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Mothers of the Taukei:
Fijian Women and 'the Decrease of the Race'

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University

December, 1997

Victoria Lukere
Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis represents my original research.

Victoria Lukere
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Abstract

In the 1890s the British administration of Fiji commissioned an inquiry into the decrease of the indigenous population. Its subsequent report - a seminal text - figured Fijian women as both a cause and potential solution to the problem. This study explores what was said and done about Fijian women in the context of 'the decrease'.

The first section addresses the epidemiological conditions which induced Fijian depopulation; and the political and intellectual factors which shaped a discourse alleging the incompetence of Fijian mothers.

The second section tests one popular theory: that this incompetence was due to deleterious effects from the 'abolition of polygamy'. We discuss pre-Christian marriage practices, how they changed, and whether these changes elevated Fijian infant mortality.

The third section examines measures that were taken around the turn of the century on the premise that Fijian mothers were congenitally defective. Attempts were made to change them by edict, education and training. They all failed; and Fijians were abandoned to extinction just when their demographic recovery began.

The fourth section deals with later shifts in the discourse: a period when it lapsed and official attention focussed on Fiji's Indian women; the interwar era when the discourse was revived in the context, so to speak, of a demographic race between Indians and Fijians; and finally its appropriation by Fijian men in an effort to enhance their control over Fijian women and prevent interracial liaisons.

Changes after World War 2 rendered the discourse on decrease obsolete. The conclusion returns us to debates in chapter one about about the etiology of disease in New World population decline and a reflection on the place of women in this process.
Abbreviations

ANL  National Library, Canberra
BM  British Museum
CAIG  Cakobau/Ad-Interim Government
CO  Colonial Office
CF  Confidential Files, Secretariat.
CMO  Chief Medical Officer
CSO  Colonial Secretary's Office
CSR  Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd
DC  District Commissioner
F  'F series', Secretariat
GBPP  Great Britain Parliamentary Papers
LCP  Legislative Council Papers
LC  Ladies Committee for the Ameliorating the Condition of Women in Heathen Countries
M  Methodist Archives, Fiji
mf  microfilm
ML  Mitchell Library, Sydney
MMS  Methodist Missionary Society
MOM  Methodist Overseas Mission
ms  manuscript
N  'N series', Native Affairs
NAF  National Archives, Suva
NMP  Native Medical Practitioner
NON  Native Obstetric Nurse
NSM  Native Stipendiary Magistrate
PAH  Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University
PM  Peabody Museum
PMB  Pacific Manuscripts Bureau
PMO  Provincial Medical Officer
QVS  Queen Victoria School for Boys
RCAF  Roman Catholic Archives, Suva
SM  Stipendiary Magistrate
SNA  Secretary of Native Affairs
ts  typescript
Fijian Orthography

- $b$ is pronounced as $mb$ in number
- $c$ is pronounced as $th$ in they
- $d$ is pronounced as $nd$ in end
- $g$ is pronounced as $ng$ in sing
- $q$ is pronounced as $ng$ in finger

Note on Fijian terms

I italicize Fijian words with the exception of the titles of office-bearers in the Native Administration and certain institutions, as in Turanga ni Koro, the government appointee for administration of the village; or Bosevakaturaga, the Council of Chiefs.

Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fijian Word</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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| Adi                      | title of respect for a woman, as in 'Lady ....'
<p>| bose                     | meeting, conference |
| Bosevakaturaga           | Council of Chiefs   |
| bunigone                 | midwife, grandmother, old woman |
| bula                     | health, life        |
| Buli                     | government appointee for the administration of the district |
| buturaki                 | kick, 'bash-up'     |
| bure                     | house; men's house  |
| bure ni sa               | men's house, house for guests |
| cakacaka                 | work                |
| cauravou                 | youth, young man    |
| cika                     | conjunctivitis      |
| coka                     | dysentery, diarrhoea|
| cokadra                  | dysentery, pass blood|
| cokalosi                 | procedure for draining blood via a man's urethra |
| coko                     | yaws                |
| dabe                     | infant's sickness due to breaking the post partum taboo |
| dalo                     | taro                |
| davola                   | cross-cousin of the opposite sex |
| dauveimaroroi            | 'carer', nurse      |
| dagai                    | sickness caused by sex with much older partner |
| dravu                    | ashes               |
| dreke levu               | carrying heavy loads|
| girmit                   | indenture contract; indenture |
| girmitya                 | an Indian indentured labourer |
| gone                     | child               |
| gone lalai               | babies              |
| ibe                      | mats                |
| ivukevuke                | helpers, assistants (term used for Fijian 'little sisters' in the Roman Catholic Mission) |</p>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>child or children of a chief by a low born woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>kai colo</td>
<td>people from the hilly interior of Viti Levu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaisi</td>
<td>commoner, low born person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalourere</td>
<td>a type of god or spirit; also used for practices to produce communion with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kania</td>
<td>to eat, consume; also verb for a man's sexual intercourse with a woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karokaro</td>
<td>skin complaint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katakata</td>
<td>fever; sometimes more specifically influenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawu</td>
<td>offspring, progeny, race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawaboko</td>
<td>to make extinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawadravu</td>
<td>to make extinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawai</td>
<td>edible tuber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawayali</td>
<td>to make extinct</td>
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<tr>
<td>kiripi</td>
<td>croup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koro</td>
<td>village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kumala</td>
<td>sweet potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leba</td>
<td>a small fragrant tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lila</td>
<td>wasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lilabalavu</td>
<td>the long wasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>lotu</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>lovo</td>
<td>earth oven</td>
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<tr>
<td>lueniviwai</td>
<td>'spirits of the water' - term also used for practices to produce communion with them</td>
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<tr>
<td>magiti</td>
<td>ceremonial feast</td>
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<tr>
<td>mana</td>
<td>power, supernatural power, efficacy</td>
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<td>marama</td>
<td>lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masi</td>
<td>bark-cloth</td>
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<tr>
<td>mata</td>
<td>eye, herald, speaking chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matainance</td>
<td>'doctor', person skilled in dealing with sickness/death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matanitu</td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matanivanua</td>
<td>herald, speaking chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mataqali</td>
<td>patrilineal descent group, land-owning unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mate</td>
<td>sickness, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matetaka</td>
<td>epidemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meke</td>
<td>dance poem, ballad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na lutu sobu itaukei</td>
<td>the decrease of the Taukei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na tina ni gone itaukei</td>
<td>Fijian mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noqu taki wai</td>
<td>my water carrier, concubine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovisa</td>
<td>Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qase</td>
<td>old person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaseqase</td>
<td>cunning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ramusu</td>
<td>broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rara</td>
<td>open village square, area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratu</td>
<td>title of respect for a man, as in 'Sir ....'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roko Tui</td>
<td>government appointee for administration of a province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruve</td>
<td>dove; Ruby; name of the Methodist Women's Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>sasa</td>
<td>dry coconut leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sasaca</td>
<td>a kind of plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>save</td>
<td>infant's sickness due to conception of a sibling too soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solevu</td>
<td>ceremonial exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>sogosoço</td>
<td>society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soqosoço Vakamarama</td>
<td>Fijian Women's Association</td>
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<td>Translation</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>sulu</td>
<td>cloth, wrap-around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talatala</td>
<td>minister of religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanoa</td>
<td>large bowl for mixing yagona</td>
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<tr>
<td>taukei</td>
<td>owner or possessor of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tina</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tukutuku raraba</td>
<td>histories, traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tulevutaki</td>
<td>pack-rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turaga ni Koro</td>
<td>Government appointee for administration of a village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turaga ni Lewa iTaukei</td>
<td>son of a man's sister; he has certain rights among his uncle's people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vasu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vale</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vale ni bula</td>
<td>house of health/life; hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vale ni mate</td>
<td>house of sickness/death; hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakamau</td>
<td>formal Christian marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakamisioneri</td>
<td>missionary collection, meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakasilima</td>
<td>range of therapeutic manipulations, usually through orifices of the body, and usually in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakatevoro</td>
<td>'devil-like', heathen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vatu</td>
<td>shelf, ledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vavalagi</td>
<td>foreigner, white person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vu</td>
<td>cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vunikalou</td>
<td>midwife; priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vunikoli</td>
<td>'cough of the dog', whooping cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wai ni vakalutu</td>
<td>medicine to cause abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vunivalu</td>
<td>warlord; title of the high chief of Bau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wai ni yava</td>
<td>medicine to prevent conception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yalewa</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaqona</td>
<td>kava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavu</td>
<td>house platform, foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavu lala</td>
<td>empty house platform, foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavusa</td>
<td>a grouping of mataqali linked by a common ancestor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Introduction

Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and 'the Decrease of the Race'

This study is set in the southwest Pacific islands of Fiji against the background of Fijian demographic decline during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The collapse of American and then Pacific populations following European contact had been widely witnessed since the sixteenth century. Today the dominant explanation of this dying is in terms of non-immunity to introduced disease; but Europeans at the time proposed a range of other theories. Their tendency to see native decrease as ineluctably leading to extinction was however always strong. Fiji was therefore unusual: the British colonial administration explicitly rejected the inevitability of extinction for Fijians and tried 'to save the race'; and from the 1890s, a local, colonial discourse developed concerning the decrease of the Taukei - Fijian for 'owners' or 'possessors of the land'\(^1\) - which focussed attention and directed efforts toward Fijian mothers.

'Discourse' is here defined as a pattern of discussion in which a loose set of ideas, concerns and terminologies recur. The chapters which follow attempt to make some sense of this discourse on decrease in Fiji: its epidemiological circumstances, the political interests which informed it, the validity of some of its theories concerning Fijian infant mortality, the interventions which resulted, and the fate of this discourse, as it was invoked, forgotten, reinvoked, and used to various ends by different parties from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. Throughout this study, implicitly or explicitly, is the presence of the single text that provoked it: the bulky report of a commission of inquiry into the decrease published in 1896, which established Fijian mothers as objects of governmental thought and action and achieved almost biblical status during the next fifty years.\(^2\) In a prominent line of reasoning, depopulation was attributed to high rates of infant mortality which in turn were attributed to 'bad mothers'. Hence many efforts to 'save the race' attempted to correct the alleged defects of indigenous maternity.

The study falls into four parts. The first deals with the origins of the decrease in the new diseases imported by Europeans to Fiji; and the origins of the discourse in Fiji's native policy and politics, as well as general theories of 'decline', 'degeneracy' 'decay' and 'extinction' applied to both European and indigenous populations in that era. The second explores one explanation of Fijian maternal incompetence popular in the 1890s: that it was owing to incapacitating circumstances ensuing from 'the abolition of polygamy' - an interesting proposition which eventually I reject. The third examines

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1. The word Taukei in recent times has acquired very specific political and nationalist connotations; throughout this thesis it is used in its earlier, colonial sense to denote Fiji's indigenous people.

those initiatives taken around the turn of the century based on the premise that Fijian women were congenitally deficient in maternal instinct. Attempts were made to change the mothers of the Taukei by edict, education and special training. When these failed, the administration gave up, consigning the Taukei to their fate. The final part deals with the later permutations of the discourse, which occurred in the shadow of Fiji's other subject races. Chapter nine traces the rise and transformation of the Indian mother, whose prolificity between the wars prompted alarm and redirected attention to Fijian mothers once more. Chapter ten addresses the Child Welfare Scheme which reincarnated the 1890s discourse on decrease in the 1920s and '30s. Chapter eleven discusses its final appropriation by Fijian men in an effort to safeguard their paternity and all that it entailed against the prospect of their economic and political extinction.

Thus chapters one to eleven treat developments linked to demographic trends from the late eighteenth century to the eve of World War 2, during which time the Taukei decreased and recovered; then 'decreased' relative to the rapid growth of the Colony's Indian population. For the purposes of our discussion however, the discourse on decrease had a shorter career: it was born in the 1890s, flourished around the turn of the century, revived in the inter-war era, and died thereafter. The conclusion analyses some of the factors in its death, before addressing two ultimate questions: whether mothers contributed to the decrease of the Taukei as alleged; and whether the initiatives which the discourse authorised were any aid to their increase. To both I answer in the negative.

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This is a descriptive and reflective, text-based history. The discourse on decrease in Fiji has served as both a focus in itself and as a lens through which to examine the developments it denotes and the settings in which it was shaped and used. The resulting insights into medicine, disease and gender in empire will, I hope, add to understandings of Fiji's contact and colonial past and contribute more generally to scholarship animated by these concerns.

I feel that this work has been shaped from the 'bottom up' rather than the 'top down'. Its edges and internal divisions were suggested by a contemplation of the primary material, with each section and chapter raising distinctive interpretative questions. While others might have preferred to tailor the undertaking to a particular paradigm or problem of interpretation, I chose to run with the sources. Though this approach risks formlessness, it can also prove serendipitous and yield unanticipated patterns.

