and elections, is very close to vote buying and bribery. Often, the courts would have to decide whether the gift was genuine or was bribery (R. Crocombe, 2001: 532-537). In the case of the 1976 election in Solomon Islands, the electoral regulations stated that campaign expenses must not exceed \$300 (NZ\$60), and detailed accounts for that money should be given to the returning officers. This was problematic, as paper work and there was a lack of a system to check on the accuracy of the records. Currently in Solomon Islands, campaign expenses should not exceed \$50,000 (NZ\$10,000).

The second form of “vote buying” is patronage relationships in which a well known influential person is given a large gift to perform campaigning responsibilities on behalf of the candidate. Such a candidate must be wealthy or for example strike a deal with a logging company. Thirdly, patronage also occurs through the use of the “Rural Constituency Development Fund” (RCDF), an annual grant of around \$400,000 (NZ\$80,000) to all the parliamentarians which is not audited or regulated. Member of Parliament distributes this fund to individuals in a form of assistance or financing for small income generating activities. In a rural context, other issues such as logging and resource ownership complicate the voting processes as well (Teakeni & Scales, 2004).

#### ***The Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF)***

Edward Kingmele, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, states that the RCDF was introduced in the late 1980s. The purpose of the RCDF was to pursue development through supporting smaller community projects which were not likely to be included in the Government Development Project Budget. The fund is managed by the Members of Parliament in their constituencies and distributed at their discretion. RCDF has no regulations to direct its operation and administration. It is neither audited nor accounted for but Members of Parliament are encouraged to provide summary expenses of the fund. Originally, the Solomon Island Government

budgeted for the RCDF but recently, the Republic of China offered to finance it as its support for Solomon Islands Economic recovery strategies (Kingmele, 2004, personal communication). In 2003, each Member of Parliament was allocated an amount of SI\$400,000 (NZ\$80,000). Below is an analysis of how the allocation for West 'Are'Are constituency was used by its Member of Parliament.

Sum of Amount	Qtr				
Purpose	1	2	3	4	Grand Total
Accommodation	400			2415	2815
Assistance	634		7943	3462	12039
Bakery	2400	1800	3600	5450	13250
Bettlenut				1000	1000
Bride price		128			128
Constituency Dev. Committee (CDC)	358	21464	11956	7898	41676
Couples for Christ (CFC)	964	309	2920		4193
Chiefs	860		1760	1550	4170
Clinic	50		100	200	350
Construction	370	2893	1225	800	5288
Copra		3286	804	10000	14090
Fishing				13700	13700
Food	100	266	6050	700	7116
Funeral	1223		1200		2423
Honey	2400	600		4600	7600
Kerosene	600			2808	3408
Marriage			1400	1000	2400
Olo (elderly)	3000	1400	400	100	4900
Other	3700		1295	1320	6315
Pan Pipes				1115	1115
Petrol			3000	4800	7800
Piggery	43800	43700	23600	12032	123132
Poultry	2100		1000	3000	6100
Projects (untitled)				13200	13200
Rokotanikeni	224		349		573
School Fee	1400	3100	500	300	5300
Second hand clothing	1200			3503	4703
Sewing Machine				2830	2830
Sick	1060	450	550	400	2460
Soccer	1270		3332	1550	6152
Store/ canteen	14200	18058	1500	2700	36458
Transport and fuel	10223	4769	10417	6167	31576
Teak	2500		1200	1100	4800
Tobacco		2600		2550	5150
Training			2228	700	2928
Unknown				1500	1500
village stay				1000	1000
Water supply	1400			900	2300
Youth	1288	1171	1330	1136	4925
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>97724</b>	<b>105994</b>	<b>89659</b>	<b>117486</b>	<b>410863</b>

(Ministry of Provincial Government: 2004)

**Table 2: West `Are` Are RCDF allocation 2003**

As demonstrated in Table 2, a few community projects such as clinics, water supply, church and youth activities received a total allocation of SI\$18,493. Projects such as



piggery, bakery, copra, fishing, honey, teak, second hand clothing etc received the highest allocation of SI\$264,373. Piggery projects alone received SI\$123,132. A significant amount of money was also allocated to non-income generating projects such as school fees, sick and elderly people, sea fares, marriage, funerals and bride price ceremonies. Funds were disbursed on an individual basis rather than communally. In reality, this fund can be easily misappropriated and mismanaged.

Solomon Islands political leadership is based on a bargaining process and dominated by men. This has made it difficult for women to participate. While women have equal opportunity to compete for the seats in parliament as in a democratic election process, women are hampered with various challenges such as competing as an individual, lack of financial support, lack of party support and being in a male dominated domain. Women who have competed in previous elections have shown attributes of strength, confidence and commitment to compete in such a hostile political environment with no attachment to any individual business. In doing so, Ms. Martina Ului, one of the women candidates in the 2001 national election said *I campaigned clean, I lost clean*. Similar sentiments were also shared by other women candidates, without remorse. Women treat such experiences as a once in a life time experience (Pollard, 2003: 97). This scenario reflected Jully Sipolo's poem on politics which she highlighted as a matter of gambling. One has to play the game well in order to win which doesn't necessary mean playing clean.

### **`Are`Are Political leadership - a Case Study**

Looking at `Are`Are constituency of Malaita province as a case study, Naitoro (1993), says that `Are`Are political leadership development was affected by two historical processes. One was the influence of the colonial administration on the national government and the other, the influence from the local chieftainship leadership structure that was already in place. He notes that the potential for political leadership at the local level was alive, active, consistent and continues to survive on its agreed principles of chieftainship leadership. Meanwhile at the national government level, constitutional changes are continually being made with regards to colonial administration, decolonisation and independence. He argues that while successive governments have attempted to devolve power downwards to the people

since the formation of the Malaita Council through to the recent times, those efforts had little effect on the 'Are'Are people. The gap between the national government and the local 'Are'Are people still persists. In a nutshell, the national government has failed to acknowledge and recognise the significance of the traditional leaders, their authority and existing leadership structure attached to land, people, customs and social groupings (Naitoro, 1993: 150-151).

The national government system of electing representatives in an election was new, formal and competitive. It seemed inappropriate in a situation where the process for choosing community leaders was already in place. Despite this, ordinary and educated 'Are'Are men and women and the chiefs accepted this new system of leadership and competed in them. They had no choice but to participate. The traditional leaders/chiefs ensured that their candidates were successful as in the case of David Kausimae and Peter Kenilorea in the 1960s – 1970s (Naitoro, 1993).

In 1967, under the national government administration, 'Are'Are was part of the South Malaita constituency, covering West 'Are'Are, Small Malaita and East 'Are'Are. Then in 1970, Small Malaita was amalgamated with Sikaiana and outer islands and renamed the South Malaita constituency while the 'Are'Are constituency comprised of East and West 'Are'Are. The 'Are'Are chiefs played an influential role in selecting the one political leader for the one 'Are'Are seat. As demonstrated from the table below, David Kausimae was the favourite choice. He was the first 'Are'Are politician and was successful from 1967 to 1979. David Kausimae is a chief and carries the *araha* title; he is also a community leader, a close kin of the paramount chief Aliko Nono'ihimae and was leader of the locally based 'Are'Are Maasina Company Ltd in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **West 'Are'Are Constituency**

In 1976, East and West 'Are'Are became separate constituencies. The separation of 'Are'Are into the two constituencies meant that 'Are'Are had the opportunity to choose two leaders. The successful candidates in the West 'Are'Are constituency from 1967 are shown in Table 3.

	1967	1970	1973	1976	1980	1984	1989	1993	1997	2001
David Kausimae	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	X	X	X	X		
Alfred Aihunu					<b>W</b>	x		X		
Andrew Nori						<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>		
Alfred Hairiu								X	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>

**W – indicates the winning candidate**

(BSIP, 1967, 1970, 1973; Editor, 1980, 1984, 1989b, 1993, 1997a, 2001).

**Table 3: Contesting Candidates in West `Are`Are Constituency**

In analysing the West `Are`Are constituency candidates as shown in Table 3, David Kausimae was a famous politician and founder of the Peoples Alliance Party (Kausimae, 1983: 114-116) He was defeated by Alfred Aihunu in 1980, a public servant and an outspoken leader. Andrew Nori became the next political leader in 1985, 1989 and 1993 national elections. Andrew Nori is a close kin of David Kausimae, a lawyer by profession and son of the late Nori, the leader of the Maasina Ruru movement. His link to the chiefs through his father and as a lawyer made him quite influential. Alfred Hairiu, a chief and primary school teacher by profession emerged as the new political leader in the 1997 and 2001 elections. Alfred Hairiu is affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church. A new leader, Hon. Severino Nuaiasi emerged in the 2006 national election.

Obviously in the context of West `Are`Are political leadership, two conclusions can be made. Firstly, the *arahana* leadership strongly influenced who was chosen for political leadership. Chiefs have dominated the West `Are`Are political leadership in the past four decades. They influence the choice of candidates and the voting practices. The roles of chiefs in political leadership were significant.

Secondly, church affiliation does influence the choice of political leaders. Often the Roman Catholics would support a candidate of their choice, for example in the 2006 national election, the *hahuarahana* area which is predominantly Catholics was behind their candidate while other candidates polled zero in these areas. The two dominant churches in West `Are`Are are the SSEC and the Roman Catholic Church.

The winning candidates are affiliated to SSEC and Roman Catholic. West `Are`Are parliamentary leadership is greatly influenced by churches (Christianity).

In the 2006 national election, I contested the West `Are`Are seat for political leadership at the national level but was unsuccessful. Linda Pauromae contested for the Malaita Provincial leadership, contesting the *Tai* ward in 2002 but was unsuccessful as well. If the *‘auaapuha* leadership structure for women in `Are`Are chose and supported their own women candidates, that might challenge the *arahana* leadership’s choice of candidate. Alternatively they could negotiate with each other. From experience in the 2006 national election, the women voters were divided and were not in support of a women candidate.

**East `Are`Are Constituency**

Candidates	1976	1980	1984	1989	1993	1997	2001
Peter Kenilorea	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>			
Edward Hunuehu				x	<b>W</b>	x	<b>W</b>
Dickson Warakohia						<b>W</b>	x

**W – indicates the winning candidate**

(Editor, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1989b, 1993, 1997a, 2001)

**Table 4: Contesting Candidates in East `Are`Are Constituency**

The East `Are`Are political leadership is quite different from West `Are`Are. As shown in Table 4 Sir Peter Kenilorea dominated the political leadership and was the chiefs’ favourite choice. He took a firm lead from 1976 to 1992 when he decided to leave politics. He was selected as the second Chief Minister in 1976 and the first Prime Minister of Solomon Islands in 1978. His successor, Edward Hunuehu, a well known business man took over leadership in 1993 and again in 2001. In 1997 Dickson Warakohia, a civil servant held power for one term only. Both Hunuehu and Warakohia are not chiefs. However, their professions as businessman and civil servant respectively, influenced the voting system. Generally, the political leadership in West `Are`Are is strongly influenced by chiefs and generally consistent while in East `Are`Are it seems to depend more on personality. All three successful candidates of East `Are`Are to date have been affiliated to the SSEC.

Generally, the 'Are'Are political leadership since the colonial era has been dominated by Kausimae and Kenilorea who were the 'Are'Are traditional chiefs' choices and were supported by them. Both of them were affiliated to the South Sea Evangelical Church. During their political careers, Kausimae held various ministerial positions while Kenilorea held key political leadership posts as the Prime Minister and at other times, leader of the opposition. In terms of party development, Kausimae was involved in the formation of the Peoples Alliance Party while Kenilorea was involved in the formation of Solomon Islands United Party. It was noted that although they were the chiefs' favourites and that both are from 'Are'Are, in terms of political leadership they generally worked on opposing sides rather than cooperating together as 'Are'Are leaders.

### **Solomon Island Women and Political Leadership: The Post Independence Period (1980 -2006)**

The post-independence period was an awakening for women in Parliamentary leadership. During the colonial era, men dominated the political leadership whilst women had been virtually absent. In 1965, when only men had the right to vote, Lily Poznanski from Isabel was successful and broke through the male domination of parliamentary leadership but did not hold on to that position for long. She was replaced by Willie Betu in the 1968 elections. In the 1980 national election, Gisela McCall, a plantation owner, contested the North East Guadalcanal seat but was unsuccessful. Her initiative in contesting as the only woman paved the way for other women to follow suit. Two women contested the 1984 national election. Tina Wawane, a teacher by profession contested the Central Malaita seat and Lily Poznanski attempted the West Isabel seat. Both were unsuccessful.

In the 1989, Hilda Kari was the only woman candidate and contested the East Central Guadalcanal seat in response to Guadalcanal women's cry; *we need a voice in parliament*. She lost to Waita Ben, a long time politician. However, Waita Ben was elected the Speaker of Parliament. This gave Hilda another opportunity to contest the by-election and she was successful. Hilda Kari is from Guadalcanal, a matrilineal society. She was one of the few women senior civil servants (Chief Administration

Officer) in her time within the government and at the same time, the president of Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW). Her position as the president of the SINCW, made her voice heard on issues affecting women such as logging, liquor licensing and domestic violence both at the provincial and national levels. She toured the provinces and addressed women's rallies and conferences. Hilda Kari is affiliated with the Anglican Church but now is an active leader in the church of the Living Word. Hilda Kari was successful again in the 1993 and 1997 national election but was defeated by Nolan Leni in 2001. According to Hilda Kari's experience in 1989, she learnt with surprise that most of the registered voters who returned from the polling stations were men. She said, "I expected to see more women voting for a woman candidate, but this was not the case" (Editor, 1989a: 3). This reflected men's support for her and her political career compared with women.

From 1980 to 2001, there have been around thirty (30) women who have contested the five national elections held. Of that number, only Hilda Kari was successful. The women who participated in the last six national elections is shown in Table 5.

