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**THE GREAT COUNCIL OF CHIEFS AND FIJIAN GOVERNANCE**

**ARE THEY STILL RELEVANT IN MODERN FIJI?**

**By**

**Soderberg, Albert**

**THESIS**

Submitted to  
KDI School of Public Policy and Management  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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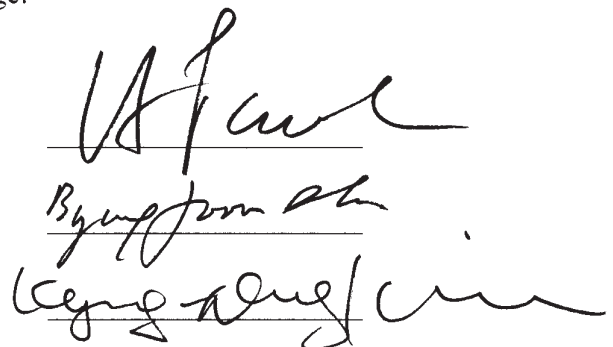
**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY**

Committee in charge:

Professor Hun Joo PARK, Supervisor

Professor Byung Joon AHN

Professor Kyong Dong KIM



The image shows three handwritten signatures in black ink, each written over a horizontal line. The top signature is 'A. Soderberg', the middle one is 'Byung Joon Ahn', and the bottom one is 'Kyong Dong Kim'.

Approval as of November , 2010

## ABSTRACT

# **THE GREAT COUNCIL OF CHIEFS AND FIJIAN GOVERNANCE**

## **ARE THEY STILL RELEVANT IN MODERN FIJI?**

By

SODERBERG, Albert

The Great Council of Chiefs which is the body tasked with looking after Fijian interests was removed by the interim government in 2007. The study investigated through the use of both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection the question of the continued relevancy of the GCC in the governance of the indigenous Fijian population. This was made possible by way of literature review, use of questionnaires, personal interviews and informal discussions. The findings from the responses did agree with the hypothesis of the continued relevance of the GCC. However, apart from the literature review discussions on good governance, participants included two main recommendations amongst others for ensuring proper governance in the Fijian context – better education and an apolitical body. The GCC may need to take heed of these recommendations in order to ensure they provide the type of governance that the indigenous Fijians expect from their chiefs and at the same time keep the trust and retain the goodwill of their people.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife Sisi, my children Em, Jone, Tina and Sisa, my late parents Tola and Miliakere Soderberg, my late sister-in-law Lo Soderberg and to my *tokatoka* members of Namalata, *vanua* of 'Orocau in the province of Ca'audrove, Fiji Islands.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to gratefully acknowledge my debts and gratitude to the following people without whom I would not have been able to complete this research.

First and foremost my thanks to my God for his guidance, to KDI, the MPP faculty and the nation of South Korea for allowing me to be a part of a great learning institution, to Professor Hun-Joo Park for his advise and constant encouragement as my supervisor, Professor Seth Leighton for checking the draft chapters and for proofreading, Professor Ropate Qalo of the University of the South Pacific for his insights, Mr. Orisi Seruitanoa and Mrs. Mere Fisher for allowing their schools to participate with the questionnaires, my family members for ensuring the questionnaires were printed and distributed, Tata Tukana, Tata Bari and Tata Vuci for allowing me to interview them, the villagers of Nakobo and Nanuca for their help, my brother Naca and wife Sala, brother Ura and family members for looking after me in the village, Tata Sio for his support, all who participated with the questionnaires and the interviews and finally Tata Naca and Nei Oni for enabling me to travel to Fiji to collect my research data.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which was adopted on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007 sets out the “individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, as well as their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and other issues”. It also "emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions, and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations"<sup>1</sup>. It "prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples", and it "promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them and their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development"<sup>2</sup> This declaration provides a basis for respecting the rights of indigenous people the world over and gives them ownership of their way of life. Fiji is a small South Pacific nation which is inhabited by indigenous Fijians for whom this recognition could not have come at a better time in their history even though the idea of indigenous rights has had a varied historical background.

Fiji was a collection of “warring and contending *vanua* or chiefdoms before cession in 1874”<sup>3</sup>. In 1861, Smythe reporting back to the British government on the political situation in Fiji was reported by the Fiji Times of September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 as having noted that “there are in the group probably not less than forty independent tribes, twelve of which from their superior influence maybe considered virtually to govern it” The British had the task of imposing unity in a place where it had never existed before in order to be able to govern. Legitimacy was

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<sup>1</sup> Frequently Asked Questions: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations adopts Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples United Nations News Centre, 13 September 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Madraiwiwi, Joni. *Governance in Fiji: The interplay between indigenous tradition, culture and politics*. (Keynote address: 2009)

granted to the British setup in Fiji because in contrast to the usual format of a colonizer taking over a country by force, Fiji and its chiefs actually requested Queen Victoria to rule and govern Fiji<sup>4</sup>. The main task of the British government was to unite the various chiefs in their individual provinces into a combined whole for ease of governance. In establishing the Fijian Administration, Gordon further wished to preserve and protect Fijian society as he saw it, in its natural state<sup>5</sup>. The Great Council of Chiefs or GCC thus came into being as a body of leading chiefs representing the 14 provinces of Fiji in 1876 to look after the interests of the indigenous Fijian population and be the linkage and voice of the Fijian people to the government of the day. While skeptics argued that the “GCC was merely a rubber stamp” to what the British did in Fiji<sup>6</sup> other writers claim that the body “actually advised the British on how best to govern the indigenous population.”<sup>7</sup> They were tasked with the governance of and ensuring that Fijian ownership of their resources, beliefs, traditions and their whole way of life was never interfered with. They had been doing very well in their noble task as proven by the fact that for example, Fijians still own 83% of the 18, 270 square kilometers of land that makes up the Fiji Islands. However, the GCC was removed from power in April, 2007 after 130 years of Fijian governance.

The concern for the writer is that with the removal of the GCC who were the indigenous Fijian mouthpiece to government, there is no one to speak for them concerning their lands and resources. The concern is that Fijians will go the way of the American Indians who now own virtually nothing and are living in reservations in a land they once roamed freely. There is also the worry that given his small population the Fijian has the real threat of losing his

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<sup>4</sup> *History of Fiji Islands*

[www.fijibure.com/fijinotes.htm](http://www.fijibure.com/fijinotes.htm) (accessed January 11, 2010)

<sup>5</sup> Madraiwiwi, Joni. *Governance in Fiji: The interplay between indigenous tradition, culture and politics.* (Keynote address: 2009)

<sup>6</sup> *Fiji: Interim PM sacks the GCC*

[www.southasiananalysis.org](http://www.southasiananalysis.org) (accessed August 26, 2010)

<sup>7</sup> *The Great Council of Chiefs*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Council\\_of\\_Chiefs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Council_of_Chiefs) (accessed August 26, 2010)

identity.<sup>8</sup> For the GCC, ways and means need to be identified on how to improve their leadership and governance capabilities. Finally, the best strategy for ensuring that they are never again removed from their traditional and Constitutional duties will also need to be looked at.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to determine the relevancy if any of the GCC in contemporary Fiji bearing in mind comments from Fijian citizens one such which states “what the Great Council of Chiefs is doing is irrelevant and they should not be taken seriously.”<sup>9</sup> The mere fact that the GCC was removed and disbanded by the interim government would seem to indicate that they were irrelevant. However, this study wishes to dig deeper into the issue and not blindly accept the government’s decision bearing in mind the importance of the body to the Fijian people.

In addition, the study also aims to look at ways and means whereby this august body can improve itself to meet the challenges of modern Fiji and as a result do better in their appointed task of Fijian governance if and when they are allowed back into their defined constitutional role.

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<sup>8</sup> 2007 Census estimation is 531,092 for 2008

<sup>9</sup> *Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs*  
[www.rnzi.com/](http://www.rnzi.com/) (accessed October 25, 2009)

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

The GCC is an institution and also a socio – political power base in Fijian society. They are part and parcel of the Fijian psyche and have been so since 1876. Fijian communal lives revolve around their chiefs and the decisions they make. They are seen to have God given rights and believed to possess almost supernatural powers when it came to making the right decisions for their peoples. They open up doors whether to government or other sectors of society that would otherwise remain closed to the general Fijian public.

The indigenous Fijians have come to rely on the body to ensure that their interests and their continued well being were seen to by the government of the day. With their removal, the Fijians do not have guaranteed access and linkage into the government and a voice in their own country for matters that concern their very survival as a race. As Fijians make up only half of the population, there is the worry that with no one to champion their cause, they stand to lose not only their identity but their very existence to the more economically powerful and generally better educated Indo – Fijians.

The topic therefore is worth studying and the problem needs to be addressed as the alternative could be internal strife and conflicts between the two major races. This happened in the past during the 1987 and 2000 coups when Fijian ethno-Nationalism had raised its ugly head. This had led to looting, burnings, beatings, displacements and threats being directed at the Indo – Fijian. It all came about because the Fijian did not feel safe in his country anymore when Indo – Fijians came to power in Parliament and touched on and attempted to change policies that were sacred to Fijians and their wellbeing and which had been there from time immemorial. The GCC as a body was used extensively by the interim government, the armed forces, the church and NGOs to help bring things under control again. With their removal,

that voice of reason and moderation is no longer there if things ever got out of hand again.