Nevertheless I owe a great deal to a range of secondary literature which I will not itemise here. I am deeply in debt to fine historical, anthropological and demographic studies relating to Fiji, as citations will show. My interest in the epidemiological conditions of the decrease has been stimulated by studies on the role of disease in
colonialism and the history of health. Insofar as the first chapter and the conclusion address debates concerning the relative weight of biological versus cultural, social and political factors in disease and decrease, this controversy provides a frame of reference for the study as a whole. Selections from a proliferating literature on gender, class and race under colonialism furthered particular lines of thought. Finally, I came to this project entranced by readings in American, British and Antipodean 'women's history'. Traces of this influence can be seen in my treatment of European women, and in some instances, where analogies with Fijian developments are suggested.

My greatest debt however is to the National Archives of Fiji, which leave the researcher awed by their richness and heterogeneity. I was initially attracted by the Report of A Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Decrease of the Native Population, because it said so much on women, and planned to track texts related to it or to the themes it raised. Warnings about the silence of man-made sources on the subject of women prepared me for a meagre haul: but the archives yielded a wealth of material caught in the driftnet of colonial inscription. Just as nineteenth and twentieth century anxieties about population trends in Europe and the Neo-Europes3 entangled women in the public record, so they did in Fiji - in complex and fantastic detail.

The main question one might ask of my sources is: what about the mothers of the Taukei themselves? Most of my primary material, both archival and published, was written by colonial administrators and missionaries. Most of the Fijian voices are those of men - speaking in provincial councils, at meetings of the Council of Chiefs, writing government reports, petitions and sometimes articles for The Native Medical Practitioner or the Transactions of the Fijian Society. Most of the female voices are European - belonging to mission sisters or missionary wives, wives of officials, workers in the Hygiene Mission, feminists campaigning against indenture, and nurses. Inevitably, these sources lead one to ponder the interrelationships among these speakers and the ways in which they documented the mothers of the Taukei.

Yet the voices of Fijian women, mostly in their native tongue, also break through. They are transcribed in the archives here and there for which my limited proficiency in Fijian was at least adequate to read. The infant death inquiries in chapters one and six record the testimony of Fijian mothers, midwives and other village women, though I sampled but a fraction of them. Reports by Fijian workers in the Native Obstetric Nursing and Child Welfare Schemes, examination answers by Fijian school girls, and letters from the champion of mothers and children, Lolohea Waqairawai are cited in chapters eight and nine. Female witnesses in court, recorded conversations with Fijian women, and a haunting women's meke, or dance poem contribute to the discussion of polygamy in part three. Sources such as these are vastly outnumbered by documents

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written by or quoting men, or authored by European women, but are none the less many and vivid.

The oral testimony of living women has played an ambiguous part in this study. Conversations with nurses, workers in women's organisations, village midwives, and others who extended hospitality and friendship, influenced my thinking on many matters. Nurses in particular, though their work, observations and commitment helped me appreciate the pioneers of their profession, enduring issues in maternal and infant health and the interaction of Fijian and official medicine. But I was struck by how many events and conditions treated in this study simply 'rang no bells' in the present. Memories did not go back so far, and when they did they remembered other things or preferred to forget. Historians must contend with amnesia as with memory; and some experiences addressed in the chapters ahead are, as I explain, particularly prone to erasure.

Certain issues of interpretation were raised by old texts which could perhaps be furthered by anthropological research today into, for instance, distinctively Fijian ideas about conception and pregnancy, or current 'folk' practices of abortion and contraception. My considerations have usually depended on the textual residues, inference, existing studies relating to Fiji or work done in cognate societies. Though I respect the ideal of combining archival and anthropological methods in approaching Pacific pasts, I was not in the position to do this kind of research myself.

Introductions to dissertations are often written last, when the author discovers what his or her research was actually all about. In this case completion has accentuated my sense of all that this thesis is not, and the limited nature of the skills I brought to it. They are only those of a reader. 'Mothers of the Taukei' touches a number of disciplines in which I have no training: demography, anthropology and medicine among them. At the time I conducted this research, I had no expertise in babies or motherhood either! I tackled this task with a modest tool-kit, and beg the indulgence of those who are expert where I am not.
Chapter One
A New Age

The foreigner is hove-to,
A sickness is reported among us,
The men are swept away; the women are swept away
They are like the plantains that have withered.

Meke on the coming of dysentery,
transcribed by Ilai Motonicocoka.1

The arrival of new diseases brought by Europeans in their ships marked a new epoch for many peoples of the Pacific. Two Fijian women from early last century caught this sense of periodization in their lament:
'We have fallen on a new age, io e infectious disease is spreading among us'.2

The phrase 'fatal impact' automatically springs to mind when thinking of new diseases introduced to the Pacific. Within Pacific scholarship it is a particularly loaded phrase, associated with visions and approaches to the past in which one can trace a full circle in the last thirty years. Ever since the apparent demise of Pacific populations was first observed, theories about the mortal effect of Europeans upon Islanders were expounded. But shortly after the 'fatal impact' was popularised in 1966 by the title of the most widely read history of the Pacific, Alan Moorehead's The Fatal Impact, the vision suggested - paradise destroyed, life extinguished - went out of academic fashion.3 To the new school of Pacific historians from the 1960s, many Pacific Islanders were manifestly alive, prolific and shedding colonialism. This vision demanded histories which downsize Europeans, banished victimhood, and stressed Islander resilience and agency.4 So, when looking to the past, exaggeration in descriptions of disease and in

2 DR, App. 1, p. 2.
4 The father of this school, Jim W. Davidson, Professor of Pacific History at the Australian National University, outlined an agenda for Pacific historiography in the first edition of the Journal of Pacific History which, ironically, was published in the same year as Alan Moorehead's Fatal Impact. Davidson's essay was a revised version of an inaugural lecture given twelve years previously and argued that historians needed to consider indigenous forces alongside imperial factors. See J. W. Davidson, 'Problems of Pacific History', Journal of Pacific History, 1 (1966), pp. 5-22. Elements of this approach were taken further by ANU-trained historians, with Kerry Howe publishing perhaps the strongest attack upon the idea of the 'fatal impact'. See Kerry Howe, 'The Fate of the 'Savage' in Pacific Historiography', New Zealand Journal of History, 11:2 (1977), pp. 137-154.
early figures for Pacific populations was especially suspected. Lower estimates tended to be favoured, thus in effect reducing the degree to which Islander numbers could be imagined as having fallen. Various studies have confirmed that there was no uniform 'fatal impact' on the Pacific: some populations were badly affected, others scarcely touched. In this research, the demographer Norma McArthur was a leader.5

Two developments have however revived 'fatal impact' in the Pacific. The first is the rise of environmental histories which deal with the effects of immigrant microbes as well as flora and fauna, and which highlight the lability of some island ecosystems. Pacific geographers, archaeologists and prehistorians have long been preoccupied with human impact and environmental change, but these themes have been charged with drama and pathos since Crosby touched on the Pacific in his panoramic study of Ecological Imperialism.6 The second is the huge rewriting of the history of the 'fourth world' - the indigenous peoples demographically and politically overwhelmed in their ancestral lands - like the Indians of the Americas and the Aborigines of Australia. This scholarship has revised upwards the estimates of native populations at contact and pictured a far greater initial demographic destruction due to disease.7 David Stannard has self-consciously brought this agenda to Pacific historiography in his studies of Hawaii, beginning with his essay Before the Horror. Here he argues that prior to their steep and rapid decline thanks to the introduction of disease, Hawaiians numbered at least 800,000 - almost three times greater than the maximum estimate hitherto accepted.s There is now a corpus of work in

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7 A useful survey of these trends in relation to America is given in David E. Stannard, American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, App.1, pp. 261-268. The work to pioneer contentious upward revisions of the Australian Aboriginal population was Noel Butlin, Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of South Eastern Australia, 1788-1850, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983. Curiously, although some Maori scholars would welcome similarly increased estimates of their population at contact, so strong is the 'anti Fatal impact' position in New Zealand that no such work to my knowledge has been done, and vigorous arguments have been advanced for more conservative estimates of Maori population on contact. Rangamui Walker, Ka Whawhai Tona Matou: Struggle Without End, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p. 81; James Belich, Making Peoples: A History of New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century, Auckland: Penguin, 1996, pp. 172-178.

dialogue or dispute with Stannard; Hawaiian nationalist historians have embraced Stannard's vision of 'the horror'; and his estimate is cited as the new, if contested upper limit of Hawaiian population on the eve of contact.  

Three features in this body of 'horror' literature are pertinent for the discussion here. The first is the tension between biological determinism and human agency as explanations of disease. Though Stannard holds Europeans responsible for introducing new diseases to Hawaii, there is a strong quality of biological determinism in his account. By contrast, the epidemiologist Kunitz who has engaged with Stannard's work in his own studies of the European impact upon the health of non-Europeans, stresses that the best explanations of disease must draw upon 'multiple, weakly sufficient causes' and must consider very specific political, social and cultural factors, rather than universal laws of microbial behaviour. As Donald Denoon has pointed out, the first approach tends to correlate with a focus on early contact, the second with a focus on the later colonial period.

A second feature is the obvious desire of Stannard, Kunitz and every author one could cite in this corpus to avoid any explanations which could be construed as 'blaming the victim'. Consequently, while much attention is given to the effect of European actions upon native morbidity and mortality, relatively little attention is given to the ways in which indigenous practices may have interacted, to fatal or beneficial effect, with imported disease. These questions are, for the most part, left in silence; or, as in


11 Denoon, 'Pacific Island Depopulation'
Stannard's vigorous repudiation of claims that war and infanticide contributed to population decline in Hawaii, branded as political myths serving to exculpate Europeans for native suffering and loss of life. This avoidance is understandable, given (as later chapters illustrate) that so many elaborate explanations of indigenous population decline have 'blamed the victim' or in effect denied the part of European actions or inaction in demographic collapse. Moreover, in the politics of redress today, victimhood can provide an empowering identity and a potent tool which some of the survivors of decimated populations today are keen to wield. The status of victimhood in this discourse accords with a vision of the Pacific and of Pacific scholarship which sees both - not in the process of decolonization forecast in the sixties - but still battling colonialism's hydra.

A third feature is the renewed examination, found especially in Stannard's and Crosby's studies, of the effect of introduced diseases upon female fertility. Stannard and Crosby agree that lowered fertility was a crucial factor in Hawaiian depopulation, rather than high rates of sickness-induced mortality alone. Stannard has argued that more than syphilis and gonorrhoea need consideration. Other common introduced diseases such as influenza, measles and tuberculosis can impair the female capacity to conceive, to sustain pregnancy and ultimately to deliver live and viable children. Stannard's 'Horror' was thus particularly horrible for Hawaiian women.

The early introduction of new diseases to Fiji; their interaction with Fijian practices; and their effect on Fijian women: these are the main questions that will inform this discussion - after some preliminary comment on Fiji and the Fijians.

Fiji and the Fijians

Fiji forms the last island group in a continental chain which stretches eastwards into the Pacific from New Guinea. Vanuatu lies 1000 kilometers to Fiji's west, Tonga and Samoa somewhat nearer to Fiji's east. During the 3,500 years or so of human settlement in Fiji, there have been further migrants from the west, and a pattern of introduction, interaction and assimilation.

16 First settlers are generally thought to have arrived in Fiji between 1500 and 1000 BC. For a overview of theories relating to the human settlement of the Pacific, see P. S. Bellwood, 'The
Map 1: Early Nineteenth Century Fiji (after Domodomo, 4:2, 1986, facing p. 96)
interaction within the triangle formed by Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Some geneticists, happily immune to the cultural debates surrounding the terms, describe the genetic influences on the Fijian population as 80% Melanesian and 20% Polynesian.

With respect to disease, Fiji's central position entailed some advantages for its inhabitants. Relative genetic diversity may have been one of these. The Fijians' history of infusion and intermingling contrasts with that of some Pacific island populations which grew from a small number of founders, developed largely in isolation and were therefore characterised by relative genetic homogeneity. Francis Black has argued that the more genetically homogeneous the population, the more virulent can an infection introduced into its midst become.


Former theories which held waves of migration solely responsible for major changes to Fijian society, and for the cultural, linguistic and physical diversity found in Fiji were countered by theories stressing the primacy of localised processes of social evolution. Terry L. Hunt, Patterns of Human Interaction and Evolutionary Divergence in the Fiji Islands, Journal of the Polynesian Society, 96:3, 1987, pp. 299-334. More recent genetic studies (see footnote 19 below) however partly reinstate the earlier view. Matthew Spriggs, The Lapita Culture and Austronesian Prehistory in Oceania, The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives, ed. Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox & Darrell Tryon, Canberra: Comparative Austronesian Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1995, p. 124.