Province	Constituency	Women Candidates	1980	1984	1989	1993	1997	2001
Malaita	Central Malaita	Tina Wawane		X				
	Lau/Baelelea	Sylvester Beata				X		
	Malaita Outer Is.	Dorothy Prince				X	X	
	North West Malaita	Keti Kaura				X		
	North Malaita	Marilyn Mase						X
	West Kwara'ae	Margaret Maelaua						X
	West Kwara'ae	Rosie Anilabata						X
	East Malaita	Afu Leah Bili						X
	Central Kwara'ae	Rosie Anilabata					X	
	West Kwaio	Miriam Garo					X	
	West Kwaio	Miriam Garo					X	
Guadalcanal	North East Quad.	Gisela McCall	X					
	East Central Quad.	Hilda Kari			W	W	W	X
	North West Quad.	Roselyn Dettke				X	X	
	North West Quad.	Bernadette Tadakusu				X		X
	West Quad.	Carolyn Mariu				X		
	West Quad.	Edme Ziokera				X		X
	North Quad.	Alice May Kaua				X		
	East Quad.	Judith Tafea					X	
	W. New Georgia & Vonavona	Merle Aqorau					X	
	W. New Georgia/Vonavona	Angelina Nuatali						X
Western	Shortlands	Caroline Laore						X
	Shortlands	Martina Ului						X
	North Vella la vella	Juliet Keti					X	
	North Vella la vella	Juliet Keti					X	
Isabel	West Isabel	Lily Poznanski		X				
	Maringe/Kokota	Merilyne Gedi					X	
Makira								
Choiseul								
Temotu	Temotu Vatud	Christina Munamua					X	
Rennell	Rennell & Bellona	Delma Nori						X
Central Is.	Ngella	Catherine Manedetea						X
Honiara	East Honiara	Anne Saenemua						X
	East Honiara	Christina Garo				X	X	
	Central Honiara	Catherine Adifaka					X	X
	Central Honiara	Tina Wawane					X	
	West Honiara	Margaret Maelaua					X	
	West Honiara	Margaret Maelaua					X	
	Women candidates		1	2	1	10	14	14
	Total no. of candidates		218	207	255	280	336	339
	% of votes for women candidates		0.10%	0.89%	0.96%	3.03%	3.24%	2.62%
	Votes for Women		68	601	777	3,183	4,552	4,824
	Total votes		57,874	67,285	81,238	104,954	140,425	183,987

(Editor, 1980, 1984, 1989b, 1993, 1997a, 2001)

**Table 5: Women candidates by National Elections 1980-2001**

Analysing women's participation in politics from the above table, Malaitan women comprised the majority (11) including those contesting the three Honiara seats but none of them were successful. Malaita is a patrilineal society, in which men



dominate politics at all levels. Guadalcanal comprised the second highest (8). An increased number of women candidates in 1993 was observed in Guadalcanal, a matrilineal society and also due to Hilda Kari's success and performance. Western Province comprised the third highest (5) while Isabel province had two. Central, Renbell and Temotu had one each. Women in Makira and Choiseul have not yet attempted to contest the national elections except the provincial elections. Provinces of Western, Isabel and Central are also matrilineal societies.

Secondly, the percentage of votes for women candidates in 1980 and 2001 remains very low. This suggests that there is need for more awareness about women in Parliamentary leadership at the community level. It is likely that the number of women contesting Parliamentary leadership will increase in the future. Thirdly, some women have contested more than once and in different constituencies, despite being unsuccessful. Of note is the fact that the women who contested the Honiara three seats were all Malaitan.

Analysing the recent 2001 election results reveals some interesting information.

Constituency	Name of Candidate	Rank	No of candidates	Percentage of Votes
East Malaita	Afu Leah Bili	2	10	19.01%
West Kwara'ae	Margaret R. Maelaua	11	14	3.35%
West Kwara'ae	Rosie Anilabata	14	14	0.84%
North Malaita	Merilyn Daefa Mase	6	8	2.70%
East Central Guadalcanal	Hilda Kari	2	12	22.92%
North West Guadalcanal	Bernadette Tadakusu	4	7	8.54%
West Guadalcanal	Edme Ziokera	5	6	6.11%
Ngella	Catherine Ann Manedetea	3	9	12.23%
Rennell & Bellona	Delma Nori Kaitu'u	4	7	11.24%
West New Georgia & Vonavona	Angelina Nuatali	5	9	10.75%
Shortlands	Caroline Laore Gorae	5	10	7.52%
Shortlands	Martina Ului	6	10	5.58%
East Honiara	Anne Saenemua	6	7	7.79%
Central Honiara	Catherine Adifaka	5	8	7.71%

**Table 6: Women Candidates by Constituency, 2001 National Election**

Significantly, Afu Bili, lost by one vote and Hilda Kari by a few, both came second in their constituencies while Catherine Manedetea from Ngella came third. As shown in Table 6, out of the 14 women candidates, only three women polled less than 5% of the total votes in their own constituencies. Five women polled between 10% and 22% while six women polled between 5% and 10%. There were twenty six women out of four hundred and fifty candidates that contested the 2006 national election but no woman was successful.

At the provincial level, women have contested seats at the Honiara Town Council, Malaita province, Western Province and Guadalcanal province. In Malaita, Miriam Garo was successful in the Waneagu ward and held a ministerial portfolio from 1999-2001 while Rosie Anilabata was also successful in the Buma ward in 2002 - 2004 provincial election. In Guadalcanal, the late Everlyn Atu stood twice in the 1980s but was unsuccessful. She was later appointed as the official women's voice in the Guadalcanal Assembly in 1989 while Rose Dettke was successful for the Saghalu ward in 1997-2000. Currently, Jenny Tuhaika and Doreen Done are members of the appointed Honiara Town Council Administrative team, headed by Mrs. Hazel Lulei (Lisa, 1994; personal communication, Teakeni, 2005; Teakeni & Scales, 2004).

Winning a seat in the provincial and Parliamentary leadership is a great challenge as women compete in a formal system that is male dominated and highly competitive. Their few success stories in the post independence period have shown that women really can make it to the top leadership positions. This challenge should not be seen as a barrier to women's future in politics but a gender issue that must be dealt with at all levels of leadership.

### **Women's Organisations and the Parliamentary Leadership**

The Solomon Island constitution states,

Whereby we citizens of Solomon Islands, proud of the wisdom and worthy customs of our ancestors, mindful of our common and diverse heritage and conscious of our common destiny, and as the basis of our united nations,

agree and pledge, that the fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed to citizens of Solomon Islands regardless of gender (SIG, 1998: 5).

Solomon Islands constitution provides for equal rights and freedom for all its citizens regardless of gender to participate in this important leadership institution. Under this provision, women are given the right and freedom to participate equally with the men in the political process. In addition, Solomon Islands National Women's Policy calls for women to be represented at all decision-making levels (SIG, 1998: 23). Shared decision-making by gender was also emphasised in Solomon Islands National Plan of Action for Women (1995-1998), as a key component of sustainable development and Solomon Islands leadership (SIG, 1995: 12-14). Solomon Islands' women have participated in regional and international women's consciousness raising events including the 1975 United Nations decade for women, and the Nairobi's women's conference on women's development in 1985. Solomon Islands' government participation at and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action also provides the basis for women in leadership. The Beijing Platform for Action is comprised of twelve key women's issues, one of which is "women in power and decision-making" (Saenemua, 2005; UN, 1996). Furthermore, the Solomon Island government ratified the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations against Women in 2002. Arguably at the policy level, the support for women in leadership is sufficiently catered for. While Solomon Islands government have signed relevant UN international conventions, the reality of such documents has very little or no impact on the lives of rural women. Women are still marginalised in terms of accessing resources and training.

A number of women's organisations have been established over time. The Church women's groups were the first to be organised and established in Solomon Islands, comprising around two thousand women's groups throughout the country. In 1962, Solomon Islands government established the Women and Development Division (WDD), previously known as "Women's Interest Section" to address women's issues. The Division facilitated formation of women's clubs throughout the country during the 1960s to 1970s through conducting sewing, cooking, weaving, baking, agriculture and family health classes, complementing culture and the church's welfare programmes (Kere, 1999; Pollard, 1999). The Division's welfare classes

were not threatening to men's leadership and were acceptable generally by women, cultures and churches as they deal with improved cooking techniques, farming, family care, home management and sewing. This development allowed cultures, churches and the government to work together towards women's development and subsequently led to an extension of women's groups throughout the country. While this development was focussed on women's traditional welfare areas, it provided the first training for women leaders in their women's groups and laid the foundation for women's organisations. However, it did not address the issue of political leadership which would have challenged what was considered a male domain.

The WDD refocused after reviews were conducted in 1986, 1988 and 1998. These reviews suggested three key aims for WDD which encompassed training, income generating activities and leadership. The leadership aim reads "to promote an increased and more effective roles for women in decision-making in national development" (Pollard, 1999: 4). In the last two decades, this aim has translated itself into leadership training conducted for women's groups at the village level, featuring characteristics of good leaders, roles and responsibilities of presidents, vice-presidents, treasurers, secretaries and committee members of women's groups. Women's groups were taught how to conduct elections, make nominations, voting, forming executives, making decisions and running the group for a term of office, which are essentially aspects of political leadership. Community women's groups were engaged in political leadership at their community level along with skills training and income generating activities.

At the national level, the WDD was involved in providing support to the National Council of Women (SINCW), Church women's groups and representing women at various government bodies and boards. WDD played an important role in influencing government's policies and decision-making with regards to women's development. However, WDD as the government arm for women is not in a position to publicly critique the government and advocate for women in political leadership. Instead, they are more of an implementing agency for government policies.

Hence in 1982 the WDD facilitated the formation of Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW), in response to women's need for an autonomous and

independent body that could advocate for women on a range of issues. This body was to co-ordinate the various women's groups in Solomon Islands as an umbrella body and to act as a "mouthpiece", "a forum" and "a collective voice" to the government on matters relating to women. In 1983, the Cabinet endorsed the submission on Solomon Islands National Council of Women policy statement and it became an autonomous organisation. The "autonomous factor" has been problematic as the SINCW requires substantial amount of funds for support from SIG.

One of the three aims of the SINCW has been to "to provide a forum where women can speak out on issues that affect them and to encourage their participation in decision-making bodies". This gave rise for SINCW to engage in public awareness on women's issues and to be outspoken on government policies that disadvantage women (Kere, 1999; Pollard, 1999, 2003). The SINCW has conducted public forums and raised awareness on issues such as domestic violence, logging, liquor licensing and political matters. In 1984-1988, Provincial Councils of Women were established in the provinces administered by provincial co-ordinators funded by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) while the national office was managed by a Clerk and a General Secretary. The government was also committed to partially finance the organisation through an annual grant merely sufficient to keep the national office going. All other committee members worked on a voluntary basis.

The establishment of the SINCW was the real awakening of women's participation in Parliamentary leadership. Specifically, the women in Honiara held public forums and campaigned for women for the Honiara Town Council seats while the same was happening in other provinces

Responding to this awakening, some of the church women's groups were advised to detach themselves from the SINCW by their Church Authority as such actions challenged men's position of power and the traditional women's roles of being a good housewife. As an organisation that challenged men's leadership domain, it came under heavy criticism by government, some churches, men and even some women. Generally, men saw and accused SINCW of being an organisation that advocates women's liberation and feminism associated with the Western world

which is seen as a threat to men's power at all leadership levels (Daukalia, 1988; J. Talasasa, 1988).

From 1984 to 1999, SINCW was suspended by the government and funds withheld three times, first in 1988, then 1992 and again in 1998. These suspensions were requested by the government in order to review the organisation and its roles. The SINCW was reviewed in 1986, 1988, 1998 and 2005. In addition, the UNDP funding lapsed at the end of 1988 which meant that provincial co-ordinators ceased to operate. Today the SINCW is only just surviving with additional financial assistance and resources from the New Zealand Agency for International Development. Although the SINCW may be seen as an autonomous and independent body, its dependence on government grants gives little flexibility to critically critique the government and its policy. Its need to be self-sustaining meaning that Solomon Islands women will need to embrace it as their own organisation and financially support it.

In 1997, the Women In Politics (WIP) Committee was formed on an ad hoc basis with training assistance from UNIFEM and administration support from the SINCW in preparing female candidates for the 1997 national election. The aim of WIP was to empower women in political leadership and to provide information and awareness of election issues. In 2001, WIP was renamed Gender In Leadership (GIL) as the word "politics" was not seen as appealing to Solomon Island women (Pollard, 2003; Teakeni, 2005). Leadership in GIL was aimed at empowering women for parliament.

Josephine Teakeni (2005), director of Vois Blong Mere and chair person of GIL, comments that in preparation for the 2001 national election, SINCW and GIL were actively involved in civic education in the three constituencies in Honiara and the Rennell and Bellona constituency while other constituencies were taken care of by other non-government organisations such as Solomon Islands Development Trust. In addition, a one week "Women in Leadership" workshop was conducted for the fourteen female candidates and their campaign managers. A similar workshop was also conducted in October 2005 for interested intending candidates for the 2006 national election. These political voter awareness programmes were financed by the (AusAID) package for the national election. Despite significant awareness

programmes in the 2001 national election, no female candidate won a seat. In 2005, the SINCW and the GIL undertook a new development by establishing a GIL desk officer in the SINCW office for a year, funded by AUSAID to co-ordinate political awareness for intending female candidates throughout the country in preparation for the 2006 national election. Given the significant amount of political awareness work that was carried out from 1997 to 2001 by SINCW and GIL, many may ask why there were no successful female candidates in the 2001 national election (Teakeni, 2005).

It is also worth noting that there are other women's groups and projects functioning apart from the key women's organisations discussed above. They are the Family Support Centre, Young Women's Christian Association, Vois Blong Mere and smaller women's associations. However, all of these women's organisations and associations are Honiara based. The only major women's organisations that are well established throughout the country from the national level through to the community level are the five mainline church women's groups namely the Mothers Union of the Anglican Church, the Dorcas Welfare Society of the SDA church, the *Fikuanakini* of the SSEC, the Women's Fellowship of the United Church and the Catholic Women's Association of the Roman Catholic Church (Pollard, 2003).

### **Challenges to Women's Participation in Parliamentary Leadership**

Theoretically, provision for women's participation in political leadership is catered for within the national Constitution, Solomon Islands National Women's Policy, the Women and Development Division, Solomon Islands National Council of Women, Gender in Leadership Committee and the United Nation declarations. Practically, despite such rhetoric, little or no real ongoing ground work is being done.

As stated earlier, Solomon Islands parliamentary leadership institution is new, foreign, structured, hierarchical, competitive, formal and dominated by men. These features make it difficult for women who dominate the informal sector to make their way through to the Parliamentary leadership. While recognition and acknowledgement is given to the effort played by local and international communities such as the UNIFEM, CAPWIP, SINCW and GIL for conducting



“Women and Politics” conferences and workshops, these programmes do not really reach rural women who are the majority, the active participants in community politics and who control the votes. As Teakeni & Scales (2004) have argued, while the women’s network for Parliamentary leadership does exist, it does so only at the centre in Honiara. This is because the centre of political awakening has been amongst Honiara urban based women and women of provincial centres who have access to resources such as radios, written information, telephones, transportation and SINCW and GIL personnel. Political leadership training has not been available or taken up by women at the grassroots level sufficiently so they are not yet fully engaged in Parliamentary leadership.

