WORKING SESSION 3a

Change of Land Tenure in Rarotonga

While land in pre-colonial Rarotonga was essential for subsistence economy and became valuable for cash-cropping in the colonial era, in the last decades the situation has changed again: cash crops nowadays play only a minor role and land is mainly needed for building houses – including hotels and other tourist facilities.

The official legal framework concerning land matters defines groups of co-owners and offers different possibilities for procedures in the allocation of land. While the recipient of the allocated land is in most cases an individual a number of persons is involved in the process of allocation. Whereas for the pre-colonial time descent groups (*ngati*) and their heads are described as crucial in land matters nowadays the official decisive body is the group of co-owners of a section of land. Looking closely at the procedures it becomes clear that there are other unofficial groups and individuals involved in the process of allocation who have a great influence on the results.

The outcome of this combination of official and unofficial ways is a highly flexible and locally variable organisation of land tenure where both groups and individuals play their part.

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