

Case Studies in Contemporary Pacific Leadership

Commissioned and produced by the Leadership Development Unit of the Governance Program at the University of the South Pacific in August 2007, the Case Studies in Contemporary Pacific Leadership project attracted researchers from around the Pacific region to conduct studies on leadership aspects in the Pacific.

The case study on 'Learning from Traditional Leadership – A Case Study of 'Iki'oa Maitani'ohu – Oroha Chief and Priest' was researched and compiled by Mr Stanley Houma based at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji.
Dated: July, 2008.

You are welcome to make use of this case study for educational and training needs, however full acknowledgement must be given to the author and the Leadership Development Unit - Governance Program of the University of the South Pacific. For further information on this case study, contact houma_s@usp.ac.fj



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Learning from Traditional Leadership - A Case Study of `Iki`oa Maitani`ohu - Oroha Chief and Priest

Stanley Houma

Introduction

In this case study, I share some observations and reflections on the character and personal leadership qualities of Barnabas `Iki`oa Maitaniohu - the chief and priest of Oroha in Small Malaita, Solomon Islands. The case study begins by positioning the providers of information on `Iki`oa within Oroha society. It then provides a description of Oroha and `Iki`oa's position in the `Iora ana Maniasinimae (Maniasinimae Canoe or Maniasinimae tribe) including his educational journey. The case study proceeds to discuss a number of real life leadership scenarios in which the chief demonstrated various leadership principles and the possible lessons we can learn from these.

Research Method

This is a case study. Information for this case study was taken from a number of sources. Firstly, my personal observations. My personal position is that of both insider and outsider. As an insider, I am the first born son of Houmapaina, a former chief and leader of `Iora ana Taumarau (canoe of Taumaetara tribe) a parallel canoe to Maniasinimae - `Ikioa's canoe. Currently, I hold the position of the leader of kao`ani `Iora of Taumaerau tribe. My observations come from outside Maniasinimae looking in, because despite my blood ties to Maniasinimae, I belong to a parallel canoe called Taumaetarau. Currently, I hold the leadership role in the middle of Taumaetarau canoe and had observed `Iki`oa over a good number of years.

Information was also obtained through pauniwarana (verbal sharing) with my sixty five year old mother - Marita. Marita had observed `Iki`oa over a period of many years since he first went to theological school to become a priest. In fact having realized his leadership role, `Iki`oa had spend a lot of his holidays with Marita and her late husband Houmapaina to receive much needed cultural education. Marita's observations also come from outside Maniasinimae looking in, because despite her marital ties to Maniasinimae through her husband, Marita is the wife of Houmapaina who was the former chief of Taumaetarau - a tribe with autonomous leadership and governance parallel to Maniasinimae.

Secondly, pauniwarana for this case study was also sourced from Andrew Suraru, one of the elders of Oroha and senior member of Na'oni'iora (front of the Maniasinimae canoe), the immediate inner circle of the chief. In fact, Suraru is from the Maumaurunaeke clan and now plays the role of organizer and spokesman within Maniasinimae and had organized many events and spoke at many ceremonies on `Ikioa's behalf. Although he is from of the traditional priest clan, he sometimes provides advice to `Ikioa on certain matters.

Also from Na'oni'iora is Martin Sukaria's ususuna or written reflections. Martin Sukaria is one of a handful well educated members of Oroha and the son of Puruhanua an elder of Na'oni'iora and traditional holder of the supporter and advisor role (Warukuru) for `Iki`oa. Suraru and Martin Sukaria's observations stem from the front of `Iki`oa's canoe - Maniasinimae.