Any rural women interested in Parliamentary leadership have to travel to Honiara to access appropriate resources which come at huge cost for them in terms of transportation and accommodation. The support mechanism for women is not in place either by the Government, churches, WDD, SINCW and GIL. For ordinary women to participate in national election for Parliamentary leadership is very expensive. The rural-urban gap is very wide particularly because of the difficulty and expense of transportation. Teakeni & Scales (2004) argue that despite good intentions from the international and national communities, the rural areas have little access to capacity building, follow up workshops and resources. Little consideration is given to assisting rural women. Funding provided by the international communities is only sufficient to finance training programmes in Honiara rather than spreading it to rural women’s groups and communities. Yet it is those rural women who need to be informed in order to use their voting power wisely.

Looking at Melanesian neighbours, Mrs. Isabelle Donald of Vanuatu was twice elected into parliament and was given a ministerial post because of her achievements and outstanding contribution to her people and community. Isabelle Donald was honoured in a ceremony held at Epi Island and was given the high ranking customary title “Sikawonuta” which means greatest woman. One of the chiefs who spoke about her at the ceremony said,

Mrs Donald's successful re-election to parliament was the result of her good work with the grassroots who have continued to support her and ensured her landslide win in the snap election (Editor, 2005: 11)

Mrs Donald's success story came as a result of her commitment and active engagement in improving the standard of living for her people and communities.

In the case of Fiji and Vanuatu, a chiefly title is a powerful tool to boost women in politics. This was demonstrated in the case of Adi Kuini Speed, who became one of the prominent female politicians in the late 1990s (Leckie, 2002: 168). Her chiefly title assisted her to be an influential leader in parliamentary leadership and at the same time she was able to cross between the national government and traditional political spheres. Another example in Fiji is where feminist groups have been involved in domestic violence projects; their involvement with this important community issue has boosted women into political leadership (UNIFEM, 2005).

In a paper presented on Women and Democratic Politics in Papua New Guinea, Orovu Sepoe (1998) argues that in the case of Papua New Guinea, Women In Politics (WIP) was comprised of a minority group of professional, educated and business women. Their lives did not resemble the majority of women who live in the rural areas and followed traditional customs and lack knowledge of their rights and opportunities in Papua New Guinea. Their decision to contest in an election is rarely a collective decision but a personal choice. Sepoe highlighted that WIP was a good example of women organising themselves into political leadership but unfortunately only from the centre. Sepoe sees "women organising" whether structured or unstructured has to occur at all levels in order to be a stepping stone for women's representation in political leadership (Sepoe, 1994, 1998).

She adds that as in the case of Papua New Guinea, women's under-representation in political leadership is not only a local issue but a regional and global issue. Sepoe (1996) argues that women's poor performance in national elections was due to the Papua New Guinea political system which I argue is similar to Solomon Islands political system. Also women are not a homogenous group; they do not support each other simply because they are women (Sepoe, 1996).

Currently, it is observed that the push for women's representation in political leadership has been from outside international communities such as UNIFEM and CAPWIP. Their attention has focussed more on preparing the individual candidates rather than the wider community of rural women. Such groups are implementing the agenda of the international communities that have the money but do not respond to the needs of rural women. Perhaps if financial support is extended to rural women's political awareness, their influence on Parliamentary leadership could be much greater.

Another criticism of the overall approach from outside agencies is that piece meal funding on a short term basis is insufficient. Funding for an officer for a year or for a particular component of political leadership such as awareness training is simply not enough. Voluntarism and ad hoc based committees are temporary measures. Women who have served on such committees on a voluntary basis tend to leave after a period. As is reflected in the past work of GIL, women can be vocal and conduct political awareness and training prior to a national election but such activities then cease after the election. This pattern repeats itself whenever there is a national election.

Internally Solomon Island women face the challenge of making sense of cultural and religious attitudes and perspectives in which leadership is often thought of as a men's domain. In the Melanesian "big man" leadership system, men are the leaders and both men and women associate leadership with men. In the case of candidates competing for a single constituency seat in parliament, men are much more likely to attain that position. This is not surprising as men dominate the leadership positions, at all levels from the community to the national level. It is the man who is the head of a family, it is a man who is the "pastor or catechist" of a village church, it is a man who is the "chief" of the community and it is men who dominate upper leadership positions in churches, non-government organisations, the private sector and provincial and national governments.

In Fiji, Vakatale (1993) points out that many Fijians and Pacific Islanders still see women's prime roles as mothers and home-makers rather than politicians. Vakatale

(1993) adds that many traditionalists and fundamentalists believe in women's subservient roles, and see that any women aspiring to leadership take on men's roles (Vakatale, 1993: 63). In the case of Vanuatu, Dalesa (2003), says that women are under-represented in national, provincial and municipal governments in Vanuatu due to attitudinal problems such as lack of acknowledgement by some men and women of women's rightful place in the decision-making processes of the country. Such attitudes are deeply embedded in the minds of men and women, which are difficult to change. She adds that Vanuatu political leadership in the post independence period has been comprised of a significant number of church pastors and chiefs who are all men, making it even more difficult for women to be successful candidates in politics (Dalesa, 2003: 1).

In discussions with fourteen former and current members of Solomon Islands parliament in 2003, all said that cultural attitudes and perspectives of both men and women towards women in parliamentary leadership is still a core problem. This is described by Honourable Billy Hilly, a long time serving politician and former Prime Minister, who states, *The political system does not favour a particular gender. Men and women compete equally. Today, not all women can vote for women as it is not a gender competition.* Because it is not a gender competition, many women and men are influenced by the negative attitudes towards women in parliament.

Generally, it should not be assumed that women will vote for a woman candidate. Women candidates compete equally with men based on who they are and their religious and family affiliations, their achievements and their standing in their community. Women's perception of men as leaders still persists and dominates the decision-making process. In addition, parliamentarians' perceptions of women as political leaders are not encouraging. Commonly expressed views are that women lack knowledge about local, national, regional and global issues, lack financial

need to be well prepared before contesting political leadership. As in the case of PNG, Solomon Island women are not a homogenous group and should not necessarily expect women to vote for women.

The one woman politician so far, Hilda Kari had an influence on some politician's negative perspective on women's performance in Parliamentary leadership. For example, based on Hilda Kari's performance, politicians made comments such as "*women will perform differently from men, they will perform better than men*", "*women are quite vocal and can perform*", and "*if women become politicians, they can do it*". No politician interviewed expressed serious opposition against women becoming politicians. Instead politicians acknowledged the potential for more women to enter the Parliamentary leadership domain. They add that if women have the skills, leadership qualities and the opportunity for political leadership, they should be encouraged to participate equally with men. Women at the Politics focus group meeting conducted in Honiara in 2003 summarised that *parliament needs women in the same way a family needs a mother. The mother's management role in the home arena could well be applied in the Parliamentary leadership arena*. The advantages of women's representation in Parliamentary leadership could demonstrate a "balanced" perspective on issues affecting the nation, both from women's experiences and wealth of knowledge as well as the different ways women leads. However, as Hilda Kari noted from her experience, for a woman to be successful in an election, she needs to rise above the crowds and be visible. Women need to act now in terms of preparing to stand as a candidate rather than waiting for the election year.

### **To Lead is to Serve**

Solomon Islands motto "To lead is to serve", though important is rarely looked at in political discussion papers by Solomon Islanders. Quite regularly, it is quoted by parliamentarians to remind themselves of their roles in their deliberations and discussions in parliament. Individual Solomon Islanders would also write their personal views in the newspaper when they wish to express their concerns to parliamentarians or raise public opinion on political leadership. Some Solomon Islanders have cynically reworded the motto, expressing their opinions on

Parliamentary leadership as “To lead is to serve oneself”, “To lead is to be the boss”, “To lead is to first serve myself”, “To lead is not to mislead” and “Presume to lead and serve” (Iro, 1993; Kovutini, 2001; Mamu, 2006).

Speaking at the graduation of Solomon Islands College of Higher Education in 1987, the late Francis Bugotu, former Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission and former Solomon Island Ambassador to the UN, reworded the motto as “To Lead is to Serve – Not to Boss” with the specific message of reviving the spirit of service without counting the cost. He further adds that serving is demonstrated in the work done rather than the commanding skills (Bugotu, 1987). Rev. Festus Suruma (1996), the current national president of the SSEC of Solomon Islands agrees that true leadership is best seen in service rather than as a commander (Suruma, 1996). More recently, Kabini Sanga and Keith Walker (2005) argue that the motto captured the most important resource that Solomon Islands have which is “people”. When people are served first and become the central focus of programmes and activities, they become empowered and equipped to lead. Leadership is a service rendered to the people through serving. It is putting the interests of those served first above oneself (Sanga & Walker, 2005).

The politicians consulted in this research had mixed perspectives about the motto. Generally, all of them agreed that it is a good motto which could be seen as a statement of purpose and a reminder but it is a difficult motto to fulfil and live by. The politicians stated that from their personal observation, this motto is far removed from the reality of what is happening today in Parliamentary leadership. Leadership by serving is not being practised. Instead, it is only given lip service and is founded on “serving oneself first” rather than serving others. The sense of “I am the boss, I serve myself first” has become dominant. This argument is reflected in the following comments by parliamentarians.

*Today's parliamentarians do not demonstrate this motto at all in them, instead they serve themselves first.*

*Leading by serving is not in the minds of the parliamentarians at all.*

*Today, the parliamentarians serve themselves. They are influenced by the outside businessmen.*

*Today, to lead is to serve oneself first.*

*Today, parliamentarians serve themselves first, the nation last, "Mr Mi fastaem".*

These views challenge leadership to follow the servanthood motto and suggest it is prone to corruption by leaders. It can easily lead to wealth accumulation, individual power and self serving. Mr. Nathaniel Supa, a former politician stated, *if you are an MP, one of the indicators that shows that you are serving is when you have nothing, and if you have many things (material wealth), it means that you have been serving yourself.* In a rural based society like Solomon Islands, material wealth is reflected by owning a permanent house, a four wheel drive, a few taxis, a motorised canoe, a radio and a canteen. In the context of Solomon Islands, such material wealth is viewed critically.

Men generally appear to have some difficulty with the concept of voluntary service while women do not. Women's roles as mothers involve them in serving. Their active voluntary role in community leadership and as leaders of their women's groups from the local to the national level demonstrates their leadership with a serving attitude. Women know what it is to serve as shown in the household. Women's influential roles in leadership through servanthood in their households, women's groups and in the churches at large demonstrate real leadership. Men are used to being served, having the best share of family meals and are often placed in responsible positions. Such practices generally poorly prepare the men for servanthood leadership. As expressed by the politicians, leading by serving is difficult and is further challenged by Solomon Islands civil conflict, the political bargaining processes and its complexities. I argue that if women are elected into parliament they might maintain the aspect of serving the nation better than the men have.



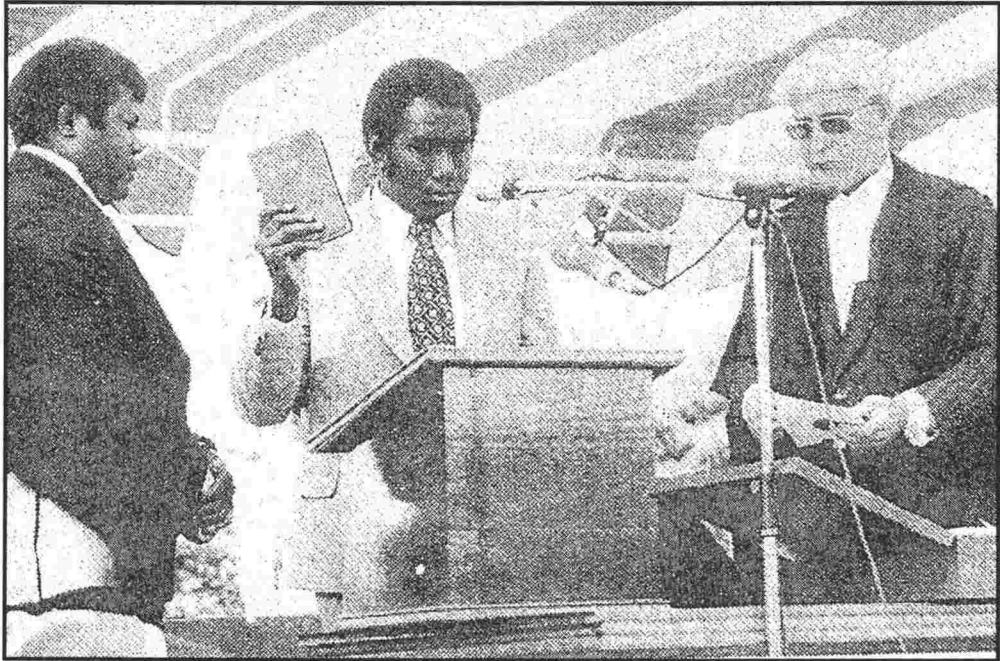
## **Conclusion**

While the Westminster model of political leadership was adopted at independence for Solomon Islands, its practical implementation is more difficult. As an introduced system, Solomon Islanders are still learning how to use it. It is not yet fully understood by the majority who reside in the rural communities and who exercise their voting right and choose their leaders during national elections every four years. While the post civil conflict era is turning towards the Federal system as an alternative, whether that will work still remains unclear. But for now the Westminster model is still practiced.

Women who form forty eight percent of the population are absent from the political leadership and their political role has been limited to voting for their member of parliament. Although a significant number of women have contested the six national elections from 1980 to 2001, only one was successful. While the number of women candidates increased from one in 1980 to fourteen in 2001, the percentage of votes for women was declining during the same period. Lack of women's representation in the current parliament has meant that women's issues and perspectives are absent at the highest decision-making level of the nation. If women are to be fairly represented in the political leadership, public awareness of women and political leadership has to become a key component for women and the wider community. The current Gender in Leadership programme should not only focus on individual candidates but should also include the rural population who influence the voting process. In addition, the women's organisations, especially the church women's groups at all levels need to embrace the ideologies behind why women need to be part of the political leadership. Importantly, if the international communities are concerned about the under representation of women in political leadership in Solomon Islands, they should invest in the Gender in Leadership public awareness programmes rather than continuing the piece meal funding of only certain components of political leadership.