#### 1.4 **Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that there is definitely a place for the GCC in modern Fiji and for continuing good Fijian governance and that the body will always be relevant in as far as the indigenous Fijian is concerned.

#### 1.5 **Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to determine the continued relevance of the GCC for Fijian governance in modern Fiji. The specific objectives are to determine how much Fijians know and understand the roles of the GCC, their standing with rural and urban Fijians at present and the ways and means whereby the GCC as a body can be improved upon to meet the challenges of a modern Fijian society.

#### 1.6 **Scope**

The researcher has limited this study to assessing thirty two tertiary and upper secondary level Fijian students from both a rural boarding and an urban boarding school as these students tend to come from all over Fiji to continue their education in these institutions. In addition, these senior students are deemed to have an interest in what is happening politically and socially around them as they prepare to leave and go out into the world of work.

The twenty one well educated Fijians who were part of the study were picked as most of them are serving in the government of the day, in NGOs and teaching in higher educational institutions so have direct linkage to what is happening on a day to day basis.



Finally, ten interviewees were chosen from the village and the urban area. This number is made up of a clan chief and one commoner from one village and a sub-clan chief, his brother and another commoner from another village. The village and rural setting is the traditional power base of the GCC. The interviewees from the urban area were chosen as they worked in government and were closer to the seat of power so can gauge what is happening.

### 1.7 **Limitations**

Due to time limitations, the writer could not travel throughout Fiji to get the numbers needed for the questionnaires and interviews for a more realistic assessment so concentrated on the two main islands where he went for the data collection. As the two main protagonists, the writer decided not to include personnel from both the army and the GCC as results may have been biased. Lower secondary students in Fiji generally do not show much interest in politics and social issues in as far as it does not affect them personally so the writer opted for the upper level secondary students for the study.

Indo Fijians who make up half of the population were brought to Fiji between 1879 and 1916 as indentured laborers<sup>10</sup>. They brought their own culture and traditions with them and so have always been regarded as outsiders by the native population even though there have been intermarriages and other attempts at integration between the two major races. Their views therefore were not included because this was specifically an indigenous Fijian issue and as the writer feels that the GCC and the Fijians whom they represent need to get their house in order first in terms of intra-provincial and inter-provincial relationship before they can move on to the other major race.

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<sup>10</sup> *Fiji Indian National Congress*  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiji\\_Indian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiji_Indian) (accessed January 11, 2010)

The results from the literature review, questionnaires, interviews and informal discussions will be analyzed to see how they match the main research questions and the hypothesis as posited by the writer. Once this has been determined, recommendations will be included on the best possible ways to solve the impasse between the interim government and the GCC and thus ensure that the Fijian people get their voices heard.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Background/ Roles of the GCC

The GCC is a traditional Fijian institution that was “established by the British under Gordon following consultations with a number of chiefs on how best to govern the colony’s indigenous population”<sup>11</sup> two years after Fiji was colonized in 1874. Thus it could be termed the “classic ‘neo-traditional’ institution established through a blending of traditional structure with colonial law and its administrative and consultative requirements.”<sup>12</sup> The “main catalyst to the initial formation of this body was the indiscriminate sale and leasing of lands by chiefs to white settlers, planters and other vested interests that had started appearing on the scene.”<sup>13</sup> This was often done without the knowledge of the people settling on the land. Gordon then “summoned the chiefs to outline their traditional rights to the land so legislation could be framed. The present Native Lands Trust Board as the guardian of land rights in Fiji thus came about as a direct result of the initiative by Gordon.”<sup>14</sup>

Two opposing views were considered in 1876 the first being the “Western concept of private enterprise and capitalistic notion of self reliance and the other was the socio/ cultural and traditional system as had existed.”<sup>15</sup> To avoid social disruptions and because it augured well with existing custom, the second option was chosen and so the GCC came into prominence. In “1875 the colonial government incorporated a system of Fijian administration into it’s existing structure such that natives could manage their own affairs.....The apex of this

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<sup>11</sup> *The Great Council of Chiefs*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Council\\_of\\_Chiefs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Council_of_Chiefs) (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>12</sup> *Changing role of the GCC*  
<http://epress.anu.edu.au/> (accessed August 20, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> *Fijian custom and culture: GCC*  
<http://www.fijiancustomculture.blogspot.com/> (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> *A primer on Fijis GCC*  
<http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2007/> (accessed August 24, 2010)

system was the Native Council [forerunner of the GCC] linking village authority to the governor himself. While the constitutional role of the GCC is to appoint the President, Vice President and 14 members of Senate, it's primary function is to submit to the President such recommendations and proposal it may see fit for the benefit of the Fijian people. It also considers questions relating to good governance and well being of the Fijian people”<sup>16</sup> Amongst the achievements of the GCC was the “recommendation for the proprietary unit of native land to be the *mataqali* (clan/tribe), recommendation to establish the Native Land Trust Board, the roles it played in both the 1987 and 2000 coups and it's role in severing it's ties to one political party to ensure Fijian political unity. The period 1944 – 1967 was a golden era in the annals of Fijian society due to bills and proposals put forward by Mitchell and modern Fiji's founder Ratu Sukuna. Features of this era included – law and order prevailing in Fijian villages, no-existence of poverty, natives living in well maintained *buves* (traditional houses) and general respect for the chiefly institution.”<sup>17</sup>

As of April 2007, the body had consisted of fifty five members, made up of the President, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the nation as ex officio members, six chiefs, 42 provincial council members, three Rotuma Island Council members and the sole life member Sitiveni Rabuka<sup>18</sup> “A few have tertiary education, careers as bureaucrats, professionals or politicians but the majority have relatively little higher formal education and many live in their villages.”<sup>19</sup> For policy changes and other matters pertaining to the Fijian people, especially their land<sup>20</sup> which was sacred to them, the GCC were informed and their wisdom and counsel prevailed upon for the continued well being of the indigenous Fijian. Indeed it is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> *A primer on Fiji's GCC*  
<http://archives.pireport.org/> (accessed July 6, 2009)

<sup>19</sup> *Changing roles of the GCC*  
<http://epress.anu.edu.au/> (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>20</sup> Fiji landowning units had customary rights to occupy and use such land even though this had no legal bindings

considered almost compulsory for government to consult and secure the approval of the GCC before making any constitutional changes although nothing in the Constitution requires it to do so.<sup>21</sup> This setup ensured harmony and peace between the Fijian and other races that began to arrive to trade, work, spread the Gospel and settle in Fiji from the 1800's up to the present. On the international front, chiefs of Fiji helped convince Fijians to join the army in World War 2 with the aid of Ratu Sukuna who is said to have stated: "*Eda na sega ni kilai nai taukei kevaka e na sega mada ni dave e liu na noda dra*". This translates as "Fijians will never be recognized unless our blood is shed first" (Ravuvu, 1988). Such was the philosophy behind young indigenous Fijian men's recruitment in great numbers to the British war effort in the 1940s to fight for their highest chief, King George of England.

On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the GCC was removed and their Constitutional duties suspended by another entrenched Fijian institution the Fiji Military Forces. The GCC was removed according to the interim PM because "they were meddling in politics and made decisions that were not in the interest of the people of Fiji" (Chandrasekharan, 2007) Not only was this august body removed, but the Ministry of Fijian Affairs which had ensured their linkage to the government was also downgraded to the Department of Indigenous Affairs as per the 2008 Budget as reported in the Fiji Times of November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Qarase the PM ousted by the 2006 coup stated "the changes have been both insensitive and disrespectful to the Fijian thinking, culture and tradition"<sup>22</sup>

Indeed for the majority of the Fijian population, these actions came as a shock. These two institutions which ensured their interests were looked after and which had been around for a long time doing just that were now both gone from the Fijian landscape. It would not be too

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<sup>21</sup> *The Great Council of Chiefs*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Council\\_of\\_Chiefs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Council_of_Chiefs) (accessed August 26, 2010)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

farfetched to say that for the Fijian people, one used to living communally with chiefs as their leaders, especially for those based in the rural areas, a feeling of helplessness, loss and anger would have been the order of the day<sup>23</sup>. Traditionally, the “vanua” or land is the powerbase of the GCC. This is where the bulk of the indigenous Fijians live in their communal village setups and where the relationship between the people and the chiefs are at their strongest.

At the same time, there had been a general feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the urban based and educated Fijians that the GCC needed to be reassessed. Matters in which the GCC had a hand and which had been detrimental to Fijian interests apart from the indiscriminate sale of lands in the 1800s, included Monasavu Hydroelectric Dam which had been in operation with minimum financial benefits for the landowners since late 1970’s for the use of 110<sup>24</sup> square kilometers of their land; the Fiji Times of April 21<sup>st</sup> 2009, reported 456 acres of Yaqara native land was converted to freehold land without consultation with the Fijian owners; the Fijian Holdings<sup>25</sup> saga; the \$20 million<sup>26</sup> given as a loan to the body which was mysteriously converted into an interest free loan to name just a few. The question had been raised that if the GCC did not speak on the Fijian’s behalf on these issues, who then did they speak for?