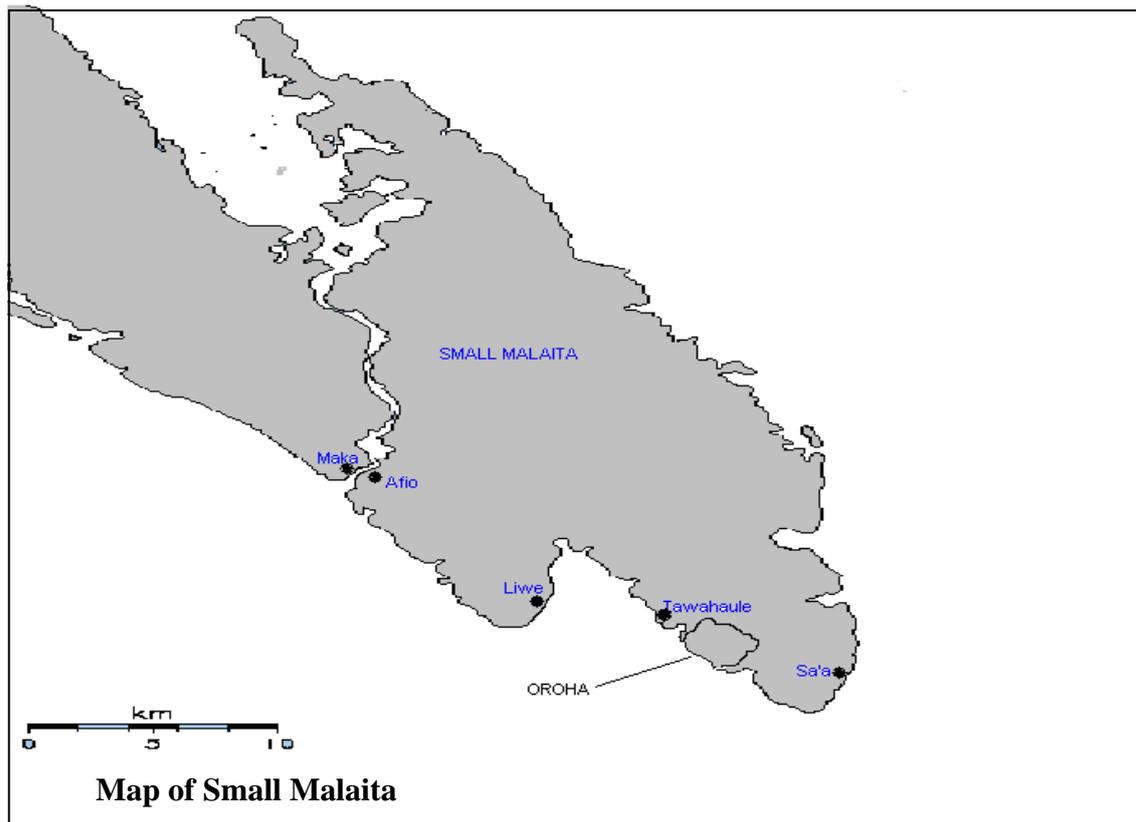
This case study also utilized the *ususuna* (written reflections) of George Clay Hunuipauro, a well educated son of Oroha. He had obtained postgraduate qualifications from universities in Australia. He is the son of Hauia and Kaona`ia of Kaoani`iora (middle of the Maniasinimae canoe). He had also grown up in the Hu`inima of Oroha (Oroha physical and cultural space) and had himself made many observations of the personal qualities of I`kioa both as a priest and chief of the Oroha people.

The written reflections of Luke Tahuniai are vital to this case study. Tahuniai son of Maraurationa and Waisiri, is also from Kaoani`iora. He is also well educated and close from `Ikioa's generation and had grown up together as cousins and had gone through primary schooling together. `Ikioa's mother is Tahuniai's aunty. Tahuniai had observed `Ikioa not only as a cousin and peer but also as person maturing into his inherited chiefly position in Oroha. Also as son in law of Sinahanua - the latest chief of Taumaetarau, Tahuniai had also been in a position to listen to comments about `Ikioa as a leader from another tribal leader.

Also of great significance to this case study is the written reflection of Simon Houma Horahanua. He is the current acknowledged chief of Taumaetarau tribe. He grew up about the same period with `Iki`oa and had gone to primary school together with him. As current chief and leader of a sister tribe, he had discussed many issues of common concern with `Iki`oa and had jointly planned and organized many events. He is well educated up to university level and had retired from government service seven years ago.