Particular attention needs to be given to address barriers to women's success in Parliamentary leadership. In addition, Solomon Islands women need to revisit their strategies for Parliamentary leadership by beginning from the grass root women and working towards the centre.

Women have the potential for Parliamentary leadership at all levels as a shared responsibility with the men but that potential has yet to be realised. As put by Jully Sipolo (1981) in her poem on politics, the current Solomon Islands political leadership is a matter of striking the right chords and humming the right tune which I argue is very weak and fragile. Parliamentary leadership needs to rest on good leadership principles such as having personal integrity, good personal character, servanthood attitude and commitment. Solomon Islanders must take responsibility for effective parliament rather than a gamble. Parliamentary leadership may need to encourage networking and dialogue with culture and church at provincial and national level.



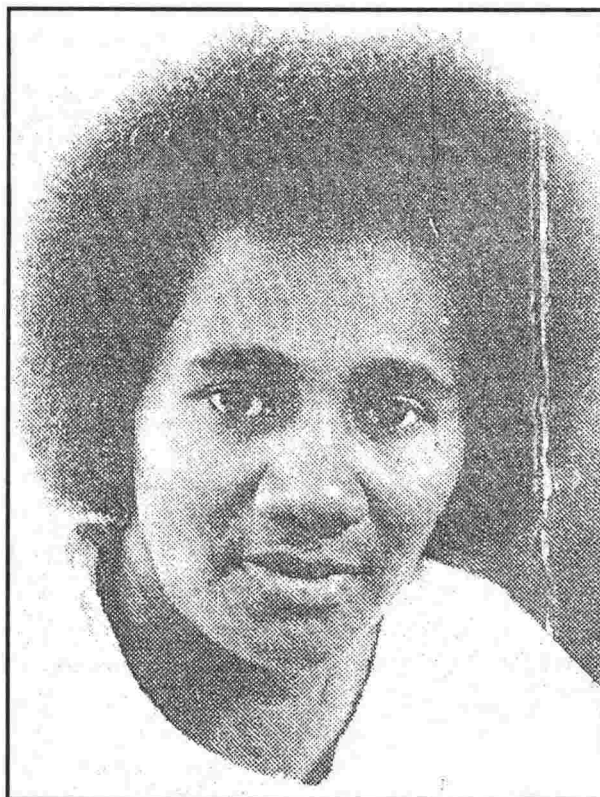
**Photo 20: Sir Badley Devesi (left) & Sir Peter Kenilorea (centre), Independence 1977. Source: Solomon Star October 1996.**



**Photo 21: Sir George Lepping congratulating the late Solomon Mamaloni following his election victory, March 1989. Source: Solomon Islands Information Service.**



**Photo 22: Lily Poznanski, First elected Woman pre-independence period. Source: USP Honiara Centre 1983.**



**Photo 23: Hilda Kari, First elected woman post-independence period. Source: Solomon Star August 1997**

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE THREE LEADERSHIP SPHERES: `Are`Are CULTURE, SOUTH SEA EVANGELICAL CHURCH AND PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP**

*The woman is like the fountain...she is the source...she is the mother, the creator. She is rarely heard in public but she bears a dominant image. A man is either made or destroyed by the woman: she may choose if there should be a new life, she may take the herbs to prevent pregnancy, she may prevent a child from surviving after birth; she may prevent her husband from becoming generous; she may adopt other children and provide meals for other children. The woman who knows her husband well may do a variety of things to make or destroy him (Narokobi, 1980: 43).*

### **Introduction**

Culture, church and parliamentary leadership are distinctive and operate separately from each other, yet blend, interweave with and influence each other at various leadership levels in Solomon Islands. Cultural leadership is active at the family and community level. Church leadership is visible at both the community and the national levels while Parliamentary leadership is visible only at the provincial and the national levels. These three leadership spheres have been discussed in detail in chapters four, five and six. The intention of this chapter is to examine the different and common gender and leadership threads found in the three leadership spheres, in relation to structural dynamics, gender roles, training, challenges and leadership attributes.

### **Leadership Structural Dynamics**

Cultural leadership focuses on enhancing cultural values, shared leadership and communal living. It is dominant at the community level but absent at the provincial and national levels. Solomon Islands constitution acknowledges the importance of

cultural leadership but fails to provide any practical support. The recent introduction of the RCDF which is at the disposal of the Members of Parliament in each constituency may be a step forward if used wisely at the village level. Cultural leadership is demonstrated by its ability to provide leadership, maintain law and order and sustain the rural livelihoods of the vast majority of the population without direct government support.

The church leadership structure focuses its activities on the spirituality of the people and promoting communalism. Its distinctive position as a bridge between the divides of spiritual/secular, gender, community/national and culture/politics provides a great opportunity to influence leadership at all levels in contrast to the cultural and Parliamentary leadership. The church as an institution embraces communalism and shared leadership by gender and is active not only at the community level but is also organised and represented at the national level.

Generally SSEC leadership blends well with 'Are'Are traditional leadership. For example, a church leader can be a chief or a big man who provides leadership in a community while at the same time dealing with land and genealogy issues. In other cases the church and traditional leaders work closely together. As noted in chapter four, the majority of the 'Are'Are population have been Christianised. Conflict arises where SSEC adherents are not allowed to smoke, chew betel-nut, drink alcohol, practice *huekeniha* (releasing a bride), perform some cultural social activities, divorce their wives/husbands or participate in ancestral worship. Such conflicts weaken cultural values and practices such as hospitality, caring and sharing with each other and communal life. The issue of *huekeniha* in particular has brought division amongst those who have given it up and those who continue to practice it.

Parliamentary leadership is essential for the overall governance of the nation state and has responsibility for local, provincial, national, regional and global issues. While it is visible and active at the provincial and national level, its presence in the community is minimal and is only reflected through the delivery of essential services such as education and health. However, the Parliamentary leadership is determined and influenced by the power of the community to select Parliamentary representatives into the provincial and government positions through the electoral

process every four years. In this way the community exercises control over who its parliamentary representative is. Cultural and church leadership spheres that are active at the community level have a significant part to play in selecting a Parliamentary representative. Both women and men participate in this selection process. Ironically the roles and presence of the elected Parliamentary representative is scarcely felt at the community level.

The leadership structural dynamics currently operating in Solomon Islands is shown in Figure 8.

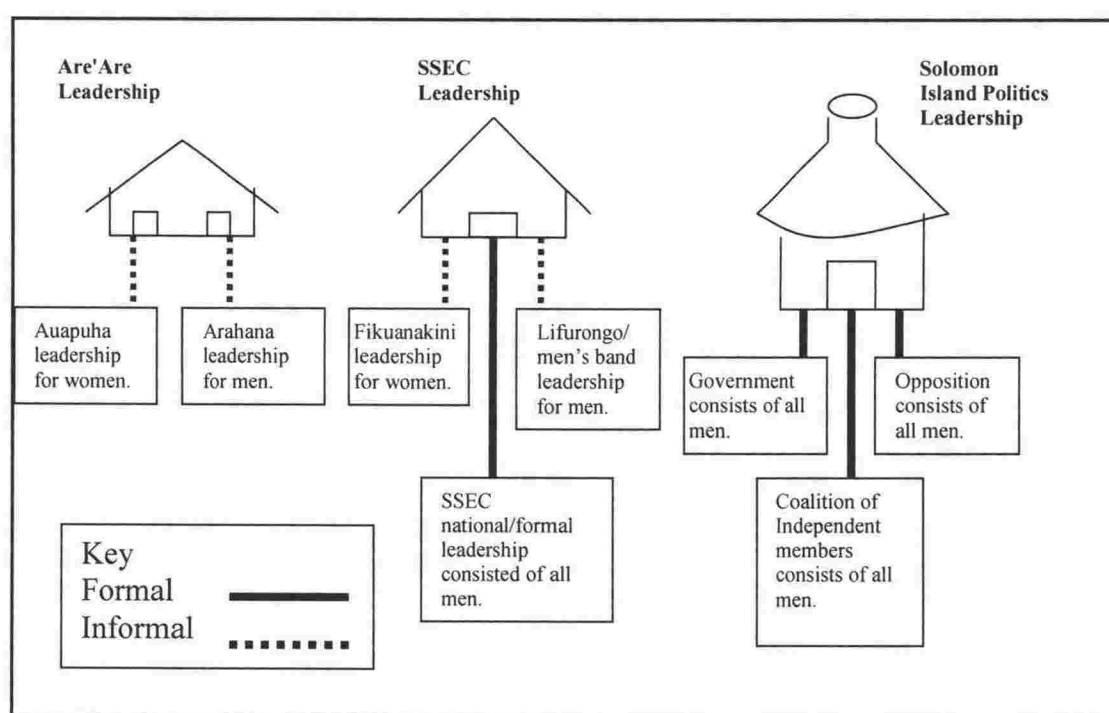


Figure 8: Leadership Dynamics

### 'Are'Are Cultural Leadership: Complementary but Separate

The ideology of "complementary but separate" leadership by gender woven through the 'Are'Are society is reflected in the different features of the 'Are'Are everyday life. For example, *warato'o*, gender roles, the *nima paina* concept, the separate house for men (*tau*), the menstruation hut (*hare*) and birth hut for women, the separate feasts, the separate leadership structures and separate wealth ownership. It is also reflected through *ha'ananauha* by gender, land being traced through male and female genealogy, and in the case of "naming" women retaining their birth name



after marriage. Men and women live separate lives, sleeping and eating separately. Living separate lives means women perform their roles and take control over their areas of responsibilities without seeking permission from the men.

'Are'Are people conduct themselves around kinship and family relationships, social organisation and gender roles which aim at fostering a functional family unit, tribe and community. The question of who is superior or inferior is not an issue of discussion. Narokobi (1980) notes that, in Bukip and Sausa language, Papua New Guinea, there are no words or phrases which suggest that women are inferior to men or can be used to discuss the issue of equality. In addition, Gustafsson (2003) argues that in traditional societies in Papua New Guinea, since there was no competition between men and women's work, comparison was problematic and therefore the argument of superiority and inferiority was irrelevant. The issue of equality between the sexes as debated in the Western context is problematic in a Melanesian cultural context. Throughout Melanesia, having separate space and living separate lives by gender such as is practised in South Pentecost, Vanuatu and the Highland regions of Papua New Guinea, is the accepted norm (Gustafsson, 2003; Jolly, 1989).

"Complementary but separate" leadership has some advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, while both genders have their separate leadership structure, having one common ancestral foundation gives power, status and respect for each other. Both genders are given opportunities to demonstrate leadership at the family, tribal and societal level. Both genders are given recognition for shared responsibilities and the system draws on the potential skills of both genders in leadership.

Secondly, *'auaapuha* provides for 'Are'Are women in leadership. This means that women have power over their lives and responsibilities and that of their family without being dependant on their husbands for survival. Women have power over food production and pig raising which are significant for big-man feasts and wealth. Women have power over the details of feasts and ceremonial activities. Women have power over life of a new birth in the forest. Women have power over decision-making and savings. Women's roles in peace making allow them to walk between warring parties and their words and action can calm hostile situations. Women have wisdom and provide advisory roles not only to their children but also to their

husbands, other women and men in general. Women's leadership have also been accorded with the invention of valuable and important material items such as the traditional drums (*oo'o*), panpipe music and stone axe. Women's roles extend over both private and public spheres. Women are influential and empowering leaders in 'Are'Are society.

*Arahana* too provides for the 'Are'Are men to demonstrate leadership and their roles are focussed on community and tribal leadership, keeping law and order, providing security, living peacefully with neighbouring tribes and communities, performing priestly roles and leading the tribe to war. 'Are'Are men are concerned both with the welfare and security issues of their family, tribe and community and to ensure that families and tribes live peacefully. They too provide leadership. *Auapuha* and *arahana*'s strength in leadership rests firmly on values such as respect, trust, wisdom, commitment, sharing, patience, caring, serving and generosity which are core cultural values (Otter, 2002: 15). In this leadership sphere, both men and women demonstrate leadership as "a process of influence" and "power to empower" each other and their communities. In addition, at times the big man, *na'oniaraha* and 'auapuha leadership does engage in "power to control" in their achieved leadership positions as well.

However, women's empowerment through this type of structure comes with a huge cost where women bear the bulk of responsibilities for food production and reproduction. Women serve men in their role as cooks while men have some privileges to relax and take time out from daily responsibilities, a privilege that women rarely enjoy and experience. The demand on women to perform is hugely burdensome. Women have little choice over their many responsibilities but are expected to perform daily, fulfilling their leadership roles. In reality while this leadership structure provides for a degree of fairness in terms of roles and responsibilities, women dominate the implementation processes while men dominate the decision-making processes of family and tribal activities. This leadership structure is informal and therefore is prone to change and overlap of gender roles and privileges. If this type of leadership structure is not properly adhered to, women bear the consequences for survival. The situation gets even more difficult with modernisation where men leave home in search of employment, leaving the mother

in the village with responsibilities of both genders. Further more, with the population pressure and cash cropping development, women's role in food production will be arduous in the future.

### ***Gender Roles in 'Are'Are Leadership***

Gender roles in 'Are'Are are articulated in birth chanting of a girl and a boy child (see chapter four). A girl is destined to be a responsible, industrious and prosperous woman while a boy is destined to be a responsible man and leader who will provide sound and spiritual leadership, guidance and protection for the tribe and tribal resources (Nori, 2003; Pollard, 1997). The invisible line that cuts across the public and private spheres does not clearly demarcate gender roles in 'Are'Are. Gender roles overlap the private and public spheres. For the 'Are'Are girls and women, they see their gender roles as representing their value, status, pride, self worth, wealth, power, ability to perform, position in society, future destiny and everyday responsibility. Gender roles are life giving and life sustaining for the entire family and tribe. A girl learns her roles much earlier than a boy. Women's responsibilities are many and arduous, yet fulfilling and fitting for community survival.

In addition, women's roles overlap with the men's domain in building and construction. The women's role in construction is demonstrated in them building their own menstruation and birth huts without men's assistance (Pollard, 1988). While men's role in gardening is limited to chopping trees, clearing and hoeing. Caroline Moser (1993: 29-34) divides these roles into three broad categories which are reproductive, productive and community managing roles. An 'Are'Are mother regards her role as very important. She has power and ownership over her domain. She values her role as a member of a community which promotes communalism rather than competition. In recent times 'Are'Are women have taken on economic and religious activities which have added to their normal activities. However, 'Are'Are see a girl or a woman who is hard working and of good character bringing a good reputation, blessing and prosperity to herself, her family, her tribe and her community, while a lazy girl or woman brings shame on herself, her family and is criticised.