Situation also influenced the number of diseases in Fiji before Europeans imported additions.\textsuperscript{22} Most of the flora and fauna of the Pacific Islands, like Islanders themselves, came from South East Asia, and the greater the distance from this source, the less as a rule the biotic range (map 1).\textsuperscript{23} Fiji appears to have had more endemic diseases than the distant Polynesian settlements; but less than the islands to its west. Among the ills Fijians acknowledged as their own were coko or yaws, leprosy, filariasis, rheumatism, boils, ulcers, fungal and other skin complaints. But significantly, malaria never made the jump from Vanuatu, a single factor which renders Fiji a much more benign environment for human beings.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand Fijians suffered yaws which seems not to have reached the farthest flung landfalls of the Pacific migrations. However in view of the encounter with Europeans to come this particular affliction was a blessing. Those who had recovered from yaws enjoyed at least partial immunity to syphilis. Because Fijians had the entrenched belief that every child needed to suffer yaws in order to grow up healthy and therefore diligently inoculated their children with coko, they may have unconsciously implemented their own universal immunization program against syphilis.\textsuperscript{25}

Hitherto I have spoken of Fiji as a single entity. There are 300 to 500 Fijian islands, roughly 100 of which are inhabited. The largest, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu account for 89\% of the land area. Two centuries ago the linguistic and cultural diversity within the group was likely to have been more striking, but since the last century Christianization, the elevation of one Fijian dialect as the language of literacy, and the all encompassing structures of church and state have promoted levels of uniformity.\textsuperscript{26} Still, considerable local variation persists, with the division on Viti Levu between the wet, windward part of the island and its drier, leeward slopes coinciding with one notable linguistic and cultural break.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{22} John Miles, \textit{Infectious Diseases: Colonising the Pacific}, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1997, provides an introduction to the pre-contact distribution and subsequent importation of infectious diseases in the Pacific.

\textsuperscript{23} McNiell, 'Of Rats and Men', p. 301. An exception is Vanuatu, which though west of Fiji has a smaller range of flora.

\textsuperscript{24} Denoon, 'Pacific Island Depopulation', passim. Miles, \textit{Infectious Diseases}, pp. 19-29.

\textsuperscript{25} The distribution of yaws in the Pacific prior to European contact and its ability to confer full immunity to syphilis is debated. Stannard is undecided as to whether yaws existed in Hawaii and argues in any case that while syphilis may grant immunity to yaws, the reverse is less certain. Stannard, \textit{Before the Horror}, p. 77. Medical fieldworkers are said to agree that childhood yaws indeed provides protection against syphilis. A. W. Woodruff (ed.), \textit{Medicine in the Tropics}, Edinburgh & London: Churchill Livingstone, 1974, p. 358 and the Fijian experience tends to confirm this. \textit{DR}, pp. 127, 160-163. I suspect Bushnell is correct in supposing that yaws had not reached Hawaii so therefore noone had the benefit of yaws-induced immunity to syphilis. Bushnell, \textit{Germs and Genocide}, p. 38. See also Pirie, 'The Effects of Treponematosis and Gonorrhoea'.


\textsuperscript{27} Hunt, 'Patterns of Human Interaction.', p. 328; See also generally Paul Geraghty, \textit{The History of the Fijian Languages}, Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No 19, Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1983.
While the significance of this division is prone to exaggeration - often in terms of contemporary politics - here we may do well to think of two Fijis: one centred around the Koro Sea, which the anthropologist Hocart described as Fiji's Mediterranean; the other comprising the inhabitants of Viti Levu's hilly interior and its western drylands. At the turn of the nineteenth century the Koro Sea complex was rich. It contained the most powerful chiefdoms of Fiji. Its peoples were linked by relations of tribute, exchange, marriage, kin, refuge, conquest, service. Through the scattering of islands which formed its eastern parameters sailed traffic with Tonga. And in the south eastern corner of Viti Levu, an intensive system of cultivation practised on the 250 square kilometers of the Rewa delta supported a population of possibly 35,000 to 40,000 people at its peak. This was the largest concentration of population in Fiji, if not the island Pacific.

Many peoples of the delta and eastern maritime regions claimed ancestors who had come down from the hills of Viti Levu generations earlier. But by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century relations between the Koro Sea complex and the smaller polities of the interior and the west appear tenuous. Probably there was more common, current knowledge among the peoples of the Koro Sea about Tonga and Samoa than there was of their own Fijian hinterland. Early missionaries remarked on the ignorance of coastal Fijians about the 'mountaineers', while many *kai colo* were imagined never to have seen the sea.

These two Fijis were likely to have constituted two distinctive networks for the transmission of disease. The people of western and interior Viti Levu probably enjoyed a

29 A. M. Hocart, 'Early Fijians', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 49, (1919), p. 43. What I call the 'Koro Sea complex' includes Vanua Levu. Though Hocart contrasted parts of Vanua Levu with the culture of the Koro Sea as exemplified in chiefdoms of Lau, Cakaudrove and Bau, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century western Vanua Levu was nonetheless enmeshed in the Koro Sea complex of trade, intermarriage and exchange. A. M. Hocart, The Northern States of Fiji, London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1952, pp. 51; 146.
31 A. M. Hocart, 'Early Fijians', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 49, (1919), pp 42-51. Thomson described traditions 'of an upheaval among the inland tribes of Viti Levu which sent forth a stream of emigrants to the coast' including the emigrants whose descendants established the chiefdom of Bau. Basil Thomson, The Fijians: A Study in the Decay of Custom, London: William Heinemann, 1908, p. 22. Thomson and Hocart imagined that the descent from the hills was due to the pressure of immigrants arriving from the west. However, it may also be consistent with the general settlement trends Southern has proposed for Fiji: initial coastal settlers moving inland and then returning to the coast to cultivate delta country resulting from the erosion they had caused in the hills. Southern, The Late Quaternary Environmental History of Fiji, pp. 214-215.
Map 2: Eastern Viti Levu and Ovalau
degree of insulation due to their weaker and less frequent connections with the Koro Sea complex, and the barriers interposed by enemy tribes. By way of contrast, the Koro Sea complex was open to influences from the world outside Fiji. Within these distinctive spheres, transmission was dependent on the incidence and patterns of contact, the destinations, distances and duration of travel. For the interior and west, I imagine a series of interconnecting, shorter-range habits of interaction; while in addition to these, the Koro Sea complex included wider-ranging movements. The phrase 'fatal impact' suggests an instantaneous event - in practice the impact of any disease was bound to be fragmented by the differentials of travel over time and space.

**New Diseases**

In 1890, if you had asked a colonial official in Fiji how many epidemics had afflicted the Fijian people, he might have replied that epidemics occur every year, but there had only ever been one major epidemic to his knowledge: measles in 1875, which had struck three months after Cession and made such a disastrous beginning to colonial rule. Contemporary observers believed the measles had killed one Fijian in four. This same, imaginary official would have been keenly aware that since Cession, the Fijian population had been declining. By 1891 it had almost dropped to 100,000, prompting the Commission of Inquiry around whose report our later chapters pivot. Among its findings was the discovery of Fijian oral traditions relating to three earlier epidemics of which most European residents in the second half of the century had been quite unaware. The two earliest of these, according to Fijian reports, had been far worse than the measles.

The first was the *lila*, or *lila balavu*, meaning long wasting. It was linked in Fijian tradition with the arrival of the first European ship, so the Decrease Commissioners tentatively attributed its introduction to the stay of the HMS 'Pandora's' tender at the Island of Ono-i-Lau in 1791 - though other sources are possible. Most of the sufferers

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33 To my knowledge, the only spatial analysis of disease transmission in 19th century Fiji is Andrew D. Cliff and Peter Haggett, *The Spread of Measles in Fiji and the Pacific: Spatial Components in the Transmission of Epidemic Waves through Island Communities*, Canberra: Department of Human Geography Publication, Australian National University, 1985. However, Hunt's 'Patterns of Human Interaction' considers factors that have likely implications for disease transmission too.


35 The exact return was 105,800. *Fiji Census for the year 1891*, Suva: Fiji Government Printer.


37 The journal of Renouard, who served on the Pandora's tender, suggests that intercourse between the vessel's crew and the Fijians was extremely guarded; and only on one occasion did any crew go ashore. Renouard, *Voyage of the Pandora's Tender*, 1791, ML: *D377. Another possible source of infection was the snow 'Arthurs' which anchored off the Yasawas in 1894. There it was attacked by Fijians, some of whom tried to board the vessel. See Im Thurn's 'Introduction' to William Lockerby, *The Journal of William Lockerby*, ed. Sir Everard Im Thurn & Leonard C. Wharton, London: The Hakluyt Society, 1925, p. xxii. Such limited encounters however seem insufficient for the transmission of infection.
of this lingering illness were left to die or were strangled. The lila epidemic cannot be identified with certainty, but tuberculosis fits many of the details. Transmitted largely by droplet infection, tuberculosis can assume an epidemic character on introduction to a previously unexposed population. The second epidemic was the coka or cokadra, translated as dysentery, a disease transmitted through the contamination of food or water by the faeces of an infected person. Its symptoms were diarrhoea and the passing of blood. Dated to the first decade of the nineteenth century and traced to a shipwreck on the reefs on Oneata, the coka was said to have spread quickly and caused massive death.

These were not the only major pre-Cession epidemics. There had also been large-scale epidemics of influenza, though curiously these were not mentioned in the report of Decrease Commission. Captain Charles Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition in 1840 reported that influenza had first appeared in Fiji some years earlier, and again in 1839, when according to his Fijian informants, not enough healthy people had been left to care for the sick. In some villages half of the population had died. Resident Europeans estimated that the death rate among those infected was one in ten. The diaries of missionaries also refer to this 1839 epidemic and testify to its extent.

The possibility of other unrecorded epidemics, especially in the decades prior to 1835 cannot be discounted. After that date missionary diaries provide some form of continuous record. The picture they create is a complex one: of smaller localised epidemics (though this may reflect the limited purview of the missionary, rather than the actual extent of the disease), recurrent outbreaks of dysentery and influenza, and multiple illness. Despite all kinds of variations, these basic disease conditions are attested by missionary accounts until Cession; and for that matter, beyond Cession; after which the reports of medical officers and others do the same.

Some unrecorded and more intimate contact with the crew of a European ship is a possibility, but I think it more likely that the lila - assuming it was TB - was brought to Fiji by indigenous sea traffic from Tonga, which had earlier and closer contacts with European shipping. Every European vessel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century almost inevitably carried tuberculous seamen capable of transmitting this infection. Sir James Watt, 'Medical Aspects and Consequences of Cook's Voyages', Captain James Cook and His Times, ed. Robin Fisher & Hugh Johnston, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979, pp. 156-157.


39 The DR suggested the eclipse may have occurred 7 Sep. 1802 (DR, footnote, p. 35). Though the coka was linked to a number of memorable events, much uncertainty surrounds its date.


The diary kept by the Reverend Thomas Jaggar during his stay at Rewa in 1840 gives myriad glimpses of sickness during a year that was not considered especially noteworthy for disease. In February Jaggar and Joshua (probably Jaggar's son, though Joshua was also the name of a native teacher) were almost blind with cika (that is conjunctivitis) and 'diarrhoea prevalent'. In April, Jaggar's colleague David Cargill was critically ill with dysentery but recovered. In May, Margaret Cargill also caught dysentery, gave birth, but in the beginning of June both child and mother died. Later that month 'The people attacked with a species of influenza' (27.6.40); and in July and August, when the Jaggars were sick with flu and cika, among the people there was 'much sickness' and 'very many sick'. On 9.8.40 he wrote 'Great sick: seized all our Koro -'; there was another outbreak of dysentery, and August proved a good month for conversion by those close to death. One of Jaggar's entries (for 13.8.40) can serve as illustration: 'Another sick joined our number - appears on verge of grave - chill? - Poor Margaretta died, - Distributing 2 others from Bureb: sick embracing Christianity...'. In September many entries refer to the individual sick, such as 'the poor man - who is only skin and bone to look at' with whom Jaggar prayed (13.9.40). He also mentions an 'abundance' of soki, a complaint caused by ulcers on the soles of the feet due to yaws. On 13.10.40 Jaggar himself was low with a sore throat, severe weakness and headache, and noted “unable to speak but in a low whisper - Nasalai man died - seems to be a genl influenza attacking the people.’ References to deaths - of both adults and children - continue in his diary till December, when the Rewan chief Raiwalui was dying of dysentery ' - Chief bloody stools'. In November Jaggar's comment, 'They are a very diseased people and either too lazy or thoughtless to seek for that which would be useful in time of sickness' is one of the very few general statements he makes about the high levels of morbidity. The following year Rewa again coped with great sickness. In August 1841 the chiefs took decisive action: to rid their people of illness, the sick were killed en masse - through shutting them up to die, clubbing or strangling them. And 1841 was not regarded by Jaggar as extraordinary for sickness either.

Jaggar indeed comments on diseases that existed in Fiji prior to European contact - such as severe conjunctivitis and yaws. One should not romanticize pre-contact Fiji as a place where no-one ailed or died of sickness and - like Diderot's fictive Tahiti - knew only the illness of old age! But most of the death-dealing diseases were new.