Background - Oroha and `Iki`oa

Oroha is the name of a small community in south west region of Maramasike or Small Malaita, in Solomon Islands. It currently has a population of about 300 people most of whom are below the age of 20 years. Oroha territory extends from the boundary with Hauhonohono to Su'urisia River, although, there are plots of land outside of these boundaries. Oroha is occupied by the Maniasinimae tribe of which `Ikioa is the chief and leader. In general usage, the name Oroha is sometimes used to cover Maniasinimae and the parallel canoe of Taumaetarau, although their histories may slightly differ.



As with the case of other Small Malaita tribes, Oroha people symbolize their tribe in the form of a canoe (`Iora). Thus, their canoe is called Maniasinimae. Like every other canoe, Maniasinimae has three broad sections - Na`oni `Iora (Front), Kao`ani `Iora (Middle) and Purina `Iora (Back). Each section has a leader who supports the Head Chief at the front of the canoe. In the case of Maniasinimae, `Ikioa Maitaohu sits at the front of the canoe.

The `Iora model of leadership depicts team leadership or a form of collaborative leadership, where authority is shared amongst a team of leaders who head the family groupings which occupy the seats within the canoe. This means there are different leaders who occupy different locations within the community structure and carry out diverse functions. Moore (1985) made similar observation in his study of Malaita society to understand the environment of origin of Malaita recruits to Queensland cane fields. He stated " traditional leadership on Malaita had both secular and religious functions which could be assumed by the same or different people. In Oroha, it is usually assumed by different individuals. Although, in the current case study `Iki`oa is both a traditional leader and a priest in the introduced Christian church. Kenilorea (2008) also confirmed this leadership arrangement. He identified three kinds of leaders in the `Iora model

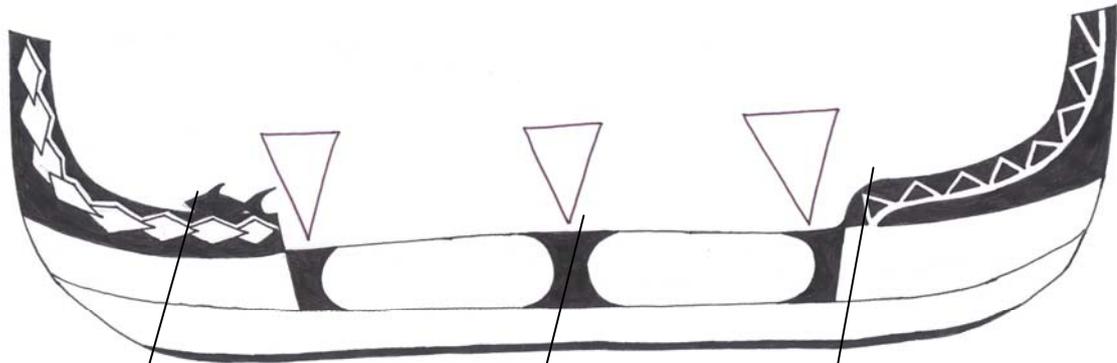
" secular leaders, prayer leader and a warrior or judge" (p.8).

Maniasinimae Canoe or Tribe

Front
Na`oni `Iora

Middle
Kao`ani `Iora

Back
Purina `Iora



Sitting Arrangement in the Maniasinimae Canoe.

Haan`ia -- **`iki`oa Maitaniohu (Chief or ARAHA)**

Warukuru - Martin Sukaria
Canoe

Maumaurunieke - Andrew Suraru - Hanasuu (Traditional Priests)

Paewaniara

Manunaikera

Waranimauri

Kao`ani `Iora - George Clay and Luke & Atkin Tahuniai
Canoe

Rutararamoa

'Apita

Hote Kurukuru

Front Section of the

Middle Section of the

Back Section of the Canoe

`Iki`oa is the second son of U'ipua from Kaoani'Iora (middle of the canoe) and Awaikerapaina the late chief and leader of Maniasinimae tribe or what is commonly referred to as Oroha. Awaikerapaina was the last to be traditionally installed as chief by the Oroha people. `Iki'oa was the grand son of Orosua who was installed as chief at the old village of Anotewa.

Traditionally, Oroha people practice patriarchy in leadership where leadership positions are inherited by adult and capable males. This was confirmed by Ivens (1927) observation; "Small Mala developed a chiefly system which practiced

patrilineal descent" (p109). Similar observations were made by Moore (1985). "Traditional leadership in South Malaita practices a rigid hereditary system" (p.16).