Women's roles are numerous, varied, often strenuous, tiring and generally performed daily. While women gain recognition, satisfaction and a good reputation for hard work, this comes with great responsibility, huge cost, many worries, manual labour and physical strength, self-denial and working long hours (Bennett, 1987; Naitoro, 1993; Pollard, 1997) However, acknowledging the costs associated with women's roles, one of the Waisisi women said,

My roles are many and heavy but I have the strength, wisdom and skills to do them for the survival and enjoyment of my family. From my perspective, I see that women are very wise, [understanding] and clever from the heart [not the head] (Pollard, 1997: 40).

Though women's roles are arduous, they are very important, meaningful and women are closely attached to them for various reasons. Firstly, women are trained continuously to perform their roles from childhood years, enabling them to be a responsible mother and a functional member of society. Acquiring skills and experience in their roles gives them pride and makes them experts in their own right as in any other profession. The roles required of them are not beyond their capability, strength and skills. Secondly, women perform their roles from their heart with a positive approach, not their head. The stamina, will and determination to do their work come from within the heart. Women have a passion for whatever work they do. They know very well that without their active involvement, the livelihood of their whole family is at stake. Their roles give them a sense of self worth, power, importance, usefulness and ownership in society. Thirdly, women perceive their roles as a life long responsibility and not a two or four year term contract as in the formal sector. They cannot be voted out, sacked or dismissed in their profession and therefore have the overall control and authority over their domain. Although women's professionalism in their role does not earn them a title as in the formal or academic world, they generally feel proud of their work.

Boys on the other hand acquire skills later in life in leadership, building houses, making spears, bows, arrows, canoes, paddles, and hunting, fishing, gardening, memorising 'Are'Are laws, knowing land boundaries and genealogies and attending meetings. They provide childcare and perform gardening responsibilities as well.

Men's work is not so strenuous nor do they work for such long hours as women. Men's tasks are few and manageable and are rarely urgent and addressed leisurely. Their roles in meetings and decision-making are relaxing and involve thinking and talking. Even if they are lazy and unproductive, they are not heavily criticised by their families and communities as compared with women. Rural livelihood can continue without some of the men's roles.

The men's roles are important but less emphasis is placed on them to perform. Given the roles as a leader to provide guidance, protection and security and to be knowledgeable about land and resources, survival on a daily basis continues without their participation. With the introduction of Christianity, the men's role of traditional priests has been impacted as women now perform priestly roles in the church as well. The fact that women now participate in income generating activities and lead church services has lessened men's responsibilities but increased women's responsibilities.

Gender roles in 'Are'Are demonstrates influential and empowering leadership. "Complementary but separate" leadership allows both genders to demonstrate leadership qualities at their levels of influence. It gives both genders access to resources and leadership without competition. This mutual relationship allows for little domination by one gender over the other. Women are influential and can exert pressure on men in decision-making. In Papua New Guinea, Gustafsson argues that in the traditional society, "the rights and responsibilities of men and women were conceived and institutionalised as parallel rather than hierarchical and the organisation of each gender cut across both private and public life" (Gustafsson, 2003: 25). He adds that men and women perform their work separately and network with people they work and socialise with. As long as they work together to achieve the same goal without jeopardizing their relationship and that of the extended family, they have no reason to interfere with each other's sphere of activities. For women in traditional Melanesian societies such as Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, their empowerment comes from their powerful traditional roles and position in society compared with the Western gender models where power is measured in terms of public performance and control of natural resources (Gustafsson, 2003).

It is also important to note that while *`auaapuha* was strict on women's morality, *arahana* was not so strict on men. For example if a girl/woman acts promiscuously she may be severely punished, however, if a boy/man acts promiscuously, he will be dealt with lightly. This practice discriminates against women.

The "complementary but separate" leadership structure is challenged when a single leader is needed to oversee community issues. For example, in a situation where one leader is to be elected to represent the community, that person will be a male and, in a situation where a community is dependent on one river source for community use, men always bathe upstream and women downstream. Practically, when leadership becomes a single strand, the *arahana* are more influential over who rules the community and are assigned the overall authority over tribes and resources especially in relation to formal and cash activities. If the *arahana* and *`auaapuha* disagree on certain issues, *arahana*'s ruling is final. The men still have the overall authority when it comes to decision-making. *Arahana* dominates *`Are`Are* in decision-making while *`auaapuha* is limited to a certain level of influence and women's spheres. As demonstrated in the *`Are`Are* political leadership during the post independence period, male dominance through the influence of the *arahana* was evident. Looking at the "complementary but separate" leadership structure, men have fewer responsibilities and are dominant in leadership. However, women and men are both present in *`Are`Are* leadership.

### **South Sea Evangelical Church Leadership: Complementary and Saved to Serve.**

The church leadership structure provides a useful mechanism that is able to influence leadership dynamics at all levels in Solomon Islands. Though SSEC leadership is based on "complementary and saved to serve" ideologies, some elements of "complementary but separate" are maintained. For example, gender roles as discussed in *`Are`Are*, separate schools for boys and girls, *Fikuanakini* for women and *Lifurongo* and Men's Band for the men, women sitting on one side of the aisle while men sit on the other side and in some church feasts women are seated separately from the men. However, these separations are not as strictly observed as in *`Are`Are* culture. Women and men cross gender boundaries without incurring demands for compensation.

Christianity's key message on love, unity, oneness, brotherhood and sisterhood has removed cultural separations such as the settling of small inland tribal communities on a single mission station or in a mission village on the coast, having a single church building instead of many tribal ancestral worship places, the removal of the men and women's houses allowing both genders to eat and sleep together. Jeremy Clark (1989: 178) made similar observations amongst the Takuru Wiru people of the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.. Bringing people of different tribes together into one community and placing both genders together in one building was not easily accepted. In addition, Gustafsson argues that missionaries failed to acknowledge the power and control women have in their traditional societies. The disregard and erasing of cultural separation has contributed to the discrimination women experience today in some churches in Melanesia (Gustafsson, 2003: 24). Creation of a single formal leadership structure in SSEC leads to competition for leadership and in most cases, men are preferred to women. Such environment discourages women in SSEC formal leadership. Furthermore, the SSEC's emphasis on women's submission to their husbands as head of the family discourages women's leadership in the church. In addition, the SSEC's discouragement of the practice of *huekeniha* devalues the importance of women in the 'Are`Are society. Christianity also brought division and confusion to some families, tribes or communities when an individual member chooses his/her own choice of the church they wish to adhere to. One very good example was the Hauhui community, West 'Are`Are which was in the 1960s and 70s, an SSEC community, but in 2003, I have observed that there are four different churches operating including SSEC. This development has dismantled the community's cohesiveness. Instead, it allows for sheep stealing and competition.

The removal of separate gender boundaries has brought men and women together, whether in the home, community, the church building or in education. Men and women are given the opportunity and access to leadership, resources and educational attainment but distinction is made when the two separate leaderships come together under a single church leadership. In the SSEC, men still dominate the church formal leadership arena while women dominate the informal domain. The *Fikuanakini*



structure, though effective and useful, operates informally outside of church formal structure as observed in West 'Are' Are.

The leadership positions women have in their *Fikuanakini* organisation demonstrate outstanding organisational skills, management and leadership in the implementation of their various programmes without men's leadership. They take overall responsibility for their activities such as fundraising, evangelism, assisting the disabled/elderly and the organising and running the women's convention. They participate with the men in decision-making and leading the daily morning and evening devotions, weekly Sunday church services, fundraising and regular combined prayer meetings which are also repeated at the Association, regional, inter-island and national levels. Men's involvement with the women's activities is limited to an advisory role, guest speaker, prayer support and practical assistance in fundraising activities and combined women's conventions and meetings. Women's leadership as a "process of influence" and "power to empower" is founded on servanthood, self-reliance, commitment, determination, strength and voluntarism. On the other hand, the SSEC men's organisation is struggling to survive. This suggests that the men's commitment to managing their own men's group is lacking. Men's attention is directed towards the family economic affairs, community activities and the wider church development. Christianity gave men and women a degree of freedom of choice, freedom of movement, empowerment and new leadership opportunities. The fact that SSEC still maintains some form of separation in the church indicates church support for women's roles in church leadership but I argue that separation can also remove women from participating at the formal and national SSEC leadership.

Women rarely put their names forward for election for formal and national SSEC leadership nor have they challenged the male dominated leadership. In the case of the West 'Are' Are SSEC Association, women are given formal leadership at the community level when capable men are not willing and available. Women are also represented at the various decision-making levels of the church. Women's presence at the various decision-making levels gives them opportunity to express their views to the formal leadership. However, women's absence in the formal leadership at all levels indicates that men still dominate and have the overall authority over the church

nationally, including the *Fikuanakini*. The SSEC constitution does not dictate church leadership to be exclusively for men. Women and men leaders have the opportunity to participate in formal leadership, but for women this appears to be in theory only. Selection for church formal leadership is based on the electoral process.

Women's representation and active participation in the church leadership are visible in their own women's groups and at the community and Association level. The *Fikuanakini* leadership structure reaches the national level and is recognised in principle but operates as an informal structure without financial support or inclusion as part of the formal structure. The fact that men do not have a strong and effective men's group network, yet dominate the formal church leadership structure can be explained in several ways. Firstly, missionaries trained men to be leaders of village churches while women were trained to be good wives, fulfilling their motherly roles as well as being leaders in their families, women's groups and communities. Margaret Jolly, in her paper entitled *Sacred Spaces: Churches, Men's Houses and Households in South Pentecost, Vanuatu*, points out that Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic and the Melanesian Mission operating in South Pentecost emphasised that women's place in the church is defined by their auxiliary roles as wives and mothers. The leadership positions such as pastors and teachers were retained for and dominated by men. She adds, "Women do indeed appear as auxiliaries rather than equal partners in the church organisation" (Jolly, 1989: 233). The women were taught scripture, the prayer book, the catechism, reading and writing, sewing, the domestic arts of cooking, washing and ironing, which does not resemble the Melanesian women's tasks of food production, weaving, fishing, collecting firewood and childrearing. A similar observation was also made with the first few Solomon Islands women who were trained at Norfolk Island with the Church of Melanesia (Fox, 1958: 218). In the case of SSEC, women's training in the Girls' Bible Schools was centred on good motherhood and community leadership. There was little access for women at that time to formal and higher tertiary education, resulting in only a very few women moving into formal and public leadership compared with men.

Secondly, women's responsibility to maintain their families and community livelihoods requires a significant amount of time. The amount of time spent on food

production, cooking, childcare, wisdom giving and other household chores leaves little time for formal church leadership responsibilities. Men seem to have time as their roles do not involve everyday tasks such as cooking and household chores whilst women are already overloaded with daily routines.

Thirdly, women greatly value their leadership roles and active engagement in their own *Fikuanakini* group. For them, their women's group activities take a higher priority than participation in formal church leadership positions. Women have invested much time and effort into improving the *Fikuanakini* and implementing its activities.

Fourthly, the nature in which formal leadership positions and roles are structured does not favour women in formal leadership. The principal leader in the village leads, guides, counsels and oversees the welfare of the community. Men are committed to overall church issues and programmes rather than their own men's group meetings and activities. Furthermore, the fact that Men's Band does not operate, not requiring leadership from men will further add to the crowding out of women from the formal leadership by men.

Although women are not adequately represented in church formal leadership, as observed in the West 'Are'Are Association, women are welcome to participate in decision-making at the village church level and at the Association level. Women can also attend the SSEC General Conference which is the highest decision-making body but are restricted to being selected by their Association. There are now two national women's coordinators at the SSEC head office and two women representatives in the SSEC national executive board.

The West 'Are'Are SSEC Association is quite different from the urban Honiara context. In the case of Honiara SSEC Association, women do not participate in the Association decision-making meetings. Such meetings are convened by and for men only. At the Honiara Central SSEC church, only men and expatriate women may preach, while island women may not. Such a rule simply reflects the Honiara Association which is dominated by formal structures and men.

Similar to 'Are'Are culture, when leadership is based on competition for a single representative or a leader through the electoral process, the position will go to a man. This is demonstrated in the third strand of formal and national leadership structure within the SSEC, beginning with the community church level up to the national level which is comprised exclusively of men. It is in this formal and national leadership structure that the issue of women's under-representation and male domination becomes evident. Women rarely put their names forward for election for formal church leadership at any level unless in a leadership crisis situation. In cases where no capable and willing men have been available, women have taken on such formal leadership positions. I argue that women who have leadership skills for formal and national leadership roles within SSEC should be encouraged to participate at any level, given the right skills and appropriate context.

Women, who are an integral part of the church congregation, are involved in leadership to a certain extent at all leadership levels. However, consideration needs to be given to the two national *Fikuanakini* co-ordinators for financial remuneration in just the same as any other SSEC employee at the national level. In order to have some women in SSEC formal leadership, it is vital that first, a significant number of women be trained in leadership both locally and overseas both on a short or long term basis. Leadership training needs to be made available for both genders at all levels. Training only men for public and formal leadership, which was the practice during the missionary era, needs to be reviewed in order to cater for the changing roles of men and women in church leadership. Secondly, the fundamentalist view common among some that only men are fit for leadership in the public and formal domain needs to be challenged. Such a view classifies women as inferior and denigrates women leaders. The leadership attributes which are already being demonstrated in women as leaders in their own women's group, families and communities need to be harnessed so that leadership in the church can become a shared responsibility at all levels both in the formal and informal structure. Both men and women leaders need to possess all the necessary skills in order to provide good leadership at all levels. Women with leadership training and attributes need to be involved in the formal sector rather than confined to the informal sector.

The SSEC leadership based on “complementary and saved to serve” has been empowering for women and has given them greater freedom and access to lead and serve beyond traditional boundaries. However, leadership as servanthood has meant immense sacrifice for women and men leaders. This sacrifice is evident with the growing need for cash to meet family’s basic needs and survival in today’s economic environment. I suggest that while this leadership system has served the church well, there needs to be consideration given for support for leaders’ roles and contribution to the community in an appropriate and manageable manner. Nevertheless, women and men leaders are present in SSEC leadership.