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42 Jaggar, Unto the Perfect Day. While the delta did flood in 1840, which doubtless worsened conditions for disease, this was a common occurrence.
43 Albert Schütz thinks Cargill's affliction was dengue. The Diaries and Correspondence of David Cargill, p. 176. However there is some question as to whether dengue was in Fiji at that stage or introduced later. See DR, p. 36.
44 Jaggar, Unto the Perfect Day, entry for 17 Nov. 1840.
45 Thomas Jaggar, Unto the Perfect Day, entry for 9 Aug. 1841.
Elevated Mortality

Perennial mortality from repeated outbreaks of endemic introduced disease, multiple infections and smaller scale epidemics were likely to have a greater sustained effect on population trends over time than single, massive epidemics alone.\(^47\) Inflammations of the bowel, species of influenza, coughs, fevers and loathsome wasting figure repeatedly in missionary accounts. It is not alway easy to identify these diseases. Diarrhoea and the passing of blood could be symptoms of a variety of complaints; the diverse forms of tuberculosis were liable to be named as other diseases; while pleurisy, pneumonia and other respiratory infections could be mistaken for pulmonary tuberculosis and vice versa.\(^48\) Fijians in the 1890s however were sure of their generic provenance: 'Coughs came with white men, so did dysentery.'\(^49\) Coka was clearly domiciled in Fiji after its introduction, and if the \emph{lila} was, as I suspect, tuberculosis, then this too was likely endemic by the turn of the century. Consumption was certainly common by the time missionaries had arrived. 'Pulmonary consumption' according to Cargill was not uncommon in Tonga and Fiji; Jaggar remarked, 'I am led to think that consumption carries off very many natives'; Lyth, in Tonga and Fiji, treated numerous patients for ailments that could well have been tuberculosis, though the terms he used - like 'pulmonary disease', 'severe inflammation of the lungs', 'disease of the lungs', 'wasting disease' - were imprecise.\(^50\) Both tuberculosis and dysentery, without reference to bouts of influenza or other infections were bound to effect the mortality regime. We should also bear in mind that \emph{coka} and tuberculosis remained among the major causes of death well into the colonial period; and as virgin populations are all the more vulnerable in the first generations of exposure to exotic infection, one could expect that the mortality from \emph{coka} and tuberculosis was higher in the early nineteenth century than later.

An important aspect of the impact of introduced diseases must have been upon infant mortality. Babies and small children are vulnerable in many ways. The effects of some diseases which adults suffer too, are even more fatal for the very young. Further, some infections almost exclusively hit children, while sparing adults. Finally, the very young are vulnerable as the secondary victims of disease, who are orphaned or neglected when their carers are struck down, or deprived of an important source of food if their mothers, due to sickness, lose their milk. In the early colonial period, a high proportion of deaths were accounted by infants under one year of age.\(^51\) Among the biggest killers were dysentery and flu, which we can safely assume were killing lots of small children in the pre-Cession period as well. Tuberculosis was also likely to have been a big, if poorly


\(^{49}\) DR, p. 31.


\(^{51}\) DR, Circular, App. 3, p. 4.
identified killer of small children. Babies are particularly susceptible to tuberculosis, and
the younger they are at infection, the more likely their death. Finally, of the diseases
particularly fatal to children, whooping cough was a terrible killer in the early colonial
period. As there were cases of whooping cough reported among the children of the first
missionaries, one might also suppose that in the period before Cession Fijian children
died from this disease. There were other introduced infections as well - but dysentery,
tuberculosis, flu and whooping cough are enough to support the arguments ventured
here.

There is little data on infant mortality in the pre-Cession period, but missionary
records are again suggestive. The pioneer missionaries were attuned to infant mortality,
as young men often smarting from the losses of their own babies and children. This
suffering common to Fijians and the missionary families seems to have provided one rare
basis for cross-cultural sensitivity and compassion in the early days. John Hunt's heart
went out to a Somosomo woman who had lost her child, reflecting that he could
sympathize with her, having within two years buried two of his own infants, a dearly
loved child of a missionary colleague and had twice expected his wife to die; adding 'I
find all heathens, almost, listen to what is said of Jesus when they are told he is the
Saviour of little children.' The small families of native teachers also suggest high rates
of infant mortality. Lyth gave the following typical descriptions: Jeremiah Kiena at 38
to 40 years old was father of one living child; Paul Vea, 38, was married with no
children; Joel Ketetha was also about 38, married with but one child 'having lost several
by death'. Indeed, the loss of infants or small children was not an uncommon factor in
conversion. Comments by Fijians themselves reflect their experience of high infant
mortality. Korotamana replied thus to Jaggar's question as to how many children he had:
'Our devil has eaten them all up'. Sometimes missionaries also observed that illnesses
like dysentery disproportionately affected the very young.

52 DR, pp. 102-103. H. M. Coovadia, 'Tuberculosis in Children', A Century of Tuberculosis, ed.
Coovadia & Benatar, pp. 91-110; F. J. Bentley, S. Grabowski & B. Benjamin, Tuberculosis in
Childhood and Adolescence, London: Tavistock, 1954, pp. 119, 155. See also F. B. Smith, The Retreat
53 Laurel May Heath, Matai ni Mate: Carpenter of Sickness: The Reverend Richard Burdsall Lyth
and the Wesleyan Mission in Fiji: A Case Study in Mission Contact Relationships in Pre-Cession Fiji,
1839-1854, PhD thesis, St Lucia: University of Queensland, 1987, p. 356. Whooping cough was
reported in many parts of the Pacific from the 1840s: Tahiti in 1840; Samoa in 1848; Cook Islands in
1848; Hawaii in 1848-49. McArthur, Island Populations, pp. 253, 103, 167; Crosby, 'Hawaiian
Depopulation', p. 190.
56 Perhaps the most famous example was that of the Viwan chief, Verani, who converted after the
Conference Office, 1866, p. 107.
57 Jaggar, Unto the Perfect Day, entry for 24 Sep. 1840.
Clearly, the conditions for endemicizing and/or widely transmitting certain imported infections existed in pre-Cession Fiji. The wet and crowded Rewa delta probably became one of the most important disease centres in the group. After the initial contacts with European ships in the 1790s, there were repeated opportunities for further introductions. The sandalwood trade flourished from about 1805 to 1810. During the 1820s, whaling ships began to stop in Fijian waters. In the 1830s and 1840s traders came for bêche de mer. The Methodist mission arrived in 1835; the Roman Catholic mission nine years later. These developments were all accompanied by a small amount of European settlement. In the late 1850s, with rumours that Fiji would be ceded to Britain and hopes of fortunes to be made from cotton or other crops, would-be-planters immigrated mostly from New Zealand and Australia. The 1860s probably brought the diseases of the Koro Sea complex to the interior of Viti Levu, as mountaineers left their homes to labour on plantations and returned with calico, muskets and new infections. By 1870, the white population had grown to roughly 2000. More intensive contacts, proximity to the growing ports of Australia and New Zealand, and the introduction of steam, increased Fiji's exposure. But this may be the place to stress that, particularly in the early contact period, diseases brought by European ships were not necessarily 'European'; nor were European diseases necessarily brought by 'European ships'; and often a disease may be traceable to an intermediate island source.

To summarise the points so far: we might suppose there were at least three destructive, large-scale epidemics before Cession; in the longer term, generally elevated mortality rates due to imported disease were probably more important than individual epidemics; and infant mortality rates probably also greatly increased.

War and 'the Murderous Customs of Heathenism'

Now we can turn our attention to the relation between disease and the practices of the time - specifically war and what the early missionaries called 'the murderous customs of heathenism'. (Christianity, by the way, did not make great headway in Fiji till the 1860s, and not till after the establishment of colonial rule can the whole of Fiji be described as nominally Christian.) From the late 1830s until the threshold of the colonial period, Europeans recorded both their own observations and the comments of Fijians to the effect that the Fijian population - as a whole, or in more circumscribed areas

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61 For the effects of steam in reducing travel times, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, ch. 2, 'Ships and Shipping'.
62 Colonel Smythe in 1861 estimated that less than one in three Fijians was Christian and this was calculated from his observation of the coastal and hence most Christianised districts. Smythe's Report 1 May 1861, CO 83/1; and GBPP vol. 36 [2995], 1862. See also A. R. Tippett, *The Christian (Fiji)-1835-1867*, Auckland: The Institute Publishing Co., 1954.
was indeed decreasing; but the explanation invariably given was bloodshed - not disease. The comments of Thomas Williams, published in 1858, are among the best known:

Except where the smaller islands have been entirely depopulated, the larger one show the clearest signs of decrease in the number of inhabitants - a decrease which has been very great within the memory of men now living, and the causes of which, beyond doubt, have been war and the murderous customs of heathenism.\(^{63}\)

What demographic significance should we attach to war and 'murderous customs' in pre-Cession Fiji? Before exploring this question, certain factors which may influence our thinking should be acknowledged. First, one might suspect that the European depictions of native violence were often self-interested, exaggerated, and inadequately appreciated the limits placed on warfare.\(^{64}\) It may therefore be tempting, as a reaction, to go too far the other way in estimating the incidence and scale of bloodshed. Secondly, when thinking of Fijian warfare in a generic sense, it might also be tempting to elide its actual variety. Warfare during the pre-Cession period encompassed a diverse range of conflicts, strategic objectives and methods. Lastly, we should not dismiss war as demographically insignificant if only a few people were killed in formal hostilities.

War was unquestionably an important part of Fijian life and a number of factors during the pre-Cession period appear to have boosted it.\(^{65}\) The longer term processes of political expansion pursued by some of the powerful coastal chiefdoms inevitably involved wars of conquest and increased the likelihood of civil war, by placing strain on the internal weaknesses which characterised the structure of the Fijian chiefly states, or matanitu.\(^{66}\) This political expansion and internal instability were further fuelled by new wealth introduced through trade with Europeans, giving aggressive chiefs the


\(^{66}\) One of these structural weaknesses was the rivalry between half-brothers in the polygynous establishment of the ruling chief which is discussed in Nicholas Thomas, Planets round the Sun: Dynamics and Contradictions of the Fijian Matanitu, Oceania Monograph 31, Sydney: University of Sydney, 1986, esp. ch. 3.
wherewithal to raise war. To the competition between Fijian chiefdoms was added a militarily and evangelistically aggressive Tongan presence, leading to the temporary establishment of a Tongan state within Fiji. New technologies, philosophies and tactics of war - whether of Tongan or European provenance - seem to have destabilised certain Fijian fighting conventions with the result that, on some occasions, more blood was shed. Furthermore particular mechanisms which may have formerly curtailed warfare became prone to discredit and disadvantage. In one way or another, a chief with warlike propensities had often to contend with countervailing interests, chiefly ideals or institutions of authority: such as the priests of the war god; a sacred chief identified with the land and with basic conditions of fertility and well-being; or a set of chiefly ideals which prized peace and immobility. European traders, beachcombers or missionaries generally dealt with those they perceived as 'executive' chiefs who in turn received the advantages to be gained from this relationship. Evangelists - European and Islander - established themselves in opposition to those they perceived as 'priests', and sought to discredit them. The toll of disease itself appears to have precipitated, in numerous instances, a crisis of sacral authority for being perceived to have failed to arrest sickness and secure the people's well-being. All these factors were likely to unsettle the checks on executive power and valorise violence.

Primary mortality due to war amounts to more than merely warriors slain in battle. Other categories of primary victims include those men, women and children slain when their village was taken; or people about their ordinary business whom the enemy chanced upon or ambushed. Probably most military actions in pre-Cession Fiji involved little

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67 Sahlins, 'The Discovery of the True Savage', pp. 55-61.
69 Sahlins, 'The Discovery of the True Savage', pp. 66, 68 ff, endnote 56, p. 87 and passim.
71 Thomas, 'Kingship and Hierarchy' pp. 125-127.
72 Heasley argues that the early epidemics of the lila and coka conducd to the debasement of the Bauan line of sacred chiefs, the Vusaratu, during the reign of Naulivou. Murray P. Heasley, 'The Life and Times of Cakobau: the Bauan State to 1855', PhD thesis, Dunedin: University of Otago, 1983, pp. xxv, 38. Sahlins argues that the submission of the Vusaratu placed the ideology of war at the centre of Bauan society. Sahlins, 'The Discovery of the True Savage', p. 65. In some places, heathen priests themselves led the conversion to Christianity - a fact which may suggest disappointment in Fijian gods. See accounts of conversion in Solevi and in Ono (the latter in the wake of an epidemic) in Joel Bulu, An Autobiography of a Native Minister in the South Seas, London: Wesleyan Mission House, 1871, pp. 32; 47-48.
primary mortality - according to Williams, 'From twenty to a hundred more commonly cover the list of killed.'\(^73\) Major campaigns of political expansion often sought to subject populations, not eradicate them - for, as Sayes observed, population constituted political capital.\(^74\) The campaigns of Bau in the 1840s against Natewa on Vanua Levu, involving thousands of warriors and causing scarcely any casualties, exemplify this kind of war.\(^75\) But massacres did occur, usually after the storming of a village. When Bau sacked Rewa in 1846 three to four hundred people were said to have been slaughtered, and accounts of warfare are dotted with similar incidents.\(^76\) Some wars appear to have been particularly murderous in intent; and this proclivity is reflected in the terms for extermination in which the Fijian language was rich. Words for 'extinct' compounded from \textit{kawa} - meaning offspring or descendants - are particularly suggestive, such as \textit{kawaboko (boko): to stamp out} \textit{kawadravu (dravu): ashes} \textit{kawayali (yali): absent, disappeared}.\(^77\) The symbolism employed by Bau and its allies in their victories over the waning chiefdom of Verata and its tributaries during the first half of the nineteenth century, on more than one occasion visually communicated this imagery - of exterminating a people by exterminating their offspring - by stringing the children of the vanquished from the mastheads of the war canoes, where according to Jaggar, they 'were blown about by the wind & beaten agt the mast & thus killed'.\(^78\) Mortality from \textit{secondary} or associated customs of killing must also be added to the primary mortality of war. Acts of mourning often included the strangling of persons to accompany the dead. Most commonly, though not exclusively, the victims were women, usually one or more wives of the deceased. Though there were numerous circumstances in which a wife was spared the strangling cord - often against her will - there was nevertheless considerable point to Thomas Williams' remark that, 'The blow which falls fatally on one man, may be said to kill several more, for, if the victim is married, his wife or wives will be strangled as soon as the husband's death becomes known'.\(^79\) Eighty wives were strangled at Namena in 1839, for example, after 100 Namena warriors were massacred.\(^80\) Infanticide was sometimes necessitated by the

\(^73\) Williams, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, p. 52.