I'kioa therefore, inherited his current leadership position from his father. I'kioa is the third child and second son born in his family. Culturally, Houma Sukaria should inherit the title, but due to mental illness, he was pronounced unfit for leadership role by the elders of the community. The second child in the family - Pa'akeni is a female. This disqualified her for leadership according to Oroha culture. Thus, I'kioa was pronounced chief of the Oroha people. Unlike his father, I'kioa was not traditionally installed. He was however pronounced chief by his Oroha leaders and people and recognized by other tribal leaders around Small Malaita.

I'kioa's age is in the early sixties. He was educated at Palasu'u junior primary school from 1953 to 1956 where he attended class 1 to class 4. He then went on to Pawa - an Anglican mission school on Ugi Island in what is now Makira province to do senior primary school from class 5 to class 7.

After leaving school, he was provided the opportunity to train as a primary school teacher within the Anglican diocese of Melanesia. After completion, he taught at number of primary schools on Malaita and Guadalcanal for a number of years. As a teacher he made his way up to head teacher. Having had enough of secular employment, he decided to go to Kohimarama Theological College to train as an Anglican priest. He graduated with a Diploma in Theology. He served a number of parishes in the Anglican diocese of Malaita, including being the rector of the Diocesan cathedral at Fiu near Auki, the capital of Malaita Province. He retired from active work as a parish priest in 1995.

I'kioa was married to Saukeni from the Ho'asita'imwane tribe a few hours walk from Oroha. They had four children; Awaikera, U'ipua, I'kioa and Arosango. After Arosango's birth, Saukeni became critically ill and died a year later.

Within the church circle, `Iki`oa is a well acknowledged and respected priest. He served both parishes of Waihi and Sa'a which cover many villages of `Iolairamo and Hanue'asu. Also he regularly visited the parish of Ho`asita`imwane. He has influence in his own community and the surrounding area because all the communities are members of the Anglican church of Melanesia. As a priest, his spread of the gospel is not so much as preacher. Rather `Iki`oa is a teacher. Having listened to a number of his homilies, I would conclude that he teaches from gospel stories and scripture readings. His ability to link the message from scripture to the reality and challenges of life of rural people appeals to his parishioners wherever he worked.

To the people of Oroha and the surrounding communities in Small Malaita, `Iki`oa is the recognized and acknowledged chief and leader of `Iora ana Maniasinimae or Oroha. He is an acknowledged Anglican priest who had served the people of these communities as a humble Shepard. Indeed he is well positioned in culture and the church establishment to serve as a leader of the Oroha people. His sources of authority originate from tradition and culture as well as the church. This is further enhanced by education and previous role as school teacher.

Scenarios of `Iki`oa's demonstrated Leadership

Scenario 1: Life as a chief and single parent.

The first few years that followed the death of his wife must have been the most difficult for `Iki`oa. His wife and family supporter is no longer around and the children are too young to meaningfully perform any role in the day to day affairs of the family. This had added a new set of responsibilities on `Iki`oa's shoulder. He played the role of the parish priest which includes touring the parish and assisting the spiritual growth of parishioners. At the same time, he is the village chief responsible for the welfare of his Oroha people. At the family level in his own household, he is the father and now mother for his children. In fulfilling his family roles, he made food gardens, fed the family pigs, cooked for his children, cared for them when sick and accompany the young ones to school. His younger sister helped him immensely, but he walked the distance carrying most of these responsibilities and humbly accepting his new roles in the family. He did not call for community help as would have been the case by many traditional leaders. He quietly advised people to focus on their family needs and welfare and he will do his responsibility.

(Marita, Observations of `Iki`oa, 2006).