### **Parliamentary Leadership: Equal in Principle, Competitive in Practice**

I begin this section by looking at the question “why have women been unsuccessful in securing a seat in the post-independence period in Parliamentary leadership?” Although around thirty women have contested in the last six national elections, only one has been successful. It has been a question that many Solomon Islanders, both men and women have asked whenever the election results have been announced. For the many women and men who supported and voted for women candidates, it is a searching question.

It is in this national leadership sphere that women are the most under-represented. Their under-representation or absence from Parliamentary leadership in Solomon Islands is a crucial national issue because women comprise forty eight percent of the total population. It is not only a local but a regional and global issue as well. Solomon Islands, as any other developing country in Melanesia and in the Pacific region, still struggle with placing women in Parliamentary leadership. Women’s poor performance in provincial and national elections in the post-independence period has been due to seven important factors:

The first is that Parliamentary leadership is competitive and dominated by men. Of all those who put their names forward, only fifty can win in this competition. The issue facing women in Parliamentary leadership is not simply a “number” issue but a highly competitive process for a single seat. The pre-independence period demonstrated a very male dominated colonial administration. The appointed

headmen and District Commissioners were all men. The public service which has been the implementing agency of government policies is also dominated by men as the number of educated men outnumbers educated women. The Westminster system has little resemblance to the cultural leadership system but is based on Western ideologies of leadership. As a formal leadership system, it does not embrace informal sector leadership, where women dominate. The Westminster system allows women and men to compete for leadership but only those who gain the majority of votes have a chance of assuming political leadership. Catherine Adifaka, an unsuccessful candidate in the 1997 and 2001 elections, argues that although the Parliamentary election process has been established in Solomon Islands for many years now, it is a new field for Solomon Island women. She adds that her attempts as a candidate in the past two elections were for two reasons; first to participate in this tough competition and experience the art of public campaigning and second to change the mindset of the voters. As a beginner, she assumes that it will take time and a few more attempts before being successful (Editor, 1997b: 11). The women have been referred to as "newcomers" to the political scene (Eremae, 1997).

Achieving parliamentary leadership by competing for a single seat is tough. In examining this competition, Honourable Francis Hilly (2003), argues that it is not a gender competition, where men will vote for men and women will vote for women. It is a competition in which voters vote as individuals, exercising their democratic rights. Gender has little influence (bias for men) in this competition and on individual votes. Factors such as the matrilineal system, academic achievements, profession, resources, personality, culture, church and the political bargaining processes influence the voting practices, but realistically, voting for a particular candidate is a personal matter. Competition for power does not reflect the Melanesian life of communalism where men and women make decisions by consensus. It is a tough competition in which candidates both men and women sell themselves openly to attract more votes. The Western gender model for gender equity in Parliamentary leadership for women within Solomon Islands may sound good but is difficult to achieve.

Secondly, generally the majority of women lack the necessary resources and knowledge to assist them to contest the election confidently and independently. Men,

on the other hand have access to such resources through deals with other business men, logging companies and political parties. In a situation where women contest as independent candidates, the competition becomes tougher without party support and financial backup. Most men and women who compete as independent candidates enter the competition as individuals un-attached to any financial and support network.

Thirdly, while the political culture is not in favour of women in Parliamentary leadership, such criteria as education, formal profession and a business ownership mindset further marginalise women. A woman who falls short in the above criteria yet is interested in Parliamentary leadership is faced with many challenges. The prevailing view that leadership and decision-making are only for men while women's roles focus more on household chores, childrearing and food production further conflict with women's intentions to compete for Parliamentary leadership. The contemporary view that men are made for public roles while women are made for private further impedes on women's chances for political leadership. Generally, men and women accept that men should represent their constituencies, but for women, only a minority believe that women too can be Parliamentary leaders. Women are easily convinced to vote for men who promise to assist them, while voting for a woman candidate based on women's policies is still of little significance. The association of men to power, education and wealth is well established in people's minds. Such a mindset places a high benchmark for any woman who is keen to participate in Parliamentary leadership. In this context, women have to prove themselves both in the public and private domain and demonstrate their leadership skills at all levels. The standards and benchmarks are lower for men as they are easily accepted by the public for leadership in the public domain. Reflecting on the influence of traditional culture, Jennifer Wate comments, that "only men are seen fit to be involved in decision-making while women are to be seen but not heard" (Editor, 1997b: 11). This mindset contributes significantly to women's poor performance in national elections (Bako, 2001; Editor, 1997b; Eremae, 1997; Laka, 2001; Lisa, 1993).

Fourthly, political parties which are an important component of the Westminster system are fragile and fluid in Solomon Islands. Past experience has shown that



political parties lack consistency, commitment, firm policies and strong leadership. The lack of legal framework for party registration and affiliation results in Members of Parliament crossing the floor at any time they wish to. The absence of strong political parties as a supportive mechanism restricts the opportunities for women to be involved in politics.

The fifth point is that although women's organisations and groupings have undergone significant development in the last few decades and are often referred to as one of the best mechanisms for rural development, women are not a homogenous group. Women comprise many different ethnicities, denominations, cultures, languages, income levels, professions, social statuses and have different levels of understanding. These differences make them as much a heterogeneous group as the men. These differences contribute significantly to women's unsuccessful attempts in political leadership. Two explanations can be made here. First, it is quite clear that women are a heterogeneous group allowing them to compete equally as individuals against each other for a single seat as well as against the men. Because of this, any woman candidate contesting an election cannot assume that all the women will be voting for her. Emphasising this, Hilda Kari (the only successful woman candidate) points out that while one might expect women to vote for women candidates in order to promote women's issues and policies in parliament, this does not occur. Women generally vote without political policy reasoning and are often directed by males or family members. In addition, campaigning on women's issues and policies has no strong bearing for women in politics (Eremae, 1997). However, men campaigning on women's issues do attract women's votes. This same observation is also evident in PNG where Sepoe (1996) points out that women's issues are not important in PNG politics and women candidates cannot win on policy matters. People simply do not vote along policy lines. Women's concerns for gender, their representation and issues are secondary in terms of competition for Parliamentary leadership. The political culture which is fragile and fluid does not base its foundation on policy issues but on personality and individual competition.

Quite significantly, only a minority group of women who are Honiara based and educated are knowledgeable about the political processes, aware of their political rights and the importance of women in parliament. The majority of women, the rural,

less educated and low income earning do not share the vision of the Honiara minority group of women interested in Parliamentary leadership. Such a minority group may come under criticism by men and women alike as interfering with the men's domain, implementing the overseas donor agenda and being influenced by the Western women's liberation movement. From Solomon Islands context, political support must be sought from the rural women and men who hold the voting power.

The sixth point is that churches impact the voting process through voter allegiance to candidates of their same church. Voting by Church allegiance obstructs the independent choice for good parliamentary leaders. Furthermore, churches' views on gender and public leadership impede capable women from holding public leadership positions which are men's domain.

Finally any intending women candidate will have to prove herself first by demonstrated leadership skills and achievements at the community level. This I call the "*Kuka*" principle<sup>7</sup>, which is "go and do your homework". This refers to the degree to which an intending candidate has engaged with the rural people's lives and activities and made a tangible difference for them before becoming a candidate.

These six general observations lie at the heart of gender and political debates in Solomon Islands. With such an interesting scenario, is there any hope for women in Parliamentary leadership?

### ***Parliamentary Leadership in Solomon Islands: Women Are Hopeful***

In a political environment that is based on competition, the National Women's Policy for shared decision-making by gender is ideologically attractive but so far has been unachievable. Shared decision-making in Parliamentary leadership can be achieved at least to a minimum level through the following. First, there is a need for an educational awareness programme on Parliamentary leadership, political culture and the importance of shared decision-making in leadership at all levels. Such a

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<sup>7</sup> The late Jonathan Kuka, a former member of parliament for West Kwaio, Malaita province articulated the key criteria for a successful candidate was to have done their "homework". By this he meant, researching as well as being involved with people's lives on matters that affect them to the extent that they recognise that they are cared for and loved.

programme should target audiences at all levels, for example, the rural communities, churches, women's groups, youth groups, non-governmental organisations, private and public sectors and even the politicians themselves. Implementation of such a programme needs to engage the different mediums available in Solomon Islands such as the existing networks of radio, publications and print media, workshop techniques and word of mouth. This programme will require substantial financial backing for a three to five year plan rather than piece meal funding for a one year period or one political leadership workshop prior to election. The programme should not only focus on educating the general public about the importance of gender in Parliamentary leadership but also provide information and critical analysis on gender participation in national parliament.

Secondly, good leadership is paramount for Solomon Islands. The issues of women's under-representation and women's policy issues are significant but secondary. Women and men with good leadership qualities are what are really needed to provide quality leadership. The lack of women in the current Parliamentary leadership may suggest that Solomon Islands just do not have a pool of women leaders who can take up the challenge to lead in the formal and national domain yet. This must be addressed by providing and equipping women leaders with leadership skills training at all levels in order to enhance their participation in leadership. On the other hand, men without leadership qualities should not be placed in leadership positions just because they are men. Such men should not be voted in, rather men or women leaders with good track records and good leadership qualities. National leaders should participate in parliamentary discussions and debates and be present at parliamentary meetings. When given a portfolio, they should be a role model by being on time for work and performing to the best of their ability. A poor Parliamentary leader only offers lip service but no action, appearing only at election time. Parliamentary leadership requires quality men and women. Gender stereotype attitudes and differences need to be addressed as well so that men and women can adopt a more positive perspective on gender and leadership. In this way, anyone aspiring to leadership will succeed not because of gender but because of his or her leadership qualities.

Thirdly, the Westminster model and its processes to achieve leadership based on competition may need to be re-examined in order to accommodate the traditional and church model of complementarity, consensus, communalism and servanthood. This will mean that the Parliamentary leadership will need to work alongside the cultural and church leadership framework, communicating with and supporting each other.

Fourthly, the absence of women in Parliamentary leadership could be addressed by introducing a quota system to parliamentary seats. Quotas are seen as an alternative measure to ensure that at least 30 to 40% of the parliamentary seats are reserved for women. According to a report on "Gender Balance in Political Representation" workshop, held in Manila on the March 21-22, 2001, organised by the Centre for Legislation Development (CLD), there are two types of quotas that could be applied: the constitutional and legislative quotas and the political party quotas. This arrangement is working in countries such as India, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Brazil. While quotas may be identified as an effective and efficient way to ensure women's representation in Parliamentary leadership, it could be argued against in terms of the democratic process of equal competition and having functioning political parties. Women who had not gone through the normal electoral process might be treated as second class Members of Parliament or be given limited powers compared to those who were elected (CLD., 2001). The quota system addresses the issue of under-representation of women in political leadership in terms of numbers and increases women's participation in decision-making on policies and women's issues, but it does not necessarily address having the right women leaders with the needed leadership qualities in these key leadership positions.

In Solomon Islands, addressing the "under-representation of women" as a gender issue in Parliamentary leadership is a concern but having quality women and men in leadership positions at all levels is paramount. Thus any gender programmes for leadership should not only deal with increasing the numbers of women in Parliamentary leadership but advocating for good women and men leaders. Good women and men leaders mean those who possess leadership attributes and characters.

## Training

In the 'Are'Are and SSEC leadership spheres, women and men have been trained to perform their roles as leaders in the family and community. This training begins at childhood by word of mouth, by the demonstration of skills and through church activities such as Sunday school and community devotions everyday. Information in the community about how the Parliamentary leadership system works, its processes and its importance is scarce. The absence of provincial and Parliamentary representation at the community level makes parliamentary leadership an outside and essentially foreign entity. It is seen as leadership that is held by a successful person in a competitive context, and as an activity that takes place every four years and is essential only for national and regional issues. Local issues often receive little attention. On the other hand cultural and church leadership give much attention to local issues, hold the community together and provide leadership. In regards to this, one Waisisi woman says this about the presence of a Member of Parliament in her community when asked when she last saw her MP, *No, the last time I saw him (MP), I had four children, now I have six children and I have not seen him yet* (Pollard, 1997: 69) The rural community lacks Parliamentary awareness yet holds the power in selecting their national representative every four years. In such a situation they can easily be misled and misinformed by contesting candidates. Greater awareness of the importance of Parliamentary leadership to the wider rural communities is a necessity.

## Leadership Attributes

The leadership attributes recognised, embraced and relevant for the three leadership spheres include serving, loving, sharing, caring, listening, being knowledgeable and wise, helping, being visionary, having integrity, being people centred and developing relationships. Within Parliamentary leadership, leaders are required to speak English, write, read, debate bills and represent the government at regional and global meetings. While leadership attributes are not gender specific, women and men display various leadership attributes through the roles they perform at different levels of leadership. Women whose domain revolves around food production, reproduction, household chores, community and women's group activities demonstrate more qualities of strength, respect, willingness, patience, serving, caring, loving, wisdom

giving, people-centeredness and relationships. The attitudes of self-denial, respect and providing for the needs of others rather than themselves becomes the central core of their influential leadership. With the reality of women's roles being performed daily for the livelihood of the family, women display great commitment, hard work and hospitality. Such display of women's leadership attributes should not be limited to the private sphere but be given opportunities in the public sphere. If women can display good leadership at the family and community level and in managing their women's groups on a voluntary basis, they could also provide good leadership at the formal and national leadership level.

Men generally display fewer of the above leadership attributes but dominate the formal and national leadership level. In the "big man" leadership system, the big man leader is powerful through his commanding skills and decision-making, not so much in servanthood attributes. Men demonstrate strength also in performing strenuous activities such as construction, fighting and providing security. The attributes of strength, knowledge, decision-making and firmness makes men leaders. Although there are exceptions, generally men leaders display fewer serving, caring, listening, patience and hospitality attributes in leadership.

Significantly, responding to the question as to whether the 'Are'Are, the SSEC and the Parliamentary leadership spheres have a pool of leaders available, a significant number of my interviewees answered "no" or "a few". This response is a concern for Solomon Islands future leadership.

The question of remuneration forms an underlying factor for political leadership. Remuneration has become a powerful tool in attracting men and women into Parliamentary leadership. Such practise is slowly infiltrating through the cultural and SSEC leadership at the community level. In essence, it challenges leadership attributes such as servanthood, voluntarism and communalism which have shaped leadership at the community level and the informal leadership systems for years. In rural subsistence based communities such as West 'Are'Are, being remunerated for community leadership is difficult. Remuneration at the community level could be in kind or a token of appreciation on a regular basis according to the ability of the community or group. It is still essential to retain and maintain voluntarism and

communalism at the community level. Political leadership at provincial and national levels is remunerated and dominated by men.