\(^76\) Waterhouse, \textit{King and People of Fiji}, p. 127; Williams, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, p. 52.


\(^78\) Jaggar, \textit{Unto the Perfect Day}, entry for 1 Nov. 1839; for descriptions of the same incident, see Cargill, \textit{Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Cargill}, p. 263; and Cargill, \textit{The Diaries and Correspondence of David Cargill}, entry for 1 Nov. 1839. Mary Wallis describes how the Bauans massacred the people of Gau and then 'ied the children by their heels to the masts of their canoes', and when Namosimalua massacred the people of a town on Moturiki, the children 'were strung to the masts and carried to Bau; those who died from their bruises were fried...., and the others were given over to the tender mercies of their own children, to torment them to death.' Wallis, \textit{Life in Feejee}, pp. 84, 85.


\(^80\) Waterhouse, \textit{King and People of Fiji}, p. 84.
distress of war. In 1845 one chief explained to John Hunt how his people were so short of food that, despite being Christian, they were killing their children as soon as they were born. In wartime conditions, the sick and infirm were even more likely than usual to be killed. Furthermore, there were deaths related to the preparations for war - as in the sacrifice of victims for a new war-canoe or temple - while the heightened tensions of hostilities could lead to the summary executions of people suspected of some wrong. The inspiration of fear and respect through the spectacle of terror was here, as elsewhere, an essential political tool.

War must also have led to mortality from sickness. Stress, crowding in besieged villages, and malnutrition doubtless rendered people vulnerable to infection. A vast array of archival evidence testifies to war-induced famine - due to people's fear of venturing too far from their village, or due to siege, or due to the common practice of destroying the enemy's crops and fruit-bearing trees. In 1845 Mary Wallis commented on the chronic shortage of food in Macuata, which, she wrote, 'may truly be termed a land of dearth', for enemies were 'continually destroying each other's food, and are often nearly starving themselves'. These causes of scarcity were in addition to, or sometimes coincided with, periods of scarcity owing to natural causes - occasionally drought, but more usually hurricanes, which hit Fiji more frequently than any other south west Pacific island group.

Deaths from sickness also entailed a secondary mortality. The strangling of a person or people to accompany the dead is again the clearest example. Infanticide was sometimes committed when the mother of a small child died, or its parents were ill. The sick and infirm were often killed too - sometimes at their own request and usually after Fijian therapies had failed. Many of the sick and many of the children who were killed in these circumstances would probably have died shortly anyway.

82 Bau's construction of a new temple to the war god in 1839 was honoured by the sacrifice of 3 Veratans; but what with reprisals and widow strangling, a total of 326 were computed killed. Waterhouse, King and People of Fiji, pp. 371-371; for human sacrifices and war canoes, see also pp. 95-97. Displays of violence are amply recorded. See for example the death inflicted on the run-away wife of Qaraniqjo in Jaggar, Unto the Perfect Day, entry for 5 Nov. 1840; the murder of the man suspected of adultery with Verani's wife and the execution of the woman suspected of being the go-between in Wallis, Life in Fuejee,..., entry for 7 Jan. 1845, pp. 36 ff.; the assassination of Cakobau's half-brother Raivalita in Joseph Waterhouse, King and People of Fiji, pp. 108-110; the rape, execution and eating of two women for attempting to fire Cakobau's house at Bau in Hunt, Journal, ML: A3350, entry for 19 Feb. 1844. While some of these incidents may appear to be 'domestics' or 'crimes of passion', the political significance of marital infidelity should not be underestimated, as Sahlins reminds us. Marshall Sahlins, The Return of the Event, Again: With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War of 1843 to 1855 between the Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa, Clio in Oceania, ed. A. Biersack, Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, pp. 48, 59 ff.
84 Wallis, Life in Fuejee, p. 157.
85 Southern, 'The Late Quarternary Environmental History of Fiji', p. 29.
86 This is inferred from later court cases, such as that found in CAIG 544/1875.
It is important to stress that the demographic destructiveness of war was not necessarily correlated to high levels of primary mortality. Even the deaths of a few men in their prime could reverse the fortunes of a small community. And where primary mortality was low, forms of secondary mortality could still conceivably be high. Indeed, many of the areas which were later considered to have been seriously depopulated by war - and this would include not only the Rewa delta following the Bau-Rewa war from 1843 to 1855, but Vanua Levu and Taveuni - probably suffered most from disturbed or diminished food supplies due to war in combination with disease.\(^{87}\)

Another way in which disease and cultural practices combined to harmful effect was through selectively elevating rates of female mortality. For the purpose of reproduction, particularly in a polygynous society, the deaths of males matter less than the deaths of young females. The number of women available for child-bearing is a crucial determinant of reproductive capacity. In order to recover from setbacks due to war or epidemics, or in order to counter perennially high rates of mortality, the number of women of child-bearing age should be kept close to maximum. Certain Fijian practices had the opposite effect. Widow-strangling certainly cut short the child-bearing careers of some women, in certain instances even before it had begun.\(^{88}\)

A further practice worth considering is female infanticide. This was claimed by some missionaries to have been widely practised.\(^{89}\) While (unlike Stannard in relation to Hawaii) I have no doubt that infanticide was practised in Fiji, I doubt the degree to which specifically female infanticide occurred. Certainly, a warrior culture made male children much desired; there were specialists to whom mothers could resort in their efforts to ensure the birth of a son;\(^{90}\) certain attitudes still evidenced in Fiji attest to the special value of male children;\(^{91}\) and some statistics from the early colonial period suggest that either female infanticide was still being practised, or that the births of females were under-registered [table 1].\(^{92}\)

But against the assumption of widespread female infanticide there are other considerations. Males rather than females would be the more likely victims in certain

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87 Parry, 'Ring-Ditch Fortifications in the Rewa Delta', pp. 25, 27, 74-75; for Bua and Macuata, see David Wilkinson's submission in DR, App. 4, pp. 81-82; for Taveuni, see letter from J. B. Thurston to Dr Lang, 23 Oct. 1870, in Papers of Reverend J. D. Lang, ML: A2229.
88 Waterhouse, King and People of Fiji, pp. 307-308. See also 'Na Meke i Ratu Ravulo', Hefferman Collection, 'Mekes and Ethnological Notes' in Stanmore Papers, BM (mf) and the strangling of Tuikilakila's young daughter, R. B. Lyth, Journal, ML: B533, entry for 1 Aug. 1839.
89 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 181, 173; Waterhouse, King and People of Fiji, pp. 308, 327-328.
90 Jean De Marzan, 'Superstitions relatives à la naissance de l'enfant...', in 'Fijian Traditions', RCAF 5/6/7; Michael Weiner, Secrets of Fijian Medicine, Suva: Government Printer, 1984, p. 108.
92 Minute by the Assistant Colonial Secretary, DR, App. 4, p. 124. On the tendency to count female infants last, or to omit them, see DR, App. 4, pp. 118, 120.
### Table 1

**Fijian sex ratios (males per 100 females) 1880-1891**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Ages</th>
<th>At Birth</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
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<td>114</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td>1881</td>
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<td>114</td>
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<td>1887</td>
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<td>1890</td>
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<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---:-- indicates data unavailable or unobtained.

**Source:**

circumstances. In the polygynous establishments of powerful chiefs, the birth of a son by an inferior wife could be fiercely resented by a senior wife who saw this as a threat to the prospects of her own children; given the premium on boys, a woman seeking to hurt her husband might well cause him greater disappointment by depriving him of a son than of a daughter; and given that a husband could exploit his son's rights to appropriate the resources of his maternal kin as their vasu or 'sister's son', in some circumstances the mother may have wished to spare her natal kin these depredations. Despite the public value attached to boys, girls are of more practical use to their mothers in helping with women's work. Though men were certainly known to commit infanticide, often they had little direct opportunity to intervene at birth, when the consideration of a daughter's usefulness would weigh most where it mattered: with the mother. Finally, some missionaries seem to have been influenced by writings on female infanticide in India, where a daughter's dowry could impose a burden parents would rather avoid. In Fiji, however, daughters were an asset in constituting new marriage and kin alliances, and women seem to have been appreciated as creators of wealth - through their children and their artifacts.

Women and Disease

If deliberate infanticide of females was overstated nonetheless more girls than boys may well have died. Male children were likely to receive preferential treatment - particularly in times of hardship due to war and when the need to raise a future generation of warriors was keenly felt. In so far as girls received less food and less attention, higher rates of mortality due to disease should probably have followed. The same applies to women. One early observer, Osborne, remarked that '..in times of scarcity, the women are kept very short of provisions as the men always take the larger share to themselves'; and it is still customary for women and children to eat the leftovers after the men are

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94 Cf. Margaret Chung's remarks relating to contemporary attitudes in the island of Kadavu: while boys were often preferred for the patriline, '..the majority of women interviewed said they wished for at least as many daughters as they did sons, for girls helped with the tasks of the women and are more reliable sources of assistance when adults.' Margaret Chung, 'Politics, Tradition and Structural Change: Fijian Fertility in the Twentieth Century', PhD thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 1991, p. 178.
95 Thomas Williams clearly had India in mind when thinking on this topic. In Fiji and the Fijians he contrasts the motives for infanticide in India and Fiji (p. 181). On the author's copy held in the Mitchell Library (ML: B457) Williams stated that a reason for Fijian female infanticide was the dowry that had to be given with a Fijian girl when she married - an inappropriate analogy.
96 Some recent ethnographies have stressed a close balance in marriage exchanges between the kin of a bride and a groom, tending to favour the bride's people; later prestations to the bride's people have been interpreted as compensating her kin for the loss of a daughter and her reproductive potential. B. Teckle, 'The Position of Women in Fiji', PhD thesis, Sydney: University of Sydney, 1986, p. 223. See also Aseela Ravuvu, Development or Dependence: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village, Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1988, pp. 14 ff. Women's idea of the bride's value, and men's idea of her 'price' are explored in Nicholas Thomas, 'Contrasts: Marriage and Identity in Western Fiji', Oceania, 62:4 (1992), pp. 320-323. The value of women and their artefacts in Pacific societies has been reassessed in several studies since Annette B. Weiner, Women of Value Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977.
sated. The degree to which cultural or non-cultural factors contributed to any hypothetical gender differential in disease-linked mortality is open to speculation. In nineteenth century England, mortality rates from whooping cough and tuberculosis were higher for females than for males, and in pre-Cession Fiji, whatever the contributing factors, analogous mortality differentials possibly obtained.

New diseases certainly complicated the physiological and social roles of women as mothers. Though syphilis appears to have been unknown among Fijian women and gonorrhoea very rare, we can be sure that a greater proportion of pregnancies in the pre-Cession era eventuated in miscarriage or in stillbirth than during the period before new diseases were introduced. Infant death inquiries from the 1890s document numerous individual cases in which a mother came down with dysentery or flu and then spontaneously aborted or felt her child cease to move in her womb. A bout of dysentery at childbirth was usually fatal to mother and child. We can also suppose that at least some women were rendered infertile by genital tuberculosis. Stannard has done well to highlight that other diseases impacted on the ability of women to bear children, aside from syphilis and gonorrhoea which have been such enduring preoccupations with respect the European infection of the Pacific.

But there are pronounced contrasts, with regard to women, between the experience envisaged for Hawaii and that which seems more likely in Fiji. In post-contact Hawaii the postulated scenario is one of depressed fertility and high rates of infant mortality. In Fiji the depression of fertility due to imported disease was probably not severe (though one could speculate on the effects of scarcity and war). Instead, I imagine, rates of infant mortality were raised and this in turn increased the incidence of births, since the early death of a child shortened the period of time that would have separated its birth from the mother’s next pregnancy, a spacing which customarily lasted several years during which the mother suckled her child and abstained from intercourse. In the 1890s, the great contrast the Decrease Commissioners noted between Fiji and Polynesia was that birthrates in Fiji were high, in Polynesia low. Yet the children who survived

99 See ch. 6.
100 DR, pp. 126-127.
102 Stannard, Before the Horror; Stannard, ‘Disease and Infertility’; Crosby, ‘Hawaiian Depopulation’.
103 This argument is further developed in ch. 6. DR, pp. 146-148.
104 DR, p. 5.
from a Fijian mother's repeated pregnancies were conspicuously few. Almost half the Fijian children born in the 1880s and early 1890s died before they reached their first birthday - mostly from the introduced killer-diseases. It would not be surprising if this pattern had been established in parts of Fiji well before Cession, nor if higher rates of infant mortality meant Fijian women of the nineteenth century experienced on average more pregnancies in relation to their reproductive careers than their eighteenth century predecessors.