Leadership Lessons: Service with Humility

`Iki`oa's demonstration of service with humility is the most humbling observation seen of a traditional chief in Small Malaita. `Iki`oa took the high status of traditional leadership accorded to a chief (Araha) and belonging to the Toohi (chief's house) to the level of the ordinary men, women and children. He is a chief whose feet are placed firmly on the ground and accepts the reality of the village and life itself. In his humility he did not want to burden his people with his own life's challenges. Why should they when they have challenges and needs of their own. He is the people's chief more so than being the chief of the people. Here `Iki`oa was genuinely displaying in ordinary village life, the principle of *humility*. According to the New Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11th edition (2004), humility is perceived as having low estimate of one's importance or having modest aspirations or dimensions. This has to do with thinking about oneself as leader, and the use of power to solicit others' resources, time and effort for one's own benefit. In Oroha language the concept used for humility is *ha'amaimaiana*. Literally, this means to reduce one's sense of importance and status. In this context, humility acknowledges the value of others, their life experiences and challenges and draws no attention to the life of the leader. It may even mean self sacrifice of leaders own status and interest for the benefit of others. This has to do with putting one self low to the level of the ordinary people and acknowledging their value and placing priority on their interests and needs.

Humility is about accepting criticism and showing willingness to listen to other community leaders and ordinary people. "This is what `Iki`oa had embraced as a leader as he is willing to delegate authority to younger leaders from each sub tribe within the community to lead and organize activities" (Martin Sukaria, written reflections, 2007). `Iki`oa is demonstrating servant hood in leadership. As Orr (1998) highlighted

Servant hood is not simply about doing what one is assigned or doing one's rightful duty, but doing what no one else would possibly choose to do. Here `Iki`oa is demonstrating that leaders should not serve their own interests, but the interest of others. This principle frees leaders from excessive individualism, extreme isolation and self centered empire building.

In describing the law of sacrifice, Maxwell (1998) highlighted that a leader must give up in order to go up and give up even more in order to stay up. A leader who serves with humility must lose the right to think about himself or herself. This is a huge lesson for pacific leadership, where many leaders serve themselves rather than serving the people.

This is a vital leadership principle we learn from `Iki`oa's demonstrated Leadership.

Scenario 2: Resolving community conflict.

In 2002, a well educated young man and a potential future leader in Oroha community died so unexpectedly after a very short illness. During the mourning period, an elderly man in the community made some verbal comments which were out of cultural norm and practice. These were perceived as having some implication to the death of the young man. There was a meeting held to resolve the situation. With full intention of making the culprit pay for his misconduct, everyone at Oroha were in attendance at the meeting except for those who were trying to stay neutral. In the heat of the moment during the meeting some hush words were directed at `Iki`oa for seemingly not taking a tougher stance against the culprit. It was decided that the following day the close family members and relatives took a walk to the home of the culprit to collect compensation from him. `Iki`oa could envision how delicate the situation was becoming and he did not like how things were shaping up. Culturally, he knew these men were right to demand compensation. He, like everyone else, has heard what the witnesses had to say about the allegations against the man, and was in agreement that he did breach the cultural code of conduct. As the chief knowledgeable in cultural matters and behavioral norms, he had no objection whatsoever about demanding that the culprit pay up.

On his own initiative he went to see the culprit, and tried to persuade him to at least show something however small, just to pacify the situation. The culprit would not listen and was in defiance. I could only imagine how hard it must have been for `Iki`oa the Chief to be defied by someone like the person in question. I was certain that if he hadn't been a Priest he would have done what any other Oroha Chief would have done right there and then. Simply, give the order and his warriors would happily see the defiant out of Oroha.

(George Clay, written reflection on `Iki`oa, 2007)

Leadership Lessons: Diplomacy, tact, measured sensitivity and self discipline.

Mama `Iki`oa is and has been a chief of a unique kind. In the footsteps of his Christian God whom he represents as a priest, he decided to humbly overlook the defiant behavior focusing instead on what he could do to help defuse tensions. Although he knew that some of the words directed at him during the heated meeting that morning were not exactly accurate. He decided not to comment on them only because he knew it would have only worsened the situation. He instead decided to humbly take the heat. Such behavior in my opinion could only be demonstrated by a wise and humble leader who is diplomatic and tactful. Only a person of great humility is able to demonstrate such discipline and self-control. As a leader and priest of the gospel of love, peace and forgiveness, he demonstrated diplomacy and tact rather than confrontation and conflict. Leaders need to be aware of the value of diplomacy as it involves conversation or action which maintains peace rather than causing trouble and problems among others. Leaders need tact as it embraces dealing with people without offending them. Leaders need to be open and honest, but also need to be diplomatic

and tactful. According to Orr (1998), this is something "often overlooked by leaders in their zeal and their drive towards an objective, they are abrupt and short in issuing orders and in their lack of patience" (p.64).