The Fiji Times of April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 also reported that the GCC’s integrity was challenged during the 2000 coup when it was branded the “Great Council of Thieves” by another chief. It has also been alleged that at the GCC meeting in early 2007, a chief “pleaded for chiefs to be true to their calling as leaders of the people”<sup>27</sup> Does this mean that they have not been truthful? Le Mode (a pseudonym) stated “...best to do without them (GCC) since they are

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<sup>23</sup> *Gateway to Fiji, Fiji News....*

[www.fijilive.com/news\\_new/index.php/news/show\\_news/5610](http://www.fijilive.com/news_new/index.php/news/show_news/5610) accessed September 3, 2009

<sup>24</sup> *Melanesian Geo*

[melanesiangeo.org](http://melanesiangeo.org) (accessed September 3, 2009)

<sup>25</sup> *Fiji live*

[www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com) (accessed September 3, 2009)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

irrelevant democratically speaking’,<sup>28</sup>

A great many studies and papers have been written by scholars on the GCC and the role they play and how they function in Fijian society including (Appana, 2005), (Norton, 2002), (Gravelle, (Ed) 2001), (Mara, 1997), (Vakatora, 1988), (Ravuvu, 1984), (Scarr,1983), (Macnaught, 1982), (Routledge, 1980), (Scarr, 1980), (Derrick, 1972), (Scarr, 1970). These studies have been on leadership, traditional setup, governance, history, Constitutional roles and functions, strengths and weaknesses, hierarchy, politics and other related topics.

However, from its inception, the GCC has never ever been removed and suspended from power. As far as the writer has been able to verify, this will be the first study which will focus on a Fiji without the GCC and indeed their continued relevance in modern Fijian society. In relation to the GCC’s relevance as pertains to this study, the only comment from the extant literature was that “after the 2006 coup, the GCC needed to review their opposition to the coup and approve of the interim administration or lose their relevance” (Chandrasekharan, 2007) Given the esteem, aura and manna the GCC holds in the hearts of Fijians and continues to do even after their removal, the writer as a Fijian is not surprised that no one has done a study concerning their demise, as it would be very close to being sacrilege to do so. The GCC had been there from time immemorial and were expected to be there forever.

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<sup>28</sup> *Fijian provinces betrayed...*  
fijibuzz.com (accessed September 5, 2009)

## 2.2 Concerns

The ousted PM could not have said it better when he stated “land to the Fijian is part of their soul, heart, culture and tradition.” (Qarase, 2008) At the time of writing, Fijians still own the majority of the land in Fiji. This compared to the 8% of 66.5 million<sup>29</sup> acres currently held by the Maoris of New Zealand and 5%<sup>30</sup> of 16,637 sq km by the native Hawaiians in Hawaii. The GCC was setup in 1876 to look after Fijian interests, the main one being their land. Thus far, the GCC appears to have achieved this responsibility, as proven by the high percentage of land still held by the native Fijians. The “traditional concept of land as being sacred however conflicts with the western concept of land being a resource for development. Fijians view land as being derived from their ancestors in accordance with tradition and usage and it should remain in their perpetual possession”<sup>31</sup> Herein lies the dilemma and possible seeds of conflict.

The second major issue of concern is the fact that Indo-Fijians own most of the businesses and thus have a major impact on the Fijian economy.<sup>32</sup> They do have the financial means to influence decisions that maybe detrimental to Fijian interests now that the GCC is not there.

Another issue of concern is that Indo-Fijians now hold some very sensitive decision making positions in the present government. As such, the worry is that they can formulate and push policies which may not be favorable to indigenous Fijians.

Fourthly, the number of indigenous Fijians stands at 57% or 531,092 out of a total 931,741

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<sup>29</sup> *Maoriland: MaoriHealth*  
abc.net.au (accessed September 9, 2009)

<sup>30</sup> *A chiefless Fijian society*  
[www.fiji times.com](http://www.fiji-times.com) (accessed September 9, 2009)

<sup>31</sup> Kamikamica (1987) in his article *Making Native Land Productive*

<sup>32</sup> Thousands more Indians migrated voluntarily in the 1920s and 1930s and formed the core of Fiji's business class



population with Indo-Fijians at 354,061 or 38%<sup>33</sup> and other nationalities making up the balance. However, there are over a billion people of Indian ancestry<sup>34</sup> in the world who can easily displace the small Fijian population if conditions were right.

Lastly, there is always the real threat of ethnic conflicts if the Fijians believed their interests were not being looked after now that the chiefs have gone.

### 2.3 Theoretical Background

This study takes the perspective that when “good governance” is shown and practiced for the indigenous Fijian people, it will not only be good for them but will also benefit the country as a whole. The theoretical support for this comes from the 1989 *World Bank Report*<sup>35</sup> and the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI)*<sup>36</sup>. In addition, the study takes a look at the question of how relevant the GCC really is and attempts to look at ways and means of ensuring this relevancy in the coming modern, globalised and ever changing contemporary Fiji.

### 2.4 Good Governance

The United Nations emphasizes reform around the lines of human development and political institutions. According to them, good governance<sup>36</sup> has eight characteristics. These consist of being consensus oriented, being participatory, follows the rule of law, is effective and efficient, is accountable, is transparent, is responsive and is equitable and inclusive. Rosenau

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<sup>33</sup> 2007 *Census of Population and Housing*  
[www.fiji.gov.fj](http://www.fiji.gov.fj) accessed September 12, 2009

<sup>34</sup> As stated by Indo Fijian lawyer Imrana Jalal during her speech on Good Governance in Fiji – 2001 Parkinson Memorial lecture Series

<sup>35</sup> *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington: World Bank, 1989)

<sup>36</sup> *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* (South Africa :2002, UN Doc. A/CONF.199/20)  
[http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD\\_POI\\_PD/English/POIToc.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POIToc.htm) > [*JPOI*].

and Czempiel (1992) stated that Governance was a system of rule that worked only if it was accepted by the majority....Falk (1995) talked about Humane Governance which emphasized achievement of comprehensive rights for all people on earth.

The World Bank emphasis is more on the reform of economic and social resources control and use. In 1992, it underlined three aspects that must be looked at in order to determine good governance. These consisted of the type of political regime, the process by which authority is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources, with a view to development and the capacity of government to formulate policies and have them effectively implemented.

For this study, the emphasis will be more on the United Nations concept of “good governance” as the writer believes that if the GCC as a body of leaders is educated and trained in the concept, it will be good for the Fijian people as their linkage to government will be more efficient and effective in their role. The writer will not be using the World Bank definitions of good governance because it deals more with the national government while this study focuses only on GCC governance of Fijians.

## **2.5 Governance Structure**

Lee, (1998) in his study of Corporate Governance in Korea asks the question as to which system is better the Japanese one with their organizational control of the *keiretsu* or the American model with a separation of ownership and management and adhering to the free market system. Yang (2003) suggests Korea Telecom opts for the separation of ownership and control but with incentives and a monitoring scheme to ensure managers work for the interest of the shareholders and not their own interest. Gamage (2001) in his Sri Lanka study mentions that the centralized governance structure brought about after 1997 imposed

significant restrictions on human liberties and rights and was one of the causes of the civil war. The suggested model to be used by the GCC will be discussed later in the Recommendations section of the study.

## 2.6 Synthesis

Seven<sup>37</sup> of the books reviewed, one of the articles from the internet and a written article from Siwatibau<sup>38</sup>, the late Vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific defined Good Governance as such - it should be ethical, should follow the rule of law, should be transparent, should be innovative, should be accountable, should be participatory and should be value for money; the government should also be effective, “user-friendly”, have respect for human rights and be beneficial; it should be anti-corruption, it is also a” society relationship bound by political relationship of reciprocity and authority, trust and .....”(Haynes,1993). Good governance will ensure protection and advancement of human rights; it will also mean development and a means of poverty reduction and a decentralized political authority. It can also be defined as government plus....

Kooiman (2001), suggested that these features have to be constantly adjusted to keep it on par with the socio-political climate which is constantly evolving. He additionally mentions how best to implement good governance with a focus on more interaction between government and the governed in a “two way” system instead of the<sup>39</sup> traditional “one way”, top-down approach. In this way civil society is involved in scrutinizing and gauging

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<sup>37</sup> Ed: Kooiman, Jan. ed. *Modern Governance* (London: Sage Publishing, 1994); Haynes, Jefferey. *Third World Politics* (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); Hill, Michael and Hope, Peter *Implementing Public Policy* (London: Sage Publication, 2002); Ferranti ,David Jacinto, Justin.,Ody, Anthony .J.,and Ramshaw Graeme *How to improve Governanc* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), Holzer, Mare, Kim Byong .J. *Building Good Governance – Reforms in Seoul* (Korea: Dooilnet, 2002); Dawkins, Kristin. *Global Governance* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003) *Comparative Studies for Better Governance in Asian Countries*”(OECD: 2007) [www.capam.org](http://www.capam.org)

<sup>38</sup> Gravelle, Kim .ed. *Good Governance in the South Pacific* (Suva: Quality Print Ltd.,2001)

<sup>39</sup> Kooiman, Jan. ed. *Modern Governance* (London: Sage Publishing, 1994) The article talks about how government made the decisions and implemented them in the way they saw fit without any inputs from those that were being governed and suggested that it was now time that the views of the governed be taken into account

performance. Literature also mentions that in order to keep up with constant change, government and governance has to be dynamic, complex and diverse. Wilden (1987) in talking about complexity, mentions that “the last 50 years show a revolution against simplicity”. He also mentioned that “the combination of diversity that creates complexity is a qualitative process”. Diversity is a sign of the times and its neglect could well be at the root of many governance problems.