Added to the physical toll of more pregnancies was the emotional toll of infant mortality. While rates of infant mortality in pre-Contact Fiji may have been high by today's first world standards, rates in post-contact Fiji must have reached much greater heights. Fijian culture was not geared, I suspect, to cope with this great loss of infant life. Many traditional explanations for mishaps in pregnancy, a difficult childbirth, or an infant's sickness or death sought for some misdemeanour on the part of the mother or father. Even in the 1890s it is clear from infant death inquiries that mothers often felt keenly that they were being accused of their child's death - not only by colonial officials, but in terms of traditional Fijian theory. The success of a woman in bearing children who survived was also crucial to the esteem in which she was held by others, and in which she held herself. The post-contact elevation of infant mortality, which I think one can assume, thus imposed on women a triple emotional burden: of grief, blame and shame. On these grounds alone, one could argue that the new age of infectious disease, proclaimed by the two Fijian women at the outset of this chapter, fell especially heavily upon their own sex.

'The Horror' and Memory

But the profound 'horror' of pre-Cession Fiji, as I see it, is the lethal synergy of new pathogens combined with certain cultural practices predicated on much lower rates of death due to disease. Certain Fijian customs produced a degree of mortality and to a degree restricted the population's reproductive capacity. So long as this killing was limited, and so long as people were not dying in great numbers from disease, these customs were presumably sustainable. European diseases however had a two fold effect: they altered the mortality regime in which these customs occurred; and in practice, each multiplied the mortality of the other and each contributed to further reductions of reproductive capacity through processes of selective female mortality. Furthermore, the greater destructiveness of exotic infection upon its initial introduction, and the

105 DR, p 125.
106 DR, App. 4, p. 108.
107 Stannard, Before the Horror, calculates on a prehistoric infant mortality rate of 264.9 per mille for Hawaii. In most developed countries today, the rate is comfortably under 10 per mille. United Nations, Demographic Yearbook, Issue No. 47, New York: Publishing Division, United Nations, Table 15, pp. 377-385.
intensification of violence due to the disturbance of traditional constraints upon war in the early pre-Cession period, can only have made matters worse. A more disastrous demographic dynamic could scarcely be imagined.\textsuperscript{109}

The received history of population decline in Fiji is for the most part a colonial history. It begins with the great measles epidemic of 1875, which of all the major epidemics of the nineteenth century best deserves the phrase 'the fatal impact' since it struck the 'two Fijis' simultaneously.\textsuperscript{110} It continues to be documented in colonial statistics, medical reports and other writings. But this colonial history is in all likelihood but the tail-end of a pre-Cession prehistory with, overall, more protracted and possibly steeper population declines. The patchy evidence in the historical record can prompt one to ponder the ways in which the experience of disease is perceived, remembered and forgotten.

Europeans were hampered in their ability to perceive the impact of introduced disease upon Fijians. Some of the earliest ships which imported new pathogens did not stay to witness the effects. This is the haunting image of the meke concerning the introduction of dysentery: the disease-laden vessel is described sailing from island to island, leaving sickness wherever it stopped, and proceeding seemingly unawares.\textsuperscript{111} The Europeans who came to Fiji, especially in the early nineteenth century, were from societies where high rates of morbidity and mortality due to infections were normal. This probably prevented their appreciating that what was normal for them was new to their hosts. Infant mortality was unlikely to encroach upon the senses of most male observers, and if it did, again, it was not uncommon for European infants to die.\textsuperscript{112} Moreover, most European observers of Fijians were so struck by their build and musculature that an impression of robustness was hard to dispel. Though missionaries, particularly in their diaries, provide some record of disease, they tended to see it in an individualised, immediate manner and in particular relation to their Christian principles and mission. Even the medically qualified and intelligent missionary Reverend Richard Burdsall Lyth who served in Fiji from 1839 to 1854 felt no interest or need to record and study systematically the diseases with which he dealt. Nor was the transmission of infection understood. While venereal disease was known to be conveyed by intercourse, and Europeans were clearly aware of their role here in infection, a multiplicity of other theories on the etiology of sickness—bodily humours, moral corruption, morbific emanations and so forth—disguised their part as vectors.\textsuperscript{113} Men like Lyth for instance

\textsuperscript{109} Loose comparisons could be made with that projected by Dening for the interaction of disease and violence in late nineteenth century Marquesas, perhaps the Pacific's most extreme case of depopulation. Greg Dening, Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land 1774-1880, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980, pp. 239 ff.
\textsuperscript{110} Cliff & Haggett, The Spread of Measles in Fiji.
\textsuperscript{111} Motonicio-coka, DR, App. 1, pp. 2-3.
explained diseases (which we realize Europeans introduced) as products of the local environment.  

Among Fijians memories of the *lila* and *coka* survived at least into the early colonial period; but as Vansina remarked, it is in the nature of oral tradition for some catastrophes to be encoded, other not; and multiple incidents can be subsumed under the one commemorative paradigm. In so far as knowledge is generated by the recurrent experience of disease, it tends anyway to be a-historical, concerned with treatments and remedies rather than narratives of the past. It is more likely that this practical knowledge will be transmitted from one generation to the next, than individual accounts of sickness and death. This is particularly true for much female experience relating to reproduction: a woman may never tell her daughter or grand-daughters the specifics of her own experience, which may sometimes be painful to recall, but be ready to share her practical wisdom. Finally, genealogies usually track the links to the present, not the branches that died out, the young children who perished or the pregnancies which miscarried. Curiously perhaps to a European, there were indeed some circumstances in which the memory of an aborted foetus or a stillborn child was preserved. But these odd details do not permit, for instance, any kind of reconstruction of early nineteenth century pregnancy.

War, however, has always been the subject of deliberate recollection and a theme around which memory is organised. In missionary accounts, the further one moves from the lower registers of diary-keeping into the upper registers of historical narrative, allusions to disease become less frequent, and the stories of war and violence take over. To judge from certain histories, or *tukutuku raraba*, which Fijians gave of themselves to the Native Lands Commission earlier this century, these tell of migration and war (the latter often prompting the former) but say very little of disease. Communities which recognized that their components were the remnants of once populous *yavusas* or tribes, now combined and reduced to but a village, were also likely to attribute their diminished

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114 Lyth said of Vavau, Tonga, 'besides cholera, much illness of different forms prevails, though chiefly of an intermittent character - arising as I am persuaded from the noxious mias mata emanating from dead vegetable matter - of which there is a considerable quantity on the ground in this part of the island.' R. B. Lyth, Journal, 1836-1842, ML: B533, 29 Jan. 1839.


Table 2
Early Estimates of the Fijian Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Estimate</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Estimated Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>M. Gaimard, ‘l’Astrolabe’</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Commodore Wilkes</td>
<td>133,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Rev. John Hunt</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>Capt. Erskine, R.N.</td>
<td>200,000 - 300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Rev. Walter Lawry</td>
<td>200,000 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 1858</td>
<td>Rev. Thomas Williams</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Admiral Washington, R.N.</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Colonel Smythe, R.A.</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Mr Consul Pritchard</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Mr F. J. Moss</td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Official estimate at Cession</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:- *DR*, pp.2-3.
conditions solely to the depopulation caused by past wars. In both European and Fijian accounts relating to the pre-Cession period, mortality from disease thus tends to be subsumed in the metahistory of war.

In considering the impact of introduced disease on pre-Cession Fiji, so far this discussion has avoided numbers. Without wishing to make a virtue of innumeracy, any estimates one might make of the Fijian population at contact or of subsequent ratios of population decline must be radically unstable, given the many variables that would need to be taken into account and the assumptions that would need to be made. The quest for numbers should also divert attention from the interplay between cultural practices and disease, thus eliminating important elements of the demographic equation from the start - elements which need to be considered, and to which the exhortations of epidemiologists like Kunitz, urging an examination of the concerted effect of multiple historical and social factors in the operation of disease, logically turn. This line of inquiry, however, leads to two disconcerting predicaments. The first is that one is liable to charges of 'blaming the victim' and can find oneself with ugly bed-fellows - a century and a half's worth of unpleasant and fanciful pontificators upon the ways in which Islanders diminished their own numbers. The second relates to the historical record. Though I have no doubt that the introduction of disease was one of the most momentous and destructive legacies of contact, constituting an incalculable aggregate of human suffering, this experience is liable to pass largely unrecognized, in silence, or under other names, into oblivion.

118 For example, Quain wrote of the village where he did fieldwork in the 1930s: 'the present village of Nakoroka is a consolidation of the five villages of the kingdom of Inland Forest. These villages - Votua, Tovua, Nadoro, Rokowaqa, and Buleya - after their depletion in the 'days of the wars,' united about the middle of the last century, and the village therefore represents one of the native kingdoms into which Fiji was earlier divided.' Quain, Fijian Village, p. x.
Chapter Two

A Strange Discourse

'...[T]he true answer to the question, 'What are the causes of this excessive infant mortality?' is - 'The Mothers'; and that to the question, 'What is the remedy?' the answer is given - 'The mothers.'


The demographic decline of the Fijians - or na utu sobu itaukei - was elaborately investigated in the 1890s. The resulting Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Decrease of the Native Population, published in Suva in 1896 and here called simply the Decrease Report, was central to the discussion of the 'decrease' and to various counter-measures for half a century. It also launched Fijian women as objects of official recognition, speculation, concern, blame and intervention. Though an influential text and a rich ethnographic source - on both Fijians and Europeans - it has been marginal to most other studies of colonial Fiji.\(^1\) Such a fate is not surprising. The Report is an unwieldy amalgam, superficially organised but fundamentally diffuse. Nor does it lend itself to the themes around which most histories of Fiji have been written.

This chapter will discuss the genesis of the Decrease Report and the general ways in which it framed Fijian women. Comment will also be made on some Fijian perceptions of their own decline. The discourses of the colonising and the colonised on this question differed in many respects: but both, as the archival residues suggest, often converged on Fijian mothers.

Why did the Fiji administration 'care'?

The Decrease Commission, from late 1891, had the task of investigating the causes of the decrease and recommending remedies. Students of colonialism, particularly those familiar with the history of Australia and New Zealand, may be struck at the outset by the apparent oddity of this project. For sadly, the decline of native populations was not everywhere viewed as a phenomenon warranting close inquiry and concerted administrative counter-measures. To explain 'why did the Fiji administration care?' we

need to look back on early and mid-nineteenth century explanations of population decline, and see how they influenced native policy in Fiji. Fiji, it will be shown, was an unusual colony in that the native policy aimed to prevent indigenous depopulation. By the 1890s, however, this policy appeared to have failed.

Nineteenth century explanations of native population decline can be classified into two broad camps: those which held it as inevitable, and those which held it as inflicted. Throughout the period there was always a strong emphasis on 'inevitability' - either some divine law ordained that heathen nations should perish; or some natural law that black people should melt away before white; or later, a law of evolution that the 'unfit' must lose to the 'fit' in the struggle for survival. Theories that population decline was inflicted came in two varieties: those which maintained that decline was self-inflicted, and those which maintained it was inflicted by Europeans. The former was also much elaborated, and tended to harmonise with the inevitability thesis - as some submissions received by the Decrease Commissioners suggest. By the late nineteenth century the 'inevitability' and 'self-inflicted' theories were so dominant that it has been startling to retrieve, as Henry Reynolds has done for Australian history, the vitality in the early and mid-nineteenth century of an opposing thesis: that indigenous population decline - insofar as it was a consequence of dispossession and violence - was indeed inflicted by Europeans and therefore theoretically avoidable.

The thesis of 'European-inflicted' population decline, implicit in such understandings of indigenous extinction, was a secondary product of the humanitarian fervour which had brought an end to slavery. After the liberation in 1833 of all slaves in the Empire, anti-slavery campaigners, intoxicated with their moral success, looked for other ways to right the world. One of their causes became the aboriginal peoples embraced by Britain. In 1836, on the initiative of the former anti-slavery campaigner Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton MP, a Commons Select Committee was appointed to report on the condition of Aboriginal peoples in the colonies. Its conclusion stressed that in order to prevent 'wars of extermination' waged by Europeans against natives, land transactions on the frontier needed to be controlled. The Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines Protection Society which sprang from it continued to propound these views and took a keen interest in Britain's Pacific policy; while the Colonial Office, under the humanitarians Stephens and Merivale, keenly felt the Crown's moral calling to preserve natives from destruction by European settlers. But there was an irony in the humanitarian

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4 The Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), 26 Jun. 1837, GBPP.
prescription: beside the strict control of whites, it recommended trade and Christianity, which could dissolve native society in other ways.  