Leaders must be peace makers and builders of cultures of peace and peaceful co-existence. This means they must always exercise sensitivity in their words and actions not to initiate or perpetuate conflict. Their role as leaders is not confrontation but diplomacy tact and measured sensitivity. A good leader is a defender of peace even if it means taking the heat and temporarily withholding the truth in order to maintain the calm. It may also mean taking the option of silence for a period of time to keep the peace and find less confrontational and direct ways of searching for and dealing with the truth.

Scenario 3: Leadership and community work.

`Iki`oa believes in leadership by example and action. This scenario took place on a Wednesday and I had beaten the drum. It is the day for community work at Oroha. That day the people were cleaning around the Toohi or Nima ni nau. This is the community house for meetings and visitors. I noticed Mama `Iki`oa was the first to arrive at the work site followed by a few men and women. After a while more and more people arrive as the work picked up momentum. After a few hours the bulk of the work was completed and people started to leave and do other things. `Iki`oa and a few men continue to tidy up the small remaining bits. Finally he was the last to leave after ensuring everything was in good order and the place was neat and tidy. This is his normal practice. That is his leadership style in the village (Suraru, verbal sharing, 2007).

George Clay witnessed the same quality in the leader. He highlighted that `Iki`oa's leadership style is, leading by example. He not only gave directions, but was often at the forefront taking the leading role in implementing the weekly community programs and initiatives. "I have witnessed on numerous occasions during my first few years growing up in Oroha village, as well as during school holidays, how Mama `Iki`oa demonstrated this leadership trait. In those days, particular days of the week were put aside for community work on different various activities. Whether it was doing, education, church related or other community activities, Mama `Iki`oa would always be one of the first on site and always the last to leave" (George Clay, written reflection, 2007).

Leadership Lessons: Leadership by Action and Example.

Leaders in the Pacific must practice leadership by example. They must walk the talk. Leaders are not merely the givers of instructions and orders. They must not always be the center of attention in the community and attracting the full attention of the people to themselves. Instead leaders must be action oriented. It is only through action that village people in their simple judgment can be convinced of the quality of the leader. Being visible is important in leadership. It shows that the leader is out there experiencing the same life experiences and challenges of the people. It is a measure of a leader who is a role model for others to follow. Leadership is not about the status and position of the leader. It is action and example oriented which people see and which makes a difference in their lives. Many pacific leaders today lead by remote control. They are far removed from the life of the people they serve. Therefore they cannot perceive clearly the challenges and needs of the people. Leadership by

example is about being with the people, experiencing their daily lives, hardships, sadness and joys. It is about seeing them through their eyes and feelings in order to fully appreciate their conditions of life and lead them to the next level where they may not have been.

Scenario 4: Community well-being and development

`Ikioa's care for his people's wellbeing and development comes to the fore in the way he encourages families and children to take attending school seriously. He spends time discussing informally with parents about the importance of sending children to school and continued support for their education. A lot of Oroha children walk for one hour to attend primary school at Tawahaule and `Iki`oa and other elders of the community have requested the Malaita education authority to build an extension at Oroha. This would enable the younger children to attend kindergarten and classes 1 and 2 in the village rather than walking kilometers every morning to school. `Iki`oa believed that knowledge obtained from school will play a significant role in the life of the young people and their community in the future. As a disciplined leader and teacher, he reprimands children verbally for running away from school.

As a former teacher, parent, priest and leader, `Iki`oa embraces *takuma`ina* or learning is a core value. It is a vital part of his care for his people. For him learning plays a vital role in the development and growth of any individuals (*huni `Inoni*), family (*uruha ni `Inoni*) or community (*komu ni `Inoni*). Suraru in one of his sharing recalled during his teaching sessions for young people in the community, `Ikioa would always emphasize the need for *takuma`ina* as critical thinking and reflection about life in order to improve their village livelihood. In the context of Oroha community, this means individuals and families deeply reflecting on their past and present decisions, actions and level of work in order to target a new level of work or improved organization of the life supporting units in the community.