Decentralization is now seen as a must for good governance to take place. Turner, (1999) “.....decentralization is accepted as part of the democratization process all over the world” The UN urges government everywhere to consider decentralizing the political system to make it more responsive to the political demands of its citizens (UNDP, 1997) Another definition of governance place emphasis on the interdependence between government and NGO’s with the central government more in the role of managers through facilitations and negotiation” (Cloke et al., 2000)

Ackerman, (1999), also indicated what happens without the practice of good governance as in the case of Fiji, four coup de tats in the last twenty years due to disagreement on good governance and the role of the GCC. Additionally, the lack of good governance is linked to increased crime rate, protest, radicalism due to failure of socialization and loss of traditional values leading to society being more highly volatile and more diverse. Today’s societies have a high level of complexity. A high tech society where demarcations have begun to crumble and hierarchical authority has lost its standing is vulnerable to crisis where a tiny event can trigger a catastrophe. Nash (1988) defines post modernity as a blurring of boundaries, questioning of established values, spread of cynicism and elevation of image over substance. Society cannot cope with social change now let alone in future if it continues to use “the railways for transport, the telegraph for communication and bureaucracy for governance” it

needs to be abreast of the times if not ahead of it<sup>40</sup>.

Other costs of bad governance can include human rights being put at risk, lack of transparency, corruption, restrictions on the media and election results not being recognized. “Corruption is regarded as a significant adversary in the fight against poverty” (Doig and McIvor, 1999). Rose-Ackerman (1998a) defines corruption as the misuse of public power for private gain. Even with the great need that is out there amongst developing countries, the World Bank usually has a hard time locating acceptable projects due to dysfunctional public and private institution where corrupt public officials look to their own interests. Developing countries thus lose out in terms of services, infrastructures and most importantly on trust and goodwill from donor agencies. “Politically, corruption erodes the legitimacy of the state and government. It destroys trust in public officials. Socially, corruption is associated with the lower per capita income, higher levels of poverty, greater income inequality...”(Abed and Gupta, 2002). Another writer states “corruption anywhere threatens everybody everywhere” (Osborne, 1988)

One of the dynamics of the shift from government to governance is greater recognition of the need to embrace diversity and the challenges of division in contemporary society incorporating issues like nationality, ethnicity, language, religion and culture.

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<sup>40</sup> Kooiman, Jan. ed. *Modern Governance* (London: Sage Publishing, 1994) the writer is confirming that one cannot govern effectively in the modern era if one uses the tools of the past. One has to be on par with the times

## 2.7 Findings

Ferranti, Jacinto, Ody , Ramshaw, 2009; Bureekul, Brown (ed) 2005; Lovan, Murray, Shaffer (ed) 2004 Holzer, Kim, 2002; Gravelle (ed) 2001; Kooiman (ed) 1994 all agree on the main argument that a good government and good governance together is necessary for the success of a country and it's people. They also converge on the basics of good governance like transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

They agree that government and the system of governance may need to change to one where there is more interaction between government and society and where there is more dialogue. Literature sees it as a “two way street” sort of arrangement rather than the traditional “one way street” top down system of the past. Decentralization as a means of giving more autonomy to the people and getting closer to where they are is also strongly advocated. The literature also agrees that due to the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, government and governance need to be more dynamic and that without good government and good governance working together, chaos and breakdown of civil society can soon follow.

## 2.8 Analysis

As previously mentioned, a lot of researches have been done concerning the GCC but none specifically from the time of their removal in 2007 and suspension of their constitutional roles - simply because this is the first time they have ever been removed. Issues relating to them and their governance of the Fijian people have been ongoing especially since the 1987 and 2000 coups in which they played a role and also began to be really heavily involved in politics.

This study therefore has no precedence with which to make a comparison but will attempt to

explore ways and means whereby the GCC will be able to return to their main function of providing good governance for the Fijian people. It follows into other studies only in as much as the issue of governance is concerned but breaks new grounds when exploring the continued relevance of the GCC.

## **3.0 METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will demonstrate the methods used by the researcher. The rationale for using both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research design will also be explained. The population of villagers, students and educated Fijians sampled will be discussed followed by a description of the interviews, and questionnaire responses used to collect data. Procedures for collecting and analyzing the data are presented, with a discussion of the validity and reliability of these methods. These methods were selected in order to find the effectiveness of governance by the GCC in Fijian affairs and to provide a substantive answer to the research question of their continued relevancy after their removal.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study is Exploratory in nature bearing in mind that this event had never happened before so the research was in a totally new area with no existing precedence.

The qualitative method of research was used to conduct very informal interviews with five villagers. The group of villagers consisted of a clan chief from one village, a sub clan chief and his brother from another village and two commoners to find out a range of understanding and thoughts on the topic. Interviews were also done with five well educated public servants in the capital city Suva. Local literature was extensively reviewed to gauge the general feeling of the Fijian populace prior to and after what had happened. The quantitative method of research was used by way of questionnaires sent out to Form 6 and 7 secondary school students who are in the 17 – 20 years old range and are deemed old enough to understand the power plays and politics around them, tertiary students in university and polytechnic and very



well educated working Fijians citizens.

The first component of the research was through a literature review that analyzed governance by the GCC since it was formally recognized by the colonial power in 1876 up to the time they were removed by the army in 2007. The second component is made up of interviews and questionnaires used to find out whether the GCC as a body still had any relevance in governance in modern Fiji.

The questionnaires sent out to the three sets of participants followed the same format. The interviews while informal were based on a similar set of criteria even though the interviewees would often go off on different tangents at times. This the writer allowed if only to get their full responses to the questions.

### **3.3 Subjects, Participants, Population, Sample**

Members of the GCC along with the Fijian military and past and present government officials were deliberately excluded from this study as the writer was worried about their bias. Members of the GCC were removed from office so it would make sense that they would in their responses paint a positive picture of their achievements. The military who removed the GCC will also try to justify their actions as to why the GCC was not needed. The writer believed that past and present government officials would also have been biased towards the GCC as they had also been removed themselves and had worked closely with GCC members both in Senate and the House of Representatives. Students in the lower secondary levels were discounted as they were deemed to have little or no interest in what was happening. Interviews were held with clan leaders, sub-clan leaders and commoners in the two villages as traditionally, this was the power base of the chiefs. Upper level secondary students, tertiary students and well educated working Fijians were chosen as they are traditionally the people

most interested in what the GCC was doing due to their educational backgrounds and thus enlightened outlook.

For the upper level secondary school questionnaire participants, a multiracial boarding school Savusavu Secondary School in a semi rural area on Fiji's second largest island was chosen while the second Fijian boarding school Nasinu Secondary School is located in the capital city on the main island. Participants for the interviews were drawn from two different villages on the second largest island and the rest were public servants from the capital city on the main island. The writer believes that due to time constraints even though the sample size may not have been large enough for statistical validity, the particular groups sampled represent high valid opinions in as far as it represented Fijians most likely to be interested and affected by what had transpired. Both the rural and urban schools were covered. Interviewees were again chosen from both rural village Fijians (traditional GCC power base) and the urban working class.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

A total of 85 questionnaires were sent out and 63 or 74% were completed and returned. A greater number could not be interviewed due to time constraints as KOICA scholarship allows for 2 weeks outside of Korea with full allowance. The writer traveled to Fiji on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009 to collect data and relevant literature. Prior to the date, the questionnaire was prepared and e-mailed to the Principal of Savusavu Secondary School on Fiji's second island and the Principal of Nasinu Secondary School in the capital city on the main island. In addition, the questionnaire was e-mailed to a University of the South Pacific student for distribution to tertiary students and to a Ministry of Education official for those in the Public Service.