This philo-native feeling, with however less enthusiasm for missionaries and trade, was later demonstrated by the two men chiefly responsible for the native policy in Fiji: the first resident governor, Sir Arthur Gordon and John Bates Thurston, his advisor. Thurston had arrived in Fiji in 1865 and had been involved in the attempts to form a constitutional government before Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874. Subsequently he held several positions in the colonial administration, effectively running the Colony from 1888 to 1896 when the issue of na lutu sobu itaukei came to a head. Sir Arthur Gordon later Lord Stanmore, was the youngest son of a Prime Minister. He was known to have a 'sympathy for native peoples', and after leaving Fiji in 1881, continued to defend the native policy he had implemented there. Both Gordon and Thurston subscribed to the paramountcy of native interests as a moral imperative - though this principle found little support among white settlers in Fiji and the earlier humanitarian fervor had waned in some sections of the Colonial Office. Neither man believed in a natural or divine law ordaining that native races were doomed to extinction; and though Darwin was discussed, neither wished to apply popular Darwinist dogma to the administration of Fiji. Gordon's evolutionary ideas remained faithful to Sir Henry Maine and the Scottish historical experience. He envisaged that Fijians, under the protection of wise white rulers, would progress over the next four or five hundred years to a higher stage of social development, propelled by their own cultural genius, and often compared the Taukei to Highland Scots of earlier centuries, predicting an analogous process of advancement. Gordon and Thurston wanted no repetition in Fiji of the 'same melancholy history which has disgraced other colonies...'; instead, Fiji presented

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5 The 'humanitarian faith', as it shaped early colonial policy towards the Maori, is discussed in Keith Sinclair, The Origins of the Maori Wars, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980 [1957], ch. 3; its later influence on the Fijian native policy is treated in J. D. Legge, Britain in Fiji, 1858-1880, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958, ch. 6.


8 Gordon to Selbourne, 16 May 1878, Stanmore Papers, BM (mf).

9 Darwin was the topic of discussions at the Governor's table, according to Baron Anatole Von Hügel, The Fiji Journals of Baron Anatole Von Hügel 1875-1877, ed. Jane Roth & Steven Hooper, Suva: Fiji Museum, 1990, entry for 30 Aug. 1875.


'such an opportunity of preserving an aboriginal people as does not often come in the way of a government'.

Among the considerations shaping Gordon's and Thurston's approach was the plight of native populations in the Australian colonies and New Zealand. Not only were these the closest British colonies to Fiji, but Fiji was viewed by many Australians and New Zealanders as their own rightful colony. Most of Fiji's European settlers had come in the 1860s and early '70s from Australia and New Zealand, where many of their expectations and attitudes had been forged.

Australian Aboriginal populations had plunged in areas of European settlement. To some observers their slaughter and dispossession by whites was manifestly the cause. As a clergyman quoted by Reynolds remarked in 1840, 'Kill and exterminate is the general doctrine'. The treatment meted out by European colonists to Tasmanian Aborigines - hunted down until a handful of survivors were moved off-shore for their own protection - was cited as the flagrant extermination of a defenceless native race. The last full-blood Tasmanian man died in 1870 and the last full-blood Tasmanian woman in 1876 - roughly coeval with the coming of British rule to Fiji. For Gordon and Thurston, the Australian colonies exemplified, in the extreme, the ruin that colonial settlement could inflict on natives. During a pause in Australia on the voyage to Fiji, Gordon and his party reflected upon Aboriginal suffering. His cousin, Constance Frederica Gordon-Cumming observed,

...if all tales be true concerning the ruthless policy of extermination practised by too many of the settlers on the frontier, and the manner in which tribes have been shot down wholesale for daring to trespass on the lands taken from them without any sort of right, the extinction of the Australian black may be found to be less a law of nature than an illustration of the might that makes right.

According to Gordon, Australians in Fiji all shared 'one unfortunate characteristic - a contempt & hatred of the natives'. Fiji's Australians could be divided, he said, into 'those who simply desire the extermination of the natives and those who desire to utilize them as serfs or slaves'. One may guess that the horrors to which Gordon occasionally alluded - such as the gentleman who led Gordon to believe that he had used the measles epidemic as a screen to thin local Fijians by other means - were often the handiwork of Australian immigrants.

12 Sir Arthur Gordon to Selbourne, 6 Sep. 1880, Stanmore Papers, BM (mf).
13 John Young, Adventurous Spirits: Australian Migrant Society in Pre-Cession Fiji, St Lucia, Qld: Queensland University Press, 1984.
18 Paper by Gordon, no date, no title, circa 1878, Stanmore Papers, BM (mf).
Though the Maori population was also declining, for Fiji in the 1870s the main moral to be gleaned from there was the danger of inter-racial war. In contrast to the Australian colonies which gave no recognition to native title, the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (by which Maori signatories ceded 'sovereignty' to the Crown) acknowledged indigenous rights to land and was intended to provide for harmonious and orderly relations between Maori and settlers. The treaty, however, did not prevent land-loss or bloodshed. The succession of conflicts between 1845 and 1872, which on occasion humanitarians deplored as a 'war of extermination', proved protracted, costly and militarily not the decisive success for which European forces had hoped. Consequently, the dangers of war were vivid to those who had fled from the Maori Wars to Fiji. The attitude of New Zealand settlers towards natives differed, so Gordon observed, from that of Australians in being more respectful and more fearful: 'unfortunately they have learned to look on natives as enemies'. An editorial in the Fiji Times reflected such fears:

The Maoris are a mere handful considered with the swarm of Fijians that hive around us. Not only are the Fijians formidable in number, but they are well-armed, for which we must thank our own folly, and if anything could unite them as a people, it would be the hope of regaining their lands in a general attack on the whites.

Thurston and Gordon were wont to emphasize that the native policy in Fiji, aside from safeguarding the interests of the Taukei, had prevented full-scale war.

The cornerstone of this policy was not surprisingly land. Gordon and Thurston interpreted the Deed of Cession generously in favour of Fijian title. More than 80% of Fiji's land was confirmed inalienably in Taukei ownership, where for the most part it remains. Gordon and Thurston viewed this as just, as necessary to prevent war, and as the precondition for Fijian survival. In the first decade of the twentieth century, when attempts were made to loosen land from Fijian ownership, Gordon, by now Lord Stanmore, again stressed this last point in the House of Lords: '... all who are acquainted

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22 Paper by Gordon, no date, no title, circa 1878, Stanmore Papers, BM (mf)
23 Fiji Times, 19 Mar. 1870.
with the Fijian know perfectly well that if you separate them and the land the race will die out...".[26]

Corollaries to the recognition of Fijian land ownership were the native taxation system and the importation of labourers from overseas to work on European plantations. Fijians were required to pay tax in the form of produce cultivated in their own gardens and received tax refunds in cash. While supplying the government with revenue, this scheme was intended to keep Fijians in their villages, to protect them from commercial exploitation, and to foster their development towards the status of peasant farmer.[27] For labour, European planters were expected to rely mainly on indentured workers from other Pacific Islands and, after 1879, from India.[28]

The final element of the native policy was indirect rule. The native administration in Fiji was like a pyramid. It descended from the Governor at its apex to the European Native Commissioner and to lower levels of Fijian-staffed provincial, district and village administration. The lowliest government appointee was the Turaga-ni-Koro or village chief; above him was the Buli or district chief; and above him the Roko Tui, or provincial chief. Each level had its own forum: village meetings, district and provincial councils. The highest native forum was the Council of Chiefs or Bosevakaturaga, where the Roko Tui, Native Stipendiary Magistrates or Turaga-ni-Lewa-iTaukei and selected Buli met to discuss legislation and advise the Governor. This infrastructure was relatively cheap. It had the added advantage, in the eyes of its designers, of ensuring organic integrity and a dimension of tradition to Fijian society.[29]

No attempt is made here to glorify the native policy or its architects. This study cannot avoid dealing with some of the policy's practical shortcomings and its regrettable implications for the ways in which Fijian women were depicted and understood. Others have analysed the misinterpretations and false anthropological assumptions on which the native policy was based, and argue that it ossified Fijian society and bequeathed many problems.[30] While Gordon and Thurston may be portrayed, and certainly saw themselves, as champions of the Fijians, their support for Fijian interests would not, for some critics of European imperialism and British rule in Fiji, cancel the negatives of

26 Lord Stanmore, addressing the House of Lords, 16th July 1907 in Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] House of Lords, 4th Series.
30 Peter France and Oscar Spate are two of the best known critics of the native policy, but there was a long tradition of criticism within the Fiji administration itself; and more recent political tensions in independent Fiji have sharpened a sense in some quarters of a difficult colonial legacy. See France, The Charter of the Land; Oscar Spate, The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects, Suva: Government Printer, 1959 and his other unofficial works in the bibliography; and Brij Lal, Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, p. 334 and passim.
colonial subjection. Moreover, their sympathy for Fijians was partly informed by class antipathies and in Thurston's case class pretensions which laced their altruism with a self-regarding snobbery. Nor did they extend this sympathy to all coloured peoples. Thurston did not feel the same respect for the integrity of village and chiefly structures in the New Hebridean societies from which he, and others, recruited labour. Despite his defence of Fijian landownership, Gordon was director of a company which sought to acquire tracts of land in the Solomons.

But for the purpose of preventing Fijian depopulation, the basic elements of the native administration could be considered very sound. The epidemiologist Steven Kunitz has placed great stress on dispossession, pauperization, cultural disruption and administrative neglect in causing disease and decrease among colonised native peoples. His emphasis is supported by numerous studies concerned with the Pacific and Australia. Sorrenson demonstrated the link between Maori land-loss and demographic decline; Durie has argued that the cultural foundations for Maori health were casualties of colonial upheaval; aside from mortality due to outright slaughter, more importantly Australian Aborigines were exposed to the ravages of sickness by dispossession and changed life-ways; urban existence in early nineteenth century Hawaii proved detrimental to Hawaiian health; and so the list could continue. The native policy in Fiji at least muffled these blows.

And at first, the native policy appeared to be achieving its demographic objectives. The Fiji Blue Book for 1878 reported - at best a very rough estimate - a Taukei population, much reduced by the 1875 measles epidemic, of 106,196. In 1879 the first attempt at a proper census returned a Fijian total of 108,924 - a seeming increase, to which should be added an estimated 3,000 absentee. The census of 1881 also reported an increase with a Fijian total of 114,748. Gordon was confident that the Taukei were set to multiply. When Stipendiary Magistrate James Blyth submitted a report in 1879 ominously drawing the Governor's attention to the decrease in the province of Bua, his utterances were discounted by Gordon as 'mysterious and oracular'.

34 Kunitz, *Disease and Social Diversity*, esp. ch. 3, 'Historical and Contemporary Mortality Patterns in Polynesia'.
39 For a critical discussion of these early colonial estimates, see McArthur, *Island Populations*, pp. 13-18.
40 Minute 24 Sep. 1879, CSO 1601/1879.
Council of Chiefs in 1881, Gordon claimed the most recent census figures proved his conviction that 'there is no necessity, as was supposed, for the dying out of your race'.

Yet even during Gordon's governorship, elements of the official discourse of population decline were established. As early as the 1879 Bosevakaturaga, chiefs were urged 'to consider carefully, with a view to their removal, the causes of the decrease of the population' in those areas where declines had been recorded. The ensuing discussions raised questions of infant mortality, midwifery, women's child-rearing practices, care of the sick and so forth - all themes that thenceforth characterised discussion of *na lutu sobu itaukei* in the 1880s, 1890s and beyond.

Government statistics, after Gordon's departure, gave less cause for optimism. Small increases recorded in some years during the 1880s were greatly outweighed by decreases in others. The dips were correlated to more than usually grave epidemics, over and above the regular outbreaks of dysentery, influenza and, I assume, the general toll of endemic tuberculosis. The decrease of 3,172 recorded in 1884 was linked to a bad epidemic of whooping cough; a decrease of 588 in 1885 to epidemics of dengue, flu and meningitis; a decrease in 1886 to another epidemic of dengue; a decrease of 468 in 1889 was not linked with any illness out of the ordinary; but a decrease of 333 in 1890 was associated with an especially severe epidemic of dysentery.

Some within the Government, like the Chief Medical Officer Dr William MacGregor, advocated further measures to counter the high rates of Fijian mortality, such as more medical staff, a thorough sanitary survey of Fijian towns, and the proper implementation of native regulations affecting public health. In 1885 he observed that 'unless a race makes a distinct gain in years in which there are no epidemics, its extinction can only be a matter of time. The question, therefore, presents itself, has all been done that can be done to maintain this race?' MacGregor, who came to the Colony with Gordon, had already implemented quarantine procedures, a vaccination program among Fijians against small-pox and the training of Fijians as Native Medical Practitioners. But more, he knew, was needed. The Colony however was too poor to employ more doctors while the Fijian officers upon whom the government relied for the enforcement of native regulations bearing on public health found these laws senseless or impossible to implement.
The decrease of the Taukei acquired increasing rhetorical importance for those attempting to discredit the Fiji administration. Since an important justification of the native policy was the prevention of native extinction, evidence of demographic decline was used to accuse the government of failure, or indeed of producing the very opposite to its professed aim. One source of criticism was the majority Wesleyan Mission, which resented features of the native administration that conflicted with the mission's preferred mode of operation and curbed the effective power of the church. As Roko Tui Ba bluntly stated, since Cession the missionaries had lost much of their former sway. But colonial policies were deplored with even greater feeling by many European settlers. The white settlers had apparently imagined, 'said Gordon, that by some magical process, the assumption of sovereignty by Great Britain was to be followed by an immediate change from poverty to wealth, from struggling indigence to prosperity, that their claims to land would be at once allowed, that an abundant supply of labour would be at once found for them, and that their claims to supremacy over the natives... would be at once acknowledged. They were, therefore, bitterly disappointed to find their hopes not realised.