I recall during a village gathering, while discussing the issue of education of children attending school, he advised all the *uruha ni `inoni* (families) to think about apportioning the use of their time to come up with initiatives to get income to meet the ever increasing school fees rather than just focusing on planting food crops for consumption. After that meeting, a number of families started undertaking initiatives to earn income to cater for needs such as school fees and emergency costs for sick children.

`Iki`oa believed that knowledge obtained from school will play a significant role in the life of the young people and their community in the future. Thus, as a disciplined leader and teacher, he reprimands children verbally for running away from school.

`Iki`oa also believes in maintaining the cultural identity of the Oroha people and their culture. Thus, he encouraged cultural and Christian education in the community. Christian education took place on Sundays in the form of Sunday school for children and youth as well as confirmation classes. Community and family devotions were organized daily in the mornings and evenings. As for cultural learning, cultural education on matters within the public domain took place during informal gatherings of adults and youth where advice or teaching takes place. These sessions included topics such as history, land boundaries, genealogy, church, legitimate fishing grounds and tribal history.

(Houmahorahanua, written Reflection, 2007).

Leadership Lessons: Love, Care and Stewardship

Here `Iki`oa is not only demonstrating care but equally important is the principle of stewardship. According to Sanga and Walker (2005), stewardship is defined as someone who is given responsibility to look after something important for some else. In this case it is the community resources of the Oroha people. Besides being the custodian of community resources of the Oroha people, `Iki`oa is a steward and assumes responsibility over the children and youth of Oroha who are the future of the community. `Iki`oa believes as current leader, he needs to prepare the future of the community, thus he places significant value on the education and schooling of the children and youth of the community. Many leaders who are stewards abuse or overuse resources belonging to the people and are careless about caring for the current welfare and envisioning the future for children and youth.

Care and stewardship is guided by some key principles. These include; *public trust* which demands that leaders perform their responsibilities in a way that they do not lose the trust of the people who are under their care. Good stewardship tends to replace the fear many leaders have of being questioned and criticized by people. Commitment to *public interest* is also a vital principle in care and stewardship. This enables a leader to use the resources and authority of their position, perform their responsibilities and use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of all. According to Sanga and Walker (2005), to maintain public interests needs a leader to hold firmly to democratic processes and ethical principles. The personal interest of leaders must always take second place to the interest of those they serve.

Care and stewardship also means leaders must adhere to the principle of *accountability*. This means that as stewards of community resources, leaders must keep the community or organization informed about the decisions, policies and actions relating to the care and use of their resources. Thus, it is in order for people, organizations and the media to ask questions about the care and use of community and public resources. Stewardship in a way is based on the principle of love. `Iki`oa loved his people, so exercised care in looking after their welfare.

Leaders must maintain respectability that is the confidence of the public and the community. In keeping good character, leaders will ensure respect not only for themselves but also for the positions they hold in the community or organization. Additionally, leaders must maintain the principle of independent judgment. “This means within democratic societies, the media, academics, civil society, trade unions, women’s groups, chiefs, churches and student groups have contributions to make in questioning, critiquing and calling for explanations from leaders on their public duties. Leaders must exercise solid judgment themselves and be open to independent judgment from others and not only listen to their colleagues and friends” (Sanga and Walker, 2005: 100).

Conclusion

In this case study I have shared a bit of the life and leadership of `Iki`oa Maitaniohu – the Oroha chief and priest. I have used observations and written reflections of people from different sections of the Oroha community. As the case study is about the chief of the Oroha people, it is important to position the informants in the Maniasinimae

canoe. This is done at the beginning of the case study. The context of Oroha is provided, so is the positioning of `Iki`oa Maitaniouhu to show the legitimacy of his position and role both as Oroha chief and priest. The rest of the case study focuses on scenarios in which `Iki`oa demonstrated various leadership principles and the leadership lessons we can learn as current leaders or students of leadership. It is a simple case study of a humble chief and priest whose ethical principles demonstrated through his life and can teach us so much in terms of learning from traditional leadership in our leadership development efforts in the Pacific.

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