Of the 40 questionnaires sent to the two schools, 31 or 76% were completed and returned. Of the secondary school students – 9 were from the senior Form 7 level in the predominantly Fijian boarding school in the capital while 22 were from the senior Form 6 and Form 7 level in the multiracial boarding/ day school on Fiji's second main island. Of the 20 sent out to tertiary students, 11 or 55% were completed and returned with 3 coming back from the University and 8 from the Polytechnic. Of the 25 sent out to public servants, 21 or 84% were completed and returned. A breakdown of the public servant participants is as follows – 6 school teachers, 7 lecturers in Tertiary Institutions, 1 Professor at University, 2 Ministers of Religion and 5 civil servants

Other information for the study was gathered by very informal interviews, five were conducted by the writer in the village in the short time he was there and the other five in the city was conducted by a fellow officer. The interview question format was based on the questions asked in the questionnaires. Using these questions as a base, the interviewees responded in the way they thought best. Responses were then grouped together under various sub-headings and these were then tabulated. Very important information on Fijian governance by the GCC was also gathered by way of literature and newspaper articles. However as mentioned in the main literature review section, what happened in 2007 had never happened before in the history of GCC so apart from a single article talking about relevancy, there was nothing in current literature to answer the question as posed in the questionnaires.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

Several researchers (most notably Appana et al., 2005) have all written materials concerning the GCC and their governance of Fijians. However as previously mentioned, the body had never in its history from 1876 on been removed from power so no literature concerning their

removal and continuing relevancy can be accessed. As far as the writer has been able to ascertain, this is the first time the question of the GCCs continued relevancy has been brought out into the open after their removal. Thus the validity of this research will rest on the linkages between the research questions and the methodology employed. This was done by getting the responses both from the rural and urban settings. In addition, participants consisted of poorly educated rural Fijian villagers living a communal subsistence life in the village and very highly educated working Fijians who live in the capital city. To provide a balance, senior secondary students about to leave for higher studies and tertiary students about to leave to look for employment also participated.

The writer believes that if the study was replicated using the same or a different set of Fijian participants anywhere else in Fiji, the answers would basically be the same thus proving reliability. This is because the majority of Fijians still live in a communal setting in the rural areas so conditions are very similar throughout the islands. For educated Fijians who work and live in urban centers, as proven by their responses, they still have very strong ties to their villages and communities so a replication in other urban areas will most likely bring the same outcomes.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This study uses a variety of valid and reliable instruments under the framework of both the quantitative and qualitative research in order to analyze the dilemma that the GCC now finds itself in and make recommendations to ensure they can stand up to the challenges of governance that they must face in modern Fiji. Using the *1989 World Bank Report* on good governance as a guide, these recommendations aim at minimizing the chances that the GCC will ever again be removed from power. The next chapter will present the results.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results from this study. Results are presented in three sections. The first section contains information as gathered from literature on Fijian governance by the GCC since 1876 up to their removal in 2007. The second section presents results from the informal interviews with the rural and urban workers. The third section presents the analysis of the questionnaire responses as given by secondary students, tertiary students and educated working Fijians.

### **4.2 Organizing the Results**

The GCC was established in 1876 to advise the colonial governor on how best to govern the Fijian people. In the 1950s, the Council membership was opened to non chiefs provided they were Fijians. In 1963, the GCCs right to select indigenous representatives for the colonial Parliament was abolished. Fijis first Constitution of 1970 gave the body the right to appoint eight of the twenty two Senators. Following the 1987 coup, the GCC again became exclusively a chief's only domain. The 1990 Constitution allowed the GCC to appoint twenty four of the thirty four Senators making it a GCC dominated body. In addition they also had to now appoint the President and Vice- President. The 1997 Constitution reduced representation in the Senate to fourteen out of thirty two members. Since the 2000 coup the body has worked with mixed success to regain the independence it had lost due to government manipulations. The GCC was in crisis in 2004 when it's then Chairman was rejected by the government of the day for not backing them. In 2005 the GCC endorsed the very controversial Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill aimed at compensating victims and pardoning coup perpetrators. The body was removed from office in 2007.

### 4.3 **The GCC**

From 1876, the GCC had worked for and stood for Fijian interests. They began to lose their grip on the traditional reins of power when they became more actively involved in politics after the first coup in 1987. The coup of 2000 did not help their case as the majority of the members were seen to be supporting it due to its nationalistic tone. They could not rebuild their image due to manipulation by the government of the day as shown by the removal of the GCC Chairman for not following official line in 2004. Their support of the Unity Bill in 2005 further alienated. In the light of these events, it may not be so surprising then that they were removed in 2007 for not supporting the nomination of the interim government for Vice President as per their constitutional role.

## The Interviews

**Table 1**

QUESTIONS	RESPONDENT / RESPONSES <i>RURAL VILLAGERS: 5</i>
1. What do you know about the GCC?	a. They are the most influential chiefs - 3 respondents  b. They are our traditional leaders - 2 respondents
2. Do you think they are still relevant today?	a. Yes - 5 respondents
3. If Yes, why?	a. They have the manna and the power - 4 respondents  b. Leaders are from God - 1 respondent
4. If No, why not?	
5. How can they be improved?	a. They should be approachable always and put the people first - 2 respondents  b. They should not be in politics but stay in their villages - 2 respondents  c. They should be God fearing - 1 respondent
TOTAL:	5 Respondents

**Table 2**

QUESTIONS	RESPONDENT / RESPONSES <i>PUBLIC SERVANTS: 5</i>
1. What do you know about the GCC?	a. Body entrusted as custodians of everything Fijian – welfare, culture, well being, laws and governance - 5 respondents
2. Do you think they are still relevant today?	a. Yes - 3 respondents b. No they have been removed - 1 respondent c. Relevancy not an issue – they were and always will be - 1 respondent
3. If Yes, why?	a. They keep Fijians anchored, sense of identity, consensus approach and cultured - 3 respondents b. God given right - 1 respondent
4. If No, why not?	a. At the moment chiefs rule limited to villages and own provinces - 1 respondent
5. How can they be improved?	a. Be apolitical - 2 respondents b. Better education - 2 respondents c. Have Fijian interest at heart not only lip service - 1 respondent
TOTAL:	5 Respondents



## The Questionnaires

**Table 3**

QUESTIONS	RESPONDENT / RESPONSES <i>SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: 31</i>
1. What do you know or understand about the Great Council of Chiefs?	<p>a. A highly respected forum responsible for the preservation of Fijian identity, culture and tradition and they have a say in government policies - 5 respondents</p> <p>b. A council made up of high chiefs - 2 respondents</p> <p>c. Council of high chiefs from around Fiji who elect the President - 6 respondents</p> <p>d. Chiefs from the 14 provinces of Fiji who look after the interests of the people - 14 respondents</p> <p>e. A council of high chiefs from around the country who make decisions - 2 respondents</p> <p>f. Nothing - 2 respondents</p>
2. Do you think they are still relevant in modern Fijian society?	<p>a. Yes - 23 respondents</p> <p>b. No - 7 respondents</p> <p>c. No idea - 1 respondent</p>
3. If Yes, why?	<p>a. They are the voice of the people and they help with the preservation of Fijian culture and traditions - 20 respondents</p> <p>b. The bible states that leaders should be given respect - 1 respondent</p> <p>c. They are still recognized as chiefs in their domains - 1 respondent</p>

	<p>d. It was set up by the Constitution as a separate body - 1 respondent</p>
4. If No, why not?	<p>a. They are too old fashioned - 4 respondents</p> <p>b. What is needed is authentic and professional leadership who speak for the people not only for themselves - 1 respondent</p> <p>c. No comment - 3 respondents</p>
5. Is there anything that you feel can be improved where the GCC is concerned?	<p>a. They should be well educated, visionary and modern and not based solely on lineage - 13 respondents</p> <p>b. They should be morally right and listen to their people's opinions as part of decision making - 8 respondents</p> <p>c. They should not be involved in politics - 5 respondents</p> <p>d. They should be consulted in policy decisions by government - 2 respondents</p> <p>e. Not concerned - 2 respondents</p> <p>f. No comment - 1 respondent</p>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>31 Respondents</b>

**Table 4**

QUESTIONS	RESPONDENT / RESPONSES <i>TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS: 11</i>
1. What do you know or understand about the Great Council of Chiefs?	a. They are made up of chosen representatives from the 14 provinces of Fiji who meet and make decisions concerning issues relating to Fijians - 8 respondents b. They consist of high chiefs of Fiji who appoint the President - 2 respondents c. A council of all chiefs around Fiji - 1 respondent
2. Do you think they are still relevant in modern Fijian society?	a. Yes - 8 respondents b. No - 3 respondents
3. If Yes, why?	a. They know best about traditions and culture of the Fijians and hence are the best people to make decisions concerning them - 6 respondents b. Leaders are from God - 1 respondent c. Because they are citizens of the country - 1 respondent
4. If No, why not?	a. The present President was appointed without the chiefs blessing - 2 respondents b. There is an elected government in place so the chiefs are not needed - 1 respondent

<p>5. Is there anything that you feel can be improved where the GCC is concerned?</p>	<p>a. They should ensure their peoples are kept up to date on government decisions but at the same time they must be the voice of their people to the outside - 5 respondents</p> <p>b. They should stand for the spirit of the Constitution - 1 respondent</p> <p>c. With any attempt at their abrogation, there will likely be a rise in tension which may lead to unpleasantness in the land - 1 respondent</p> <p>d. No comments - 4 respondents</p>
<p>TOTAL:</p>	<p>11 Respondents</p>