### **Solomon Islands Leadership –Where do we go from here?**

Leadership has always existed and still does exist in Solomon Islands but is facing many challenges today. These challenges, according to Sanga & Walker (2005:15-19) at the community level include relationships, choices and resources while at the national level include justice, relationships, economy, diversity and ideology. Sanga and Walker argue that these challenges can be addressed by identifying and understanding them in the context in which they occur. In essence, leadership is not new to Solomon Islands and throughout Melanesia (Narokobi, 1980, 1983).

In analysing the three leadership spheres studied in terms of moving forward in the area of gender and leadership in Solomon Islands, I am offering two suggestions:

Leadership in Solomon Islands should be seen as a shared responsibility by both genders at all levels and all sectors. Men and women, who possess different leadership skills, lead and perform differently. Narokobi (1980) suggests that the fact that women and men are different does not of itself mean inequality or that one gender is inferior to another. Judy Rosener cited in Still (1996) supports the idea that women and men lead differently. Women have been seen as transformational leaders while men have been seen as transactional leaders (Still, 1996: 66). In addition, Heller summarises the negative and positive images of contemporary stereotypes of women and men leaders as shown in a comparative study carried out in the United States in organisational leadership roles as,

Men focussed on procedures while women focussed on people, men are remote and inaccessible while women are emotionally demonstrative, both men and women are authoritarian and aggressive while women are not assertive. On the other hand, the positive images includes, women are more humane while men are relaxed and humorous, women are open and friendly while men have separate work and social roles, women are egalitarian while



men think categorically and women are efficient and organised while men work independently (Heller, 1982: 10).

As in the case of 'Are'Are, women leaders, whose roles are performed daily in both the private and public spheres demonstrates openness, people centred, strength, perseverance, servanthood, determination and courage. Women believe that their role in leadership both in the informal, private and public spheres can make a difference as demonstrated in the family unit where they dominate. Likewise, men leaders whose roles are in decision-making, guidance and security over tribal and community resources are also vital. Women and men leaders are equally essential for a functional family unit, community and the nation. Leadership in Solomon Islands should not be based on preferred gender and having the numbers but on the display of quality character. In doing so, formal leadership positions such as the Parliamentary leadership which is currently all men needs to be re-examined in order to place capable leaders, both men and women in relevant leadership positions.

The second point is that women's under-representation in formal and Parliamentary leadership should not be ignored by Solomon Islanders. As a nation that is comprised of diverse cultures and almost equal number of men and women, women's representation at the formal level is paramount. While culture and the church leadership have catered for and embraced women in leadership, there is no reason why the Parliamentary leadership should not follow their example. Women are absent in the Parliamentary leadership sphere in contrast to the other two spheres. For women to be represented in the Parliamentary leadership sphere, changes need to be made to the current Parliamentary processes in order to provide for women and the changing environment in which politics operates in Solomon Islands. Such an adaptation will enable women to be represented and lead at all levels.

## **Conclusion**

The three leadership spheres studied provide for gender in leadership to differing degrees. The 'Are'Are culture as a "complementary but separate" leadership sphere acknowledges women and men in leadership and is effective at the community level. This strong community-based leadership provides for the rural livelihoods and the

day to day operation of families and communities. Women and men are significant resources and are dependent on each other for decision-making and their livelihood. This leadership institution is stronger at the community level but also influences the church and the Parliamentary leaderships which govern at the national level as well.

SSEC leadership is placed in a distinct position to influence the many social divides. The church can be an important catalyst for change at all levels and in all sectors. It holds power at all levels and can engage on national issues affecting the country. However, the church does not always engage in many social issues. Historically, church separation from parliamentary leadership began during the missionary era when missionaries were advised not to be involved in parliamentary leadership. The church structure though is a unique mechanism, only certain programs utilise its network. For example, the *Fikuanakini* informally have the best network in the country from the local to the national level. Yet it can only implement certain activities such as church activities and traditional welfare areas approved by the formal church leadership who are mostly men. Utilising this network for other purposes such as women in parliament would be unacceptable. Church women's individual participation in such an arena is a matter of individual choice.

Parliamentary leadership which is visible at the provincial and national level is based on competition. Although Parliamentary leadership is absent at the community level, the electoral processes for a single representative depends very much on the power of the community where culture and church leadership dominates. This implies that any man or woman wishing to compete for Parliamentary leadership must be influential at the community level. Her or his presence and influence at the community level determines the person's fate rather than by being known at the national level as emphasised by the "Kuka" principle and common within big man leadership throughout Melanesia.

In Solomon Islands, generally, women's leadership dominates at the community level, the informal sector and their own women's groups which depend on voluntarism and servant leadership, while the men dominate the formal and national level whose work is often remunerated. When leadership becomes a single position or a paid position, it is primarily the men who aspire to and hold these positions. To

ensure shared leadership between men and women, the key issue to be considered for Solomon Islands leadership is to place men and women with leadership skills in the right positions at all levels whether in the formal or informal leadership spheres. Good leaders, both men and women are what are most needed to make a difference in Solomon Islands.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

*Leadership development is a life-time journey – not a brief trip*

John Maxwell, cited in (Orr, 1998: 3).

### Introduction

Good leadership will be the key ingredient to take Solomon Islands forward in the recovery processes after the civil conflict that occurred from 1998 to 2003. Good leadership in my argument means having women and men leaders of influence who can lead by example and make a difference at all levels, beginning at the family to the national level. In doing so, women and men will have to engage in leadership, working together in partnership as mothers and fathers of this nation Solomon Islands. Women need not be spectators and watch Solomon Islands struggle to recover but can be actively engaged, playing an active part in leadership at all levels. I believe women can make a difference in Solomon Islands leadership as has been demonstrated at the family and community level and in their own women's groups.

Women's involvement in leadership in the cultural and church spheres is phenomenal and has provided the foundational strength to these two spheres. Women can provide that same strength to the Parliamentary leadership sphere where they are under-represented. Women need to be part of these three leadership spheres as they interact with and influence each other at the different levels of society. Men cannot obtain leadership positions or perform well without women's involvement and influence. The same applies for women as well. If leadership in Solomon Islands is to be effective and practical, one sphere cannot divorce itself from the other two or women cannot divorce themselves from the men. In this complex matrix, the leadership dynamics need to adapt to the unique and diverse context.

The concept of "complementary but separate" leadership dynamics in culture provides a starting platform on which gender equality in leadership could be developed. Any endeavour to improve gender equality in leadership should begin on this building block. More women need to be trained and equipped to involve in

formal leadership where they are absent. Leadership in the community and informal sectors is performed by both genders, although in fact women play a more prominent part compared with men. Such strength was demonstrated during the civil conflict when there was dysfunctional provincial and Parliamentary leadership. The cultural and church leadership, which are informal and community-based, maintained and held the family, community and the nation together. Women's influential and dominant leadership roles in the community and the informal sectors became the basis of stability and peace during the time of the crisis. However, Solomon Islands women with leadership skills need to move beyond informal and community based leadership. Formal leadership within the three leadership spheres need women as it cannot progress positively with only one gender (men) dominating this important leadership arena.

### **Yes – Women Are Present and Absent in Leadership in Solomon Islands**

Leadership structures contribute significantly to the presence or absence of women in leadership. As reflected in the 'Are'Are cultural leadership sphere of "complementary but separate", the *arahana* system provides for men in leadership while the *'auaapuha* system provides for women in leadership as well. *Auaapuha* enabled women to demonstrate leadership in their gender roles as wisdom-givers, food producers, ceremonial masters, diplomats and judges. The roles they perform are leadership roles and warrant them the title "leader". These two structures allow both genders to be involved in and demonstrate leadership. However, it is noted here that 'Are'Are is only one of many different cultural groups with diverse leadership structures in Solomon Islands.

Within the SSEC leadership sphere of "complementary and saved to serve", both men and women demonstrated leadership as initiators, administrators, teachers, nurses, leaders, preachers, builders, sailors, farmers and translators in church work without much financial support. Their leadership attributes of persistence, patience, serving and commitment to their work was outstanding. Women demonstrated genuine leadership and were influential in their work. They provided leadership in

the church, developed the *Fikuanakini* programme, travelled beyond cultural boundaries, providing encouragement and upholding sisterhood throughout Solomon Islands, all at their own financial cost. Indeed women in SSEC are leaders and the SSEC cannot function without their participation.

On the other hand, men too are leaders in SSEC and more so dominate the formal structure. They provide mutual support to women's group activities and oversee community church development. However, the *Lifurongo* Band is extinct and the Men's Band is struggling to survive. While men dominate the formal SSEC leadership at every level, leadership within their own men's group is absent. *Lifurongo* and Men's Bands for ordinary SSEC men have been neglected and largely ignored since the 1970s. This picture raises the question of how it is that men dominate the SSEC formal structure but fails to lead their own men's groups or attend to ordinary SSEC men. Such neglect reflects poorly on men's leadership in formal leadership. I argue here that men's focus is on the nation and church national development rather than brotherhood or that they do not have the leadership skills to organise themselves. Nevertheless, men have shown leadership in establishing and leading community churches on a voluntary basis similar to women in the early stages of church. Men and women are present in SSEC leadership. However, it is noted here that SSEC is only one out of the five main churches in Solomon Islands.

It is in the Parliamentary leadership sphere of "equal in principle but competitive in practice" that women are absent and under-represented. In reality this competition is tough for women as the number of seats is limited and men currently dominate this leadership. Their involvement in this leadership is limited to their voting power for the contesting candidates.

Comparing community leadership where women dominate, with national leadership where men dominate, women leaders generally have demonstrated leadership in their daily roles, women's group activities and community responsibilities. It is the women leaders who show determination, commitment, persistence, perseverance, strength, servanthood, collaboration and cooperation. It is the women leaders who act as the implementing agency for church and community programmes. It is the women leaders who bind the community together. It is the women leaders who make the

church alive and functioning and it is the same women leaders who bring hope and love to the disabled, the elderly and the sick. Women's groups as informal but active institutions at the community level provide the solid foundation from which community and church leadership build their strength. The success of any church and community activities depend very much on women and women leaders. Men leaders at the Parliamentary level are less likely to demonstrate such attributes in their leadership.

In the three leadership spheres studied, women are present in 'Are'Are culture and SSEC leadership. Their contribution to leadership in 'Are'Are and SSEC makes a great difference. The roles they perform both in the private/public spheres and informal sectors guarantee them the title "leader". They are influential and powerful leaders. Their only absence in formal and national leadership means that women must strategise the way ahead so that they could be represented in this formal and public domain as well. I believe that women with leadership skills and good personal character could make effective parliamentary leaders.

### **Empowering 'Are'Are, SSEC Women for Parliamentary Leadership**

The issue of under-representation of women in the Parliamentary leadership levels is a challenge if women are to play a part in this leadership sphere. The two key questions being discussed here are why we need women in Parliamentary leadership and how this can be achieved.

In responding to the question of "why", the women at the focus group meeting on "Women in Politics" held in Honiara in 2003 unanimously agreed that women would make a difference if they were represented at the Parliamentary leadership. This issue of "difference" would be reflected in various forms. Firstly women would bring with them their existing leadership skills of serving, commitment, perseverance, hard work and honesty which are already being demonstrated at the community level. Having women represented at the Parliamentary level would also be representative of the whole population and would address the issue of the imbalance of gender at the highest decision-making level. Furthermore, having women representatives at the Parliamentary level would show to the wider community that women too can be



leaders at that level. This could provide a model for young women who aspire to Parliamentary leadership. It would show that the Parliamentary level is not exclusively for men but for both genders. Also having women in Parliamentary leadership will influence and rally support for women's issues.

The question of how women can get into Parliamentary leadership is a core issue. Culture and church are already an empowering mechanism for women as reflected at the community level where women are active leaders, but that alone is insufficient.

Particularly for the 'Are'Are culture, women need to reclaim their rightful position within their own cultural leadership domain which has nearly been lost in the process of Christianising and the colonising of 'Are'Are. This reclaiming process will involve becoming knowledgeable about 'Are'Are culture, identifying themselves with their own culture and being connected to their people, land and cultural values. Women must embrace the *'auaapuha* concept in 'Are'Are and become women of influence. Culture is very important and as quoted by Sir Peter Kenilorea in his speech on Independence Day, culture is looked upon as "the soul of our society, source of wisdom, knowledge, inspiration and courage for the purpose of building and maintaining a nation" (Saemala, 1979: 35). In addition, it is observed that women's strength comes from below, meaning that women leaders draw their strength from their families, people in their communities and their church women's groups. Empowerment of women will have to begin from below and slowly work its way up the leadership ladder. For the women, Parliamentary leadership cannot begin from the top or outside and then be expected to trickle down to the people. It is not an individual endeavour but a communal undertaking. Community, culture and church leadership play an influential role in empowering women for any form of leadership.

Women also need to be involved in the SSEC leadership at the formal and national level. This means that women need to be actively involved in the church national and formal machinery. In addition, the National Church Woman's Coordinator needs to be treated as any other SSEC staff member serving at the national headquarters and paid accordingly. The 'Are'Are cultural and SSEC leadership structures at the community level need to be strengthened and equipped to handle today's challenges

and issues which are seriously impacting on community life and community leadership.

Nevertheless, reclaiming a position in the cultural and church leadership is not sufficient to get women into Parliamentary leadership. This is where education is crucial for women. Education needs to be both informal and formal. The informal side would involve having community-based leadership workshops as well as utilising print media and the radio on a national level. It would also include strengthening any positive leadership initiative programmes that are already working at the community level. In the case of formal education, young women should be encouraged and supported to go through the formal education system which will enable them to read, write and speak English, analyse documents, debate and question decisions, understand how the Westminster system works, address public forums and perform well in any given portfolio post in government. Formal education will also enable women to participate in national, regional and global meetings, expose women to public debates and forums, assist women to gain senior positions in the civil service and give opportunity for women to provide leadership at the formal and national level.

Advancing women along the formal educational path requires a national education policy on gender equity in education and scholarships. While the Ministry of Education's strategic plan, 2002-2004 clearly spells out that one of its goal was to provide equitable access to quality basic education for all children, it does not mention gender (SIG, 2002). The government document of Solomon Islands National Women's Policy 1998, called for gender disparities to be addressed in terms of quality education, access to education, adequate facilities and the re-introduction of separate schools for girls, but these have yet to be implemented. Solomon Islands government and donor agencies need to revisit their policies on gender equity in formal education and leadership. Allocating scholarships by gender will increase women's formal education.