**Table 5**

QUESTIONS	RESPONDENT / RESPONSES <i>WELL EDUCATED FIJIAN EMPLOYEES: 21</i>
1. What do you know or understand about the Great Council of Chiefs?	<p>a. They are made up of chosen representatives from the 14 provinces of Fiji who meet and make decisions concerning issues relating to Fijians - 15 respondents</p> <p>b. They consist of high chiefs of Fiji and qualified commoners who appoint the President - 2 respondents</p> <p>c. A council of chiefs from around Fiji - 3 respondent</p> <p>d. They have a significant role in governance of the multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society that is Fiji due to the confidence, trust and respect they command. - 1 respondent</p>
2. Do you think they are still relevant in modern Fijian society?	<p>a. Yes - 20 respondents</p> <p>b. No - 1 respondent</p>
3. If Yes, why?	<p>a. They know best about traditions and culture of the Fijians and hence are the best people to make decisions concerning them in addition to being the Fijian peoples link to government concerning land and other grievances - 19 respondents</p>

	<p>b. Without the GCC, Fijian land will slowly be lost</p> <p>- 1 respondent</p>
4. If No, why not?	<p>a. There is an elected government and the President in place so the chiefs are not needed</p> <p>- 1 respondent</p>
5. Is there anything that you feel can be improved where the GCC is concerned?	<p>a. They should be well educated and have good leadership qualities and inputs of the community to be taken into account on who is best to be chief – not necessarily chief due to lineage</p> <p>- 6 respondents</p> <p>b. They should not be involved in politics</p> <p>- 5 respondents</p> <p>c. With any attempt at their abrogation, there will likely be a rise in tension which may lead to unpleasantness in the land</p> <p>- 3 respondents</p> <p>d. Leaders are from God so whatever happens, they should be respected</p> <p>- 2 respondents</p> <p>e. They should be given more powers</p> <p>- 1 respondent</p> <p>f. The GCC should allow traditional based institutions to be incorporated into the national scheme and where they would be just like any stakeholders for consultation – they do not have a special role.</p> <p>- 1 respondent</p> <p>g. No comments</p> <p>- 3 respondents</p>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>21 Respondents</b>

#### 4.4 Summary

As evidenced by the history of the GCC in literature, they have been doing exactly as expected of them by the British in 1876 when they were set up to look after Fijian interests. They were recognized and looked up to by successive governments on issues relating to Fijian governance. It started to unravel from when they decided to be involved in politics from the 1980s finally leading to their removal in 2007. Manipulations by the government of the day have not helped the GCCs cause. Fijians as a people have much to thank the GCC for in the way they have managed their lands and resources and generally their way of life and identity.

Interview results and those from the questionnaires seem to show the great respect the GCC commands from Fijians in whatever sphere of life they maybe in. The results show that for the Fijian, to lose the GCC would be akin to losing his identity and “Fijian- ness”. Results point to the fact that the GCC are still relevant in modern Fiji with a respondent even stating that the question of relevancy was a non-issue as the GCC was, is and always will be part of the Fijian landscape. Various strategies for their improvement have also been given with better education and being apolitical being top of the list. The implications of these results and other details will be discussed in relation to their impact on the purpose of this study in the final chapter.

## **5.0 ANALYSIS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The GCC who were removed in 2007 by the interim government due to certain differences are now three years later still in political limbo. Because of this, the Fijian people do not have a voice to represent their interests in the government of the day. This study hopes to raise issues that may need to be looked at and discussed to ensure that the Fijian people regain their voice in government and at the same time put in place suggestions on the GCC practicing good Fijian governance and bring the body into par with modern Fiji. The impact of the study will be a very stable country where the two major races can coexist and live together peacefully. While several studies have been done on the GCC, no study has been done on their relevancy because for Fijians this was not an issue and due to the fact that the GCC in their long history have never been removed from power. This study therefore is entering new territory in as far as literature about the relevancy of the GCC and governance style is concerned.

In order to get the necessary data for the study, both the quantitative and qualitative options were used with the aid of questionnaires, interviews, informal discussions and literature reviews. The target group was made up of upper level secondary students, tertiary students, educated working class Fijians, rural villagers and a clan chief and sub chief.

This chapter will present an analysis of the results as they relate to the overall research questions and provide supporting evidence for the main arguments. Recommendations on how to set up a GCC that will provide better governance for the Fijian people will be presented at the end of the chapter.



## 5.2 Thesis Statement

The majority of participants agreed that the GCC was, is and will always be relevant in as far as the Fijian race is concerned. The one item that stands out in the responses as to why they are still relevant is that the GCC is the keeper of everything to do with being a Fijian. They are entrusted with ensuring that the Fijian keeps his land and resources, his identity, his culture, his traditions and indeed his very existence in the country of his birth. Indeed this right and sovereignty of the indigenous people is incorporated into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

After their removal, the GCC members as is their right and responsibility are mostly back in their rural village strongholds looking after the day to day functions of their communities. Even though this august body is continuing with their responsibilities outside of government, in order to fully meet their obligations to their people, a way must be found to fully integrate them back into government and enable the concerns of their people to be heard. Most respondents also pointed out two main items they believe could have led to the GCC's removal and which if looked into can serve to improve on their governance of the Fijian race. One is the need for better education to enable them to keep up in a globalised and modern Fiji. The second item points to the need for the body to keep itself totally apolitical as it was their involvement in politics which lost them the trust and faith of their people politics being what it is. Overall, there is the general feeling that the GCC is needed for the proper governance of the Fijian people.

The issue of the GCC and what they stand for is a very sensitive one for the Fijian people. It is even more so now after their suspension. However, the deep trust and respect that they still command was very much in evidence to the writer during his research. Village chief Ravuci

of the Wailevu clan and sub chief Drauna and his brother Yavala of the Namalata sub clan were both emotional and at the same time indignant stating that without the GCC, the Fijians were nothing. To them, the GCC and the Fijian people were intertwined and should never be separated as they play complementary and symbiotic roles in each others lives

The support from educated working Fijians and tertiary and higher secondary students was just as high. These groups were picked to counter the views from the rural areas where the GCC have always been traditionally strong. The fact that these participants are well educated and were in tune with Fiji's political life on a daily basis did not affect the way they positively identified with the GCC. For these secondary and tertiary students and even more for the employed educated Fijians, first and foremost they are Fijians and for whatever reason the GCC was removed from office, they identified with them.

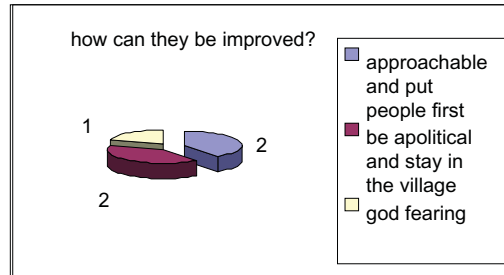
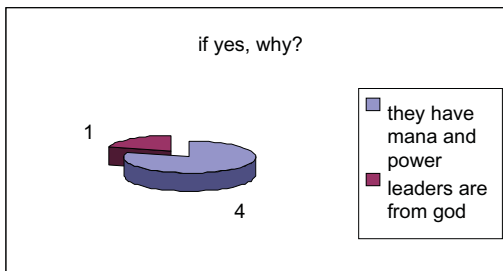
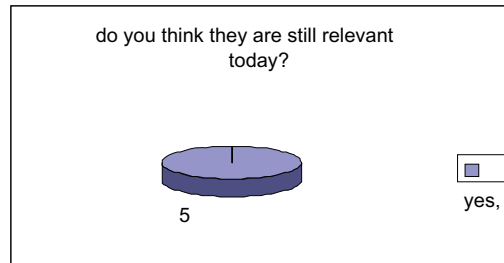
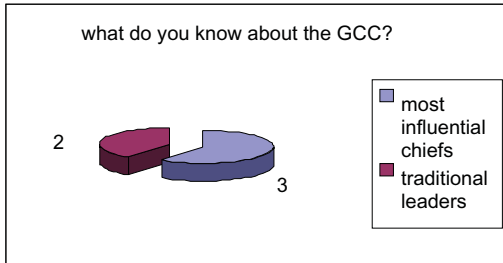
Recommendations given by rural villagers on how to improve the way the GCC was run centered mostly on the need for chiefs to be more accessible to their people in the village. This could not be done at present due to their involvement in politics and the need for them to be close to the seat of power. These same villagers would accept their chiefs being away from them if they were accessible. However due to their national duties, chiefs find it hard to juggle both sets of responsibilities to the nation and their people.

It was from the three groups comprising the secondary, tertiary students and the educated working Fijians that recommendations were given as to how best the GCC can be improved to enable it to provide good governance for Fijians.

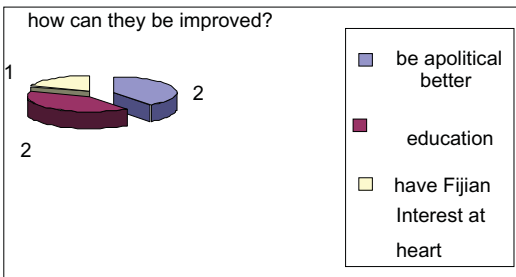
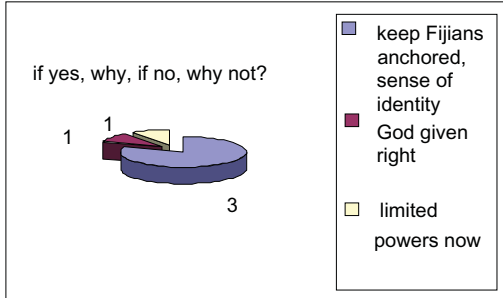
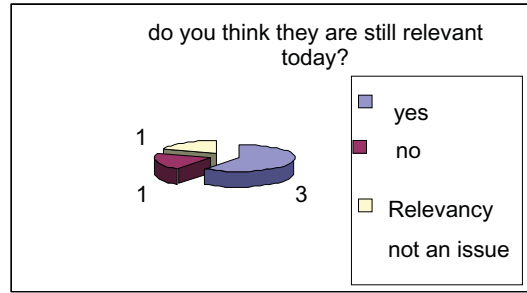
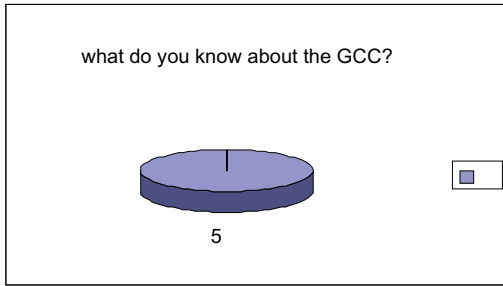
### 5.3 Supporting Evidence

#### Pie Charts

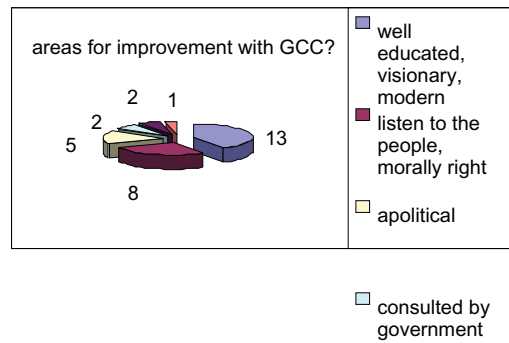
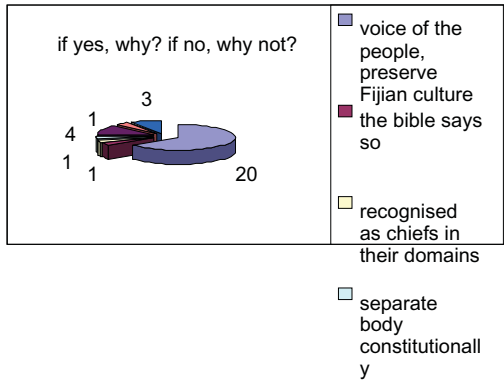
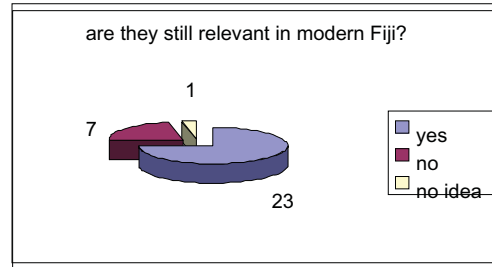
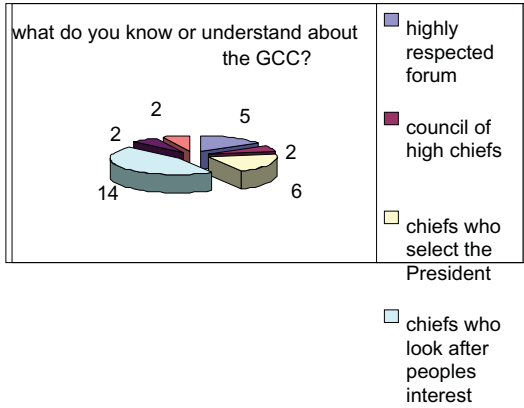
#### Chart 1 - Rural Villagers Interview Responses



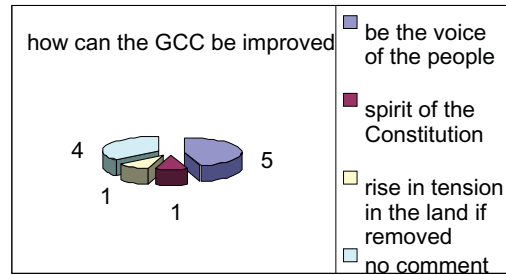
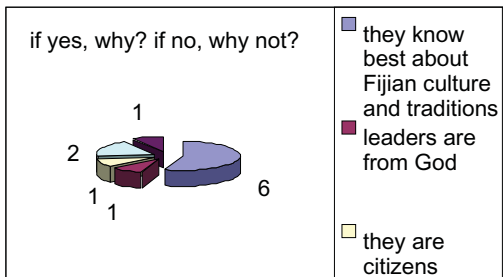
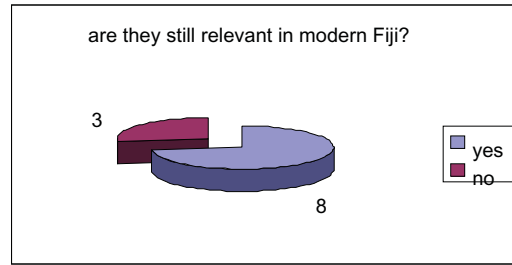
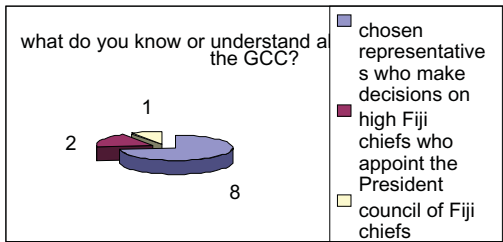
## Chart 2 – Urban Fijian Employees Interview Responses



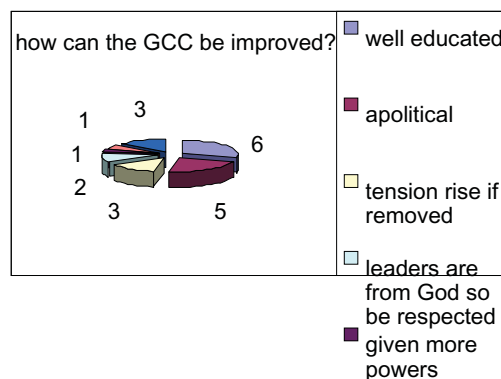
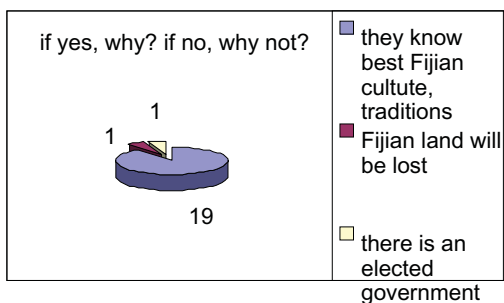
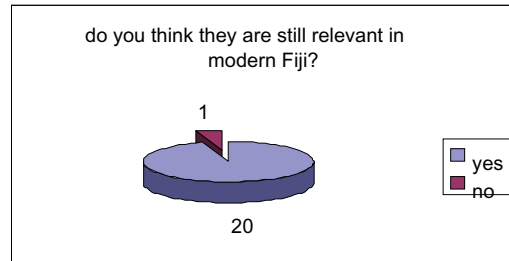
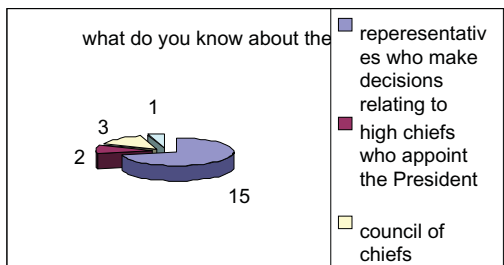
### Chart 3 – Secondary School Students Questionnaire Responses



### Chart 4 – Tertiary Students Questionnaire Responses



**Chart 5 - Educated Working Fijian Questionnaire Responses**



#### 5.4 Discussions

In the first set of charts, those interviewed in the village do recognize the GCC as their chiefs and leaders with all of them stating that the chiefs are still relevant today. On enquiry as to why this was so, most responded that chiefs had manna and as leaders, were from God. On the question of how the body can be improved for good governance, they stated that chiefs should be approachable, apolitical and God fearing.

In the second set of charts, public servants recognized the GCC as the custodians of everything Fijian. The majority responded that the chiefs were still relevant with one actually stating the question irrelevant as chiefs were beyond relevance since they were there and

always will be. On the question why this was so, they said chiefs keep Fijians anchored and gave them a sense of identity. As to ways the GCC can be improved for good governance, being apolitical, well educated and having Fijian interests at heart were the responses.

In the third set of charts, secondary school students recognized and knew the duties of the GCC even though there was one who did not know who they were. As for the question of relevancy, the majority agreed but again a few did not think so. On the question why this was so, the majority claimed that chiefs were the voice of the people and helped with preservation of culture and traditions. To improve the GCC for better governance, good education and not necessarily chiefly lineage was important, with high moral and being apolitical a close second.