Lack of formal education for women means that women are lagging behind men and though they may be outstanding in the informal and community sector leadership, their views and participation at the national leadership sphere are still largely absent.

Encouraging and supporting women in both the informal and formal leadership spheres will mean facilitating further opportunities for women to get into Parliamentary leadership.

National women's organisations in Solomon Islands, in particular the National Council of Women and Gender in Leadership groups need to review their approach and expand their leadership training programmes to the rural communities where the majority of women are, rather than centring them in Honiara for the privileged few. Extending the programmes to the rural communities would allow rural women to make informed choices when it comes to casting their votes. In addition, international communities such as UNIFEM and other donor agencies who advocate for women's representation in the Parliamentary leadership need to invest a substantial amount of funds into more long term gender and leadership programmes rather than piece meal funding on a short term basis. Committing themselves to a long term time frame is necessary to producing some positive results. More importantly, these organisations need to work with and support the churches and cultural groups who are dominant at the community level.

## **Conclusion**

Women and men leaders are present in the 'Are'Are culture and the SSEC spheres which are informal and community based structures. These structures are paramount for the socio-economic development and the livelihood of the people. Both genders play an important role in leadership and have a great influence where they are active. In terms of the Parliamentary spheres, male leaders dominate, while women are absent. Women's presence is necessary at all levels of leadership as they are 48% of the population, the mothers of the land and they are leaders in their own right within culture and the church. As such the Parliamentary leadership should equally recognise and value them.

Under-representation of women in Parliamentary leadership is not an issue for only the women to address. It needs both genders to be educated on the importance of gender equity in Parliamentary leadership as a moral responsibility. Even though Solomon Islands political process is complex, competitive and confusing, women

still need to be encouraged to become actively engaged in the whole political process. They need formal education and men's support so that together they can strive for a better Parliamentary leadership in Solomon Islands. Women's skills in leadership which are demonstrated at the community level and the informal sector are also needed in formal and national leadership. They need to be encouraged to lead at the Parliamentary leadership level, while working in partnership with men. Leadership as a life of influence equally requires men and women with quality leadership characteristics to lead Solomon Islands into the future.

Solomon Islands leadership, whether it is culture, church or politics, depends on the roles men and women play and the way they influence each other at different levels of decision-making. Gender and leadership discourse advocates for equal partnership in leadership. With this, Lesley Abdela (2000) argues that with equal partnership between men and women leaders, she believes that human relationships should be less about one gender dominating the other, but rather it should focus on finding different ways of enriching relationships, cooperation and interaction (Abdela, 2000: 16). In Solomon Islands, domination by one gender over the other in leadership or one leadership sphere over the other will not provide a solution to the leadership crisis. Embracing quality leaders of both genders and leadership qualities such as cooperation, collaboration and interaction between genders and the different spheres of leadership are the only way forward. Leadership by one gender or by one leadership sphere is inadequate to lead a diverse nation such as Solomon Islands. All Solomon Islanders regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or culture need to play a part in leadership at all levels.

In conclusion as I reflect on the roles women played at the height of the civil conflict that rocked Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003, women in particular showed leadership at that critical moment. When we talk about leadership attributes such as cooperation and collaboration, women representatives from all provinces and walks of life came together in a united effort. They prayed together, they met with both the militia groups and their leaders, they crossed the blockade together and they sought alternative solutions together to the conflict. That is leadership. When we talk about character as a leadership attribute, women took a neutral stand in the conflict, supporting neither the MEF nor the IFM, standing against the government's proposal

to increase their parliamentary term of office from four to five years, risked their lives and advocated for a “united Solomon Islands”, that is leadership. When we talk about servanthood, caring and hospitality as leadership attributes, women dug deep into their own pockets, visited, fed and assisted victims of the conflict either in their own homes, in the hospital or in temporary tents. That is true leadership. When we talk about knowledge and wisdom as leadership attributes, women launched their plea to Solomon Islands government and diplomats in Honiara and they played an outspoken role in peace negotiation but behind the scene. That is leadership. When we talk about commitment and trust as leadership attributes, women committed themselves to weekly prayer for the conflict from 2000 onwards into 2005 and they committed themselves to peace activities without remuneration. That shows real leadership. We talk about listening as a leadership attribute; women sat with and listened to militia groups, government leaders and victims of the conflict. That is leadership. We talk about integrity as a leadership attribute; women expressed their views on the conflict, called on the militants to lay down their arms, called upon the government to be neutral, encouraged church leaders to take leadership roles, peacefully confronted the conflict at its highest level and voiced their concerns and views at meetings and forums. They held the nation together amidst the crisis. That is leadership. But when women were excluded from the formal peace talks held at Townsville, Australia in October, 2000, that is definitely not responsible leadership.

If any attention is given to Solomon Islands leadership, it should take into consideration assisting both men and women leaders and the three spheres of leadership. Neglecting either gender or any of the leadership spheres will be detrimental to leadership in Solomon Islands.

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## **APPENDIX ONE: Participant Information Sheet**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Gender and Leadership in Solomon Islands.

**Researcher:** Alice Aruheeta Pollard,

### **Introduction**

I am a Solomon Islander PhD student in the School of Education and Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. As a requirement of my course towards this degree, I will be engaging in research on Gender and Leadership in the Solomon Islands. I will be particularly researching the gender and leadership issues within the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC), the 'Are'Are culture and politics. As a requirement of the University, ethics approval has been obtained, as this research will involve active participation and consultation with human participants.

### **What is Gender and Leadership?**

Gender is different from sex. It refers to the way in which females and males are influenced by behaviours and attitudes from various factors such as culture, religion, environment and politics. R.W. Connell (2002) states that *Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes* (Connell 2002:10). While Leadership as defined by Peter Northouse (1987), *is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal* (Northouse 1987:3). The research will look at how gender and leadership influence each other from a cultural, religious and political perspective in the context of Solomon Islands.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

I will be using the qualitative research methods to solicit information by conducting interviews with SSEC women and men leaders in both Honiara and the SSEC 'Are'Are Association (local to national levels). Interviews will also be held with respected women leaders and chiefs of the 'Are'Are cultural group both in the rural villages and in Honiara. Interviews will also be conducted with some past and present politicians living in and around Honiara, representing different cultural groups. Furthermore, focus group interviews will be made with women leaders of the SSEC, Rokotaniken Association of the 'Are'Are cultural group and the Gender and Leadership Committee in Honiara. I will make contacts with the women and men leaders of the appropriate organisations and finalise interview schedules. This is important as each interview will require some time to complete.

### **I Need Your Help**

Your participation in this research will be entirely voluntary. If you are willing, I would appreciate very much your advice and assistance in locating useful data and archival records relevant to my research within your organisation. Secondly, I would appreciate it if you could identify suitable candidates for the face to face interviews.

**What I will do with the Data Collected.**

The data and information collected will be analysed and compiled. This information will provide the basis for writing up my thesis. It is possible that one or more articles may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals or presented in conferences locally and overseas and that some articles may be reproduced for training workshops for women in Solomon Islands.

**Confidentiality**

All information and data that will be collected from the interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be used for the purpose of my PhD thesis research project. The questionnaires and the tapes will be retained and secured in a locker. Personal testimonies and identification will be kept confidential. No other persons apart from me and my supervisors, Associate Prof. Kay Morris Matthews, Prue Hyman and Dr. Teresia Teaiwa will see the questionnaires and minutes of group meetings or hear the tapes.

**Final Product**

The completed research thesis will be submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington for marking and deposited in the University library

**Presentation and Feedback**

Once the data are collated and analysed, a workshop will be held for the presentation of the research outcome for those who participated in the research.

**Withdrawing Your Consent**

You can withdraw your consent from this research at any time prior to the data analysis.

**For Further Information**

Should you need further clarification or more information about my project, you are welcome to contact me at my email address: [pollaralic@student.vuw.ac.nz](mailto:pollaralic@student.vuw.ac.nz), at Gender and Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. You can also contact my Supervisors at the School of Education and Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, P.O. Box 600, Wellington.

Alice Aruheeta Pollard

Signed.....

## APPENDIX TWO: Consent Form

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Title of Project:** Gender and Leadership in Solomon Islands.

- ☐ I have been provided the information sheet about your research project. I have studied it carefully.
- ☐ I understood the information provided and the purpose of your research project.
- ☐ I also had the opportunity to raise questions of clarity on certain aspects of your project and was satisfied with your responses.
- ☐ I understand that I have the right and the choice to withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for your project before the finalisation of your data analysis and the completion of your report. I understand that I do not have to give any reasons if I want to withdraw.
- ☐ I understand that all information that I have given you will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of your research project.
- ☐ I understand that any tape recordings of our interviews and the completed questionnaires will be made accessible to the researcher and her supervisors and that my personal identification in any form or another will be kept confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will feed back to me any direct quotations from my interview for me to confirm that they are correct.
- ☐ I understand the completed questionnaire will be destroyed five years later after the completion of the project. The tape recordings of our interview will be kept under tight security and destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I also understand that one or more articles could be reproduced for publication in scholarly journals and conferences locally or overseas. In addition, I understand that one or more articles may be reproduced to be used as resource materials for gender and leadership training workshops in Solomon Islands.

I would like a copy of the taped interview.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission to be quoted	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, I give permission to be named	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

I agree to assist in this research.

Signed.....

Date.....

Name of participant.....

### APPENDIX THREE: Questionnaires

This questionnaire was slightly adapted to other two leadership spheres.

#### INTERVIEW TO BE COMPLETED BY RESEARCHER

##### 'Are'Are Cultural group.

##### Explanatory note about the research.

Face to face interviews will be conducted with leaders of the, 'Are'Are cultural group. All information and data collected from interviews will be kept confidential.

##### Leadership and Responsibilities

The people of the 'Are'Are cultural group are known for the leading roles they played in the history of Solomon Islands through their active involvement in the Maasina Ruru movement in late 1940s - 1950s, the 'Are'Are Maasina movement in the 1960s to 1970s and their three houses of chiefs.

1. What is so unique about the 'Are'Are people?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. What is the difference between the three categories of the chiefly system?

.....  
.....

3. What leadership roles have they demonstrated in the above movements?

.....  
.....  
.....

There is no mention of the roles women played in the above movements apart from meal preparation, why?

4. What roles did women play in the above movements?

.....  
.....  
.....

Do you think there are significant differences in the way women and men of 'Are'Are culture perform in leadership roles?      Yes    [ ]      No    [ ]

If yes, please  
explain.....

.....  
.....

If no, please explain

.....  
.....



5. How did you attain your current leadership position?  
.....  
.....

6. What are your current responsibilities?  
.....  
.....

7. What do you believe are the characteristics of a good leader?  
.....  
.....

8. Is there such a good leader present in the `Are`Are society today?     Yes [ ]No  
[ ]

If yes,  
comment.....  
.....

If no, please comment.  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Gender and Leadership**

The `Are`Are cultural birth chanting often determines leadership positions, responsibilities and pathway for the individual

9. What do you understand about cultural chanting at the birth of a girl/boy child?  
.....  
.....  
.....

10. What are the leadership roles and responsibilities associated with gender in the `Are`Are culture?

Gender	Leadership & Responsibilities
Women	
Men	

11. How were women/men's groupings in the `Are`Are culture before the missionary era?  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. Can you tell me about how the `Are`Are social structure influences gender and leadership?

.....  
.....  
.....

13. How do `Are`Are women and men exercise leadership in the past and present  
`Are`Are culture?

Leadership	Women	Men
Past		
Present		

14. Do you think there are barriers preventing women from taking leadership in the  
`Are`Are culture?

.....  
.....

15. What programs and activities are currently in place, preparing `Are`Are women  
and men for future leaders?

Men	Women

## **APPENDIX FOUR: People Interviewed**

I conducted interviews with the following people:

### **`Are`Are Chiefs and Leaders (West and East `Are`Are)**

1. Chief John Houtarau, 5/9/ 2003
2. Chief Benedict Paurara, 13/8/2003
3. John Houkuru, 20/8/2003
4. Chief Maheana, 18/8/2003
5. Chief Dickson Maepaina, 25/8/2003
6. Jack Kenioma, 5/9/2003
7. Chief Irumai Manurapu, 27/10/2003
8. Miriam Orinia, 2/9/2003
9. Crystal Reresina, 15/9/2003
10. Seke Houhaaru, 27/3/2004

### **South Sea Evangelical Church Leaders**

#### **West and East `Are`Are SSEC Association Leaders**

1. David Wairi'asi, 26/10/2003
2. Melitus Suhote, 26/10/2003
3. Cornelius Siriurao, 4/9/2003
4. Esther Maepuri, 5/9/2003
5. Ethel Ura'i, 7/9/2003
6. Andrew Ma'ahoro, 14/9/2003
7. Rev. Joel Norihiona, 8/9/2003

#### **SSEC Head office Staff and Honiara SSEC Association**

1. Florence Orisi'a Naesol, 9/11/2003
2. Jezreel Ramoga, 30/9/2003
3. Johnson Fangalasu'u, 25/9/2003
4. Mathias Lima, 2/10/2003
5. Swanson Konofilia, 2/10/2003
6. Amy Aust, 1/10/2003
7. Joyline Mania, 26/9/2003
8. Joy Toito'ona, 25/9/2003
9. Johnson Aira'u, 26/9/2003
10. Eric Takila, 24/9/2003

### **Parliamentary Leaders**

1. Hon. Clement Rojumana, 14/10/2003
2. Hon. Nollen Leni, 13/10/2003
3. Hon. Bart Ulufa'alu, 7/10/2003
4. Sir Peter Kenilorea, 7/10/2003
5. Hon. Alfred Hairiu, 5/9/2003
6. Hilda Kari, 1/4/2004
7. Hon. Francis Billy Hilly, 7/10/2003
8. Sir David Kausimae, 6/11/2003

9. Hon. David Holosivi, 15/10/2003
10. Hon. Walter Naezon, 15/10/2003
11. Hon. Benjamin Una, 16/10/2003
12. Hon. Francis Zama, 14/10/2003
13. Hon. Nathaniel Waena, 15/10/2003
14. Nathaniel Supa, 30/10/2004

**Further Consultations with the following People in 2004 and 2005**

1. Bethaven Ripiapu
2. Ropo'au
3. Chief Ismael Irisitapa'a
4. Salathiel Tapuhana
5. Ro'oikao
6. Bobby Kusilifu
7. Lois Aburi'i
8. Dr. Kabini Sanga
9. Andrew Fanasia.
10. Josephine Teakeni
11. Edward Kingmele