In the fourth set of charts, tertiary students knew who the GCC were and what they did like making decisions on issues relating to Fijians. As for their continued relevancy, the majority agreed they were still relevant because of their knowledge of Fijian culture and traditions. For their improvement, most said that not only should they update their people on governmental decisions but that the chiefs should be the voice of their people to those in authority. However quite a few did not make any comments at all.

In the final set of charts, the majority of well educated Fijians indicated the GCC made decisions relating to Fijians with almost all of them indicating that the body was still relevant. As to why this was so, most respondents stated the chiefs know best about traditions and Fijian culture in addition to being the Fijian's link to government. To improve the body for better governance, being apolitical, better educated and electing chiefs not because of lineage but ability were the main responses.

The majority of respondents from the two groups interviewed and three groups asked to answer the questionnaires responded that the GCC was relevant in modern Fiji. As for



suggestions on how best to improve the body to ensure good governance for Fijians, the two main recommendations that stood out were the need for the chiefs to be apolitical and be better educated.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

In order for the GCC to be able to continue earning the trust and respect of the Fijian people and provide good governance for them, they will need to disassociate themselves from politics. They cannot have it both ways. The choice will have to be made about one or the other as the majority of research participants blame politics for the GCC's downfall. This recommendation brings out into the open why villagers felt abandoned by their chiefs when they spent the majority of their time in Parliament looking after their delegated duties instead of their own people in their various localities. The feeling during informal discussions with participants was that in taking part in politics, the GCC was somehow demeaning itself in the eyes of the people. They felt that their chiefs were supposed to be above the murky and shady world of politics and what it entails. Without politics, chiefs will have more time for meeting the needs and requirements of their people.

However, there is also a school of thought that the GCC members should take part in politics. Indeed if chiefs stuck to their constitutionally approved duties of being Senate members, they will still have the influence they need in government to ensure the interests of the indigenous Fijian is catered for. When they get back into government, members of the GCC should always keep their people updated on issues concerning them. After all it is their responsibility. Too often, rural based Fijians find out about issues affecting their very livelihood through second hand means like radios and television for those lucky enough to have one. They tend to be the last ones to know about issues directly affecting them and

theirs. This only serves to reinforce the point discussed above of chiefs only looking out for themselves not their people.

Secondly, there are those that believe that it would be good for GCC members to get into government as this would open the doors for those in need in their various domains. The fallacy here is that once in government, the chiefs will have to be seen to be looking after the interests of everyone in Fiji not only those of their people. If a way can be found to ensure that they serve the nation but always have the interest of their people at heart, then GCC members joining government will become a non – issue.

The third major recommendation is to choose well educated people to be members of the GCC. The idea of choosing well educated people over blood lineage as chiefs to lead will take some time to settle in but for the survival of the Fijian race in a modern globalised society it may well need to be seriously looked at. It may mean choosing certain people because they are the best candidates in terms of education and are therefore abreast with what is happening. In this fast changing globalised world, GCC members will have to ensure they keep up with it if they want what is best for their people. Being educated also means they will not be as gullible as they can make and stand by their choices of what is best for their people.

Fourth, for good governance structure, as noted by Gamage (2001) in Sri Lanka, too much centralized control cuts down on liberties and rights which can lead to conflicts. In the case of the American model when there is a separation of the ownership and management, and when there is no monitoring system, there is the threat of managers looking after their personal interests. For the GCC and Fijian governance, a “loose” centralized Japanese model would work fine provided the chiefs listen to and take on board the views of their people prior to making decisions on their behalf. Instead of the usual one - way, top-down approach, chiefs

can get their people to participate more in any decision-making by listening to and discussing their viewpoints. It is when the people feel ownership that they will take responsibility and put in that extra effort to make sure it works. In other words, decision-making is based on a consensus approach between the chief and his people.

Fifth, chiefs can decentralize decision-making by making use of knowledgeable people within his domain to help with governance. In the Fijian context, a lot of educated and well qualified people tend to return to their villages upon retirement from the labor force. Chiefs can delegate and tap upon these human resources for help in decision-making that may just be beyond the chiefs abilities.

Sixth, the GCC may need to be more diverse and dynamic in the way it approaches its responsibilities. The body must always bear in mind that Fijians tend to be very communalistic and introverted when and where their interests are concerned. With the 14 *yasana* or provinces having their own vested interests, the chiefs need to always look into the various issues raised by the provinces in a more tolerant and understanding way to ensure it encompasses everyone and all their needs.

Seventh, the chiefs will also need to be always on the moral high ground and put the interests of their people ahead of their own. Their people look up to them to set the example and when this is not forthcoming, they are looked down upon instead with the accompanying loss of goodwill and trust. To illustrate this point, as is the practice in Fiji at the moment, the local chief always gets a percentage cut from any monies and or other resources that is due to the usage of resources from the land. The rest is given to the villagers as per the Native Land Trust Board Act [Cap 134]. The writer had experienced while living in the village instances when chiefs have arranged for this monies to be used solely by themselves resulting in loss of

goodwill and trust. Chiefs who lose their peoples trust may indeed need to be replaced if only to ensure that the people will always have someone to speak on their behalf. The writer understands that this will be easier said than done due to the highly hierarchical setup of the chiefly system in Fiji.

Finally, the GCC should always stand by and be guided by the Constitution of the land. As the supreme law of the land and as the supreme Fijian body, the GCC should be seen to uphold the Constitution always. The fact that they were seen to be endorsing the 1987 coup and the 2000 coup has done much to destroy the GCC's credibility because it was seen as an attack on the Constitution of the land.

The main weakness of this study was the lack of time to obtain more data. The writer spent three weeks in Fiji but for a topic this important, would have liked to stay longer and gotten a more diverse set of responses from wider and more spread out locations. The second weakness was that the participants may not have been diverse enough. There were no responses from the Western Division which is recognized as the economic engine of Fiji and neither were there any responses from the widely scattered islands of the Eastern Division amongst the remotest in Fiji.

Indo Fijians who make up around 38% of the population were not included because the writer thought that the GCC and the Fijian people needed to get their house in order first before moving on to other members of the population. In retrospect, it might have been valuable to get their perspective if only to get an idea of opposing views.

Lastly, the writer could not get a full range of perspectives and opinions due to time limitations. However despite these limitations, he has confidence in and stands by the results and analysis of the study.

## 5.6 Conclusions

The population of Fiji is made up mostly of indigenous Fijians and Indo Fijians the two major races. However, the economy and major businesses is operated by the Indo Fijians and the only real economic power the Fijians wield is their control over their natural resources. This study wanted to look at the importance and relevance of the GCC to the proper and good governance of the indigenous.

In their long history, the GCC has not always been a force for good as first shown in the indiscriminate sale of lands in the 1800s and their very visible presence and involvement in the 1987 and 2000 coups. Often they have acted to the detriment of the very people they purport to serve. Having said that, it is only fair to point out that the GCC has also had some notable successes, chief amongst them being the passing on of ownership of native lands to the *mataqali* or clan and the establishment of the NLTB. The two institutions have ensured that the bulk of land in Fiji still belong to the indigenous Fijians.

It is quite “evident from the 1987 and 2000 upheavals that the GCC has a role to play and this role can only be enhanced if the body was to change from an advisory into an executive one when there is a political vacuum.”<sup>41</sup> “The chiefs collective authority has been grounded not only in the part they have played in asserting indigenous solidarity in opposition to other groups, especially the Indians, but also paradoxically in their capacity to mitigate ethnic conflict.”<sup>42</sup> The “Secretariat of the GCC was established in 1998 with a view to facilitating the transition of the GCC to a fully independent and autonomous body with its own chairperson. With the secretariat the GCC had shifted from being a passive into a proactive

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<sup>41</sup> *A primer on Fijis GCC*  
<http://archives.pireport.org/> (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>42</sup> *Changing role of the GCC*  
<http://epress.anu.edu.au/> (accessed August 20, 2010)

institution for Fijian well being and governance.”<sup>43</sup> This maybe a good thing in the long run seeing that in a power and political vacuum as was brought about by the two coups, the GCC can step in, mitigate the crisis and assume leadership roles which it is quite accustomed to as it was this vacuum that led to the troubles that came to be associated with the coups.

In conclusion, Gordon, Fiji’s first Governor and founder of the GCC stated “the GCC acts as a safety valve to many grievances that may otherwise rankle and swell to dangerous levels, as a touchstone of the feeling of the utmost value in gauging the tendencies of the natives and as the most powerful auxiliary in carrying out the wishes of government. With the aid of the GCC, the Governor can without effort do in native matters what he pleases, without it the management of said affairs would be a matter of extreme difficulty.”<sup>44</sup> It is respectfully submitted that what Governor Gordon observed in 1875 is as “true then as it is now and will continue to be true for as long as there exists the indigenous Fijian race”<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> *A primer on Fijis GCC*  
<http://archives.pireport.org/> (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> *A chiefless Fijian society*  
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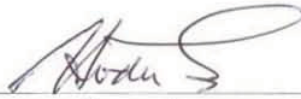
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