The attack launched in 1880 by the Reverend Mr Rooney marked the beginning of the deployment of Fijian population figures in the polemic against the native policy. In letters to the Fiji Times and Sydney Morning Herald, Rooney contested the census results of 1879 and claimed that the Fijians were in fact decreasing. He diagnosed a number of causes which he then attributed to the government: the people were too busy with tax plantations to keep their towns sanitary; meetings of the Bosevakaturaga were fatal - people died trying to get there while their hosts starved from feeding so many; the chiefs, secured by the native policy in the position of tyrants, were grinding ordinary Fijians into an apathetic, nay, suicidal state; thousands of men were condemned to celibacy by an administration which 'legalised polygamy'; and so forth. Gordon retaliated with gusto and the findings of an official commission of inquiry confirmed the general reliability of the government's census results. This commission was in a sense a prototype of the later Decrease Commission.

The attacks of aggrieved planters joined those of missionaries, and were more numerous. Prominent in this category was William Fillingham Parr, a failed Fiji planter. His letters, petitions, pamphlets and speeches - to Members of Parliament, the Colonial

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46 Sir Arthur Gordon to Colonial Office (no date or month cited) 1883, GBPP, Vol 53 (1884-1885), [c. 4434].
47 According to the Roko, the missionaries 'cannot do all that they could in past times. Formerly we were governed by our chiefs, and the missionaries governed our chiefs. Now the chiefs know that the government is the head and all are under it.' Council of Chiefs, 24 Dec. 1880.
48 Gordon, 'Paper on the System of Taxation'
49 Sir Arthur Gordon to Secretary of State, 8 Nov. 1881, Despatch No. 121, Despatches from the Governor of Fiji to the Secretary of State, Vol. 3, NAF; Report of a Commission Appointed to Investigate the Alleged Errors in the Recent Census of the Native Population and other Matters thereto Pertaining, CSO 1880 (The copy consulted in the National Archives of Fiji has no further reference numbers.)
Office, the press, the Aborigines Protection Society, the Balloon Society (!), or any approachable individual or body - were prodigious in quantity. Parr and like minds insisted that Fijians should be entitled to sell their land and labour and enjoy the rights and liberties of the individual. They also wanted Fiji to be more hospitable to European settlement - like the Australian colonies and New Zealand; or better still to be annexed to one of these. The self-interest in these pleas was plain despite rhetorical compassion and outrage for the native, who was declared to be dying from oppression. In one letter typical of this genre, Parr argued that high rates of mortality, especially infant mortality, were not due primarily to epidemic disease. Rather, Fijians were forced to subsist on wild food, while their crops went in tax. Mothers, compelled to labour on tax plantations, left their babies to old women who had nothing to give them to eat - or gave birth while forced from their homes to work, perishing with their new-born. Suicide was a common escape from tyranny. 'The life of the Natives of Fiji is,' Parr proclaimed, 'and has for some years past, been simply one of slavery.'

Such allegations were mostly treated by the Colonial Office as disingenuous - but their authors were many and their claims appeared to be corroborated by Fijian vital statistics. In response to petitions such as Parr's, a demand by the Colonial Office for a commission of inquiry into the native policy was only averted on the assurances of Governor Mitchell, who arrived in Fiji in 1887 and extensively toured the Colony: 'I found the natives everywhere cheerful and content and I certainly detected no signs among them of the apathy and hopelessness which the opponents of the policy initiated by Sir Arthur Gordon had led me to expect'. There was no oppression, Mitchell believed, to which the high rates of Fijian mortality could be ascribed. But these rates continued to indict. When vital statistics for 1888 and 1889 were forwarded to London, one officer reflected that the Fijians' death rate of 40.44 was 'fearful' and '[w]ith a paternal Govt such as we have in Fiji it is not very creditable to us...'.

A commission of inquiry, to see whether Fijian mortality could somehow be reduced, was therefore imposed by the Colonial Office on a reluctant Governor Thurston in 1891. For him the native policy meant life for the Fijians, while the kind of progress advocated by Parr and others would spell certain death - and no doubt Thurston was correct in suggesting that the decrease would only be steepened if the native policy was replaced by a system more congenial to its critics. The commission of inquiry, from Thurston's viewpoint, had therefore to be handled in such a way as to minimise the exposure of the native policy to blame.

50 For a sample of Parr's writings, see W. J. Parr, Extracts from the 'Fiji Times' and 'Fiji Argus' from June, 1875 to September 1880, Levuka: [no publisher stated], 1881.
51 W. J. Parr to Colonial Office, 26 Aug. 1886, CO 83/44.
52 Mitchell to Secretary of State, 31 Jan. 1887, CO 83/45.
53 Minute 31 Dec. 1890, Thurston to Secretary of State, 5 Nov. 1890, CO 83/53.
54 This may be inferred from comments such as 'There is at present no reason for supposing that the Natives of Fiji will not survive the strain and shock to which they are being subjected, though this supposition is chiefly warranted by the antecedent hope that the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards them may be one of continuity.' Thurston to Secretary of State, 21 Oct. 1886, GBPP, Vol.58 (1887) [c. 5039].
These then were the proximate incidents and pressures that led to the Decrease Commission. Fiji had been set aside as a small, imperial laboratory, where, as one Secretary of State remarked - without much optimism - 'an interesting experiment' in 'saving natives from extinction' was being 'fairly tried'. The Fijian decrease was an issue of acute sensitivity precisely because it pointed to the failure of the administration in Fiji on the very grounds it had hoped to be judged; and this failure was used to charge the government with the genocide which the founders of the native policy had tried their hardest to prevent. There is a further irony, to which Thurston was keenly alive. As the previous chapter suggested, in the longer sweep of demographic trends, the rates of population decline were possibly much greater in the pre-Cession period than the early decades of colonial era, notwithstanding the measles epidemic. All the fuss was being made over the tail-end of na lutu sobu itaukei.

**The Decrease Report**

Stressing Fijian women as a factor in population decline was in this context politically expedient for supporters of the system. In responding to instructions from the Secretary of State, Thurston reiterated his conviction that 'the chief cause of the decrease of the native population is due to the extraordinary indifference or culpable neglect of native women in the care of their infant children'. This proposition exculpated the native administration, its philosophical basis and the political world of men, incriminating instead Fijian mothers and what was imagined as the domestic realm. The Commission of Inquiry was set up in such a way as to make this point, and to frustrate the thrust of the government's local opposition.

The first step was a circular issued in the main to European residents soliciting their views on the decrease of the native population. This letter carefully denied that the type of native administration in Fiji had any bearing on the question. According to the circular, depopulation in the Pacific was a general trend to which Fiji was no exception;

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55 Kimberley's minute 21 Jun. 1881, on Des Voeux to Secretary of State, 17 Feb. 1881, CO 83/25.
56 See circular letter addressed by the Colonial Secretary to colonists, 30 Dec. 1891, *DR*, App. 3, pp.1-2, quoting an extract from one of Thurston's earlier despatches, in his capacity as Acting British Consul for Fiji and Tonga, to the Secretary of State, concerning births and deaths in selected parts of Fiji. The circular letter, though signed by James Stewart, reflects Thurston's views. The draft can be found in CSO 2232/1896.
57 Thurston to Secretary of State, 23 Jun. 1891, CO 83/54.
58 The European concept of 'domesticity', and the 19th century distinction between the 'public' world of men and the 'private' world of women do not fit with social arrangements in the Pacific. See Margaret Jolly & Martha Macintyre, 'Introduction', *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 1 ff. It is also worth noting that the terms 'public' and 'private' were often ambiguous in the nineteenth century European context too, and were anyway changing by the late 1800s - as 'domestic' questions of infant welfare became issues of state, and women also pressed for a role, on the basis of their feminine and domestic attributes, in determining government policy. See also Lenore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, ch. 8, 'Regarding Some 'Old Husbands' Tales': Public and Private in Feminist History'.

and despite the diversity of political regimes in New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii, the natives of all these places were declining. Instead, an emphasis was placed on the heavy mortality of Fijian infants with recent statistics indicating that on average 44 out of every 100 died in their first year of life. The circular concluded, 'It would almost appear, therefore, that the cause of this decadence of the race is attributable, less to the form of governments respectively, or to the differing conditions springing therefrom, than to the evils existing in the social and domestic life of the people'.59 In concentrating on the domestic sphere, and the infant mortality that occurred there, Thurston was pitching the inquiry towards his foregone conclusion that Fijian women were the culprits.

This focus on Fijian women resembled in some ways the focus on European women in the debates about 'population decrease', 'racial decay', 'deterioration' and 'decline' in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.60 While most New World populations were decreasing or had decreased, the symptoms of 'decline' that worried metropolitan countries and the Neo-Europes were diminishing fertility, unacceptable rates of infant mortality, signs of physical and mental deterioration associated with the slums or attributed to immorality or atavism, and the proliferation of those groups within society deemed unfit or objectionable. This preoccupation with decline and decay was the doppelganger of faith in progress and belief in Europeans as mankind's evolutionary apogee; and it was sharpened by fears that today's leaders among classes, races and nations would be tomorrow's losers.61 As a result, governments staked an interest in reproduction, maternity and infant health. Though the Decrease Commission appears to have somewhat predated the heyday of these controversies in the United Kingdom and the Antipodes, there was considerable overlap in vocabulary and ways in which the role of women in 'decrease' were imagined.

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59 Circular letter addressed by the Colonial Secretary to colonists, 30 Dec. 1891, DR, App. 3. See footnote 58 above.
60 The echoes between metropolitan debates concerned with 'European mothers' and Pacific debates concerned with 'native mothers' is addressed in Jolly, 'Other Mothers'.
The metropolitan discourses most familiar to the Commissioners and their correspondents were those relating to France and Britain. 'Racial decline' had been the cause of alarm in France from the early nineteenth century and was discussed even more keenly following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Of particular concern was the declining birth-rate. Though Europe's most powerful and populous nation in 1800, the faster growing nations of England and Germany were catching up and overtaking. One common explanation for the lapse in French fortunes was the unwillingness of French women to bear children, and their alleged practice of birth-control and abortion. The French precedent had perhaps partly influenced those correspondents to the Decrease Commission who theorised that the Fijian decline was due to falling birth-rates, the unwillingness of Fijian women to embrace maternity, and their alleged practice of abortion and contraception. One respondent, quoting figures for the excess of French deaths over births in the year 1890, wryly stated that, with regard to depopulation, Fiji and the other Pacific groups kept good company with France. In fact, deaths exceeded births in France not only in 1890, but in 1891, 1892, 1895, 1900, 1907 and 1911. Though a number of initiatives - incentives for mothers, milk schemes, mothercraft training - had helped to reduce French infant mortality rates by the turn of the century, birth-rates continued low.

The Decrease Commissioners implicitly rejected any basic similarity between the French situation and the Fijian. While the Fijian birth-rate had apparently fallen, the Decrease Report noted that declines had been steeper in many European countries and by these standards Fijian figures were still impressive: a mean of 38.48 births per thousand for the years 1881 to 1891 was much higher than those of France and Ireland and still ahead of England, Denmark, Norway and Italy, though short of the averages attained by the top performers Germany (39.6) and Hungary (42.8) [table 3]. The alleged incompetence of Fijian mothers was definitely not in fertility.

In England infant mortality rates, though among the lowest in Europe, were initially of greater concern than declining birth-rates. After the turn of the century, both these issues were prominent in the discourse on racial degeneration triggered, in part, by the publicity given to the nation's poor physique during the Boer War. But before this

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66 Dwork, *War is Good for Babies*, ch. 1; Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, pp. 41-43.
### Table 3
Comparative crude birth rates: Fiji and selected countries, 1861-1887

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Mean Annual Rate, 1861-1880.</th>
<th>1881.</th>
<th>1882.</th>
<th>1883.</th>
<th>1884.</th>
<th>1885.</th>
<th>1886.</th>
<th>1887.</th>
<th>1888.</th>
<th>1889.</th>
<th>1890.</th>
<th>1891.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>26.2 (17 years)</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>30.8 (10 years)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>German Empire</td>
<td>39.6 (9 years)</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>37.1 (18 years)</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>42.8 (15 years)</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>38.48 (10 years)</td>
<td>40.68</td>
<td>37.19</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>36.98</td>
<td>38.90</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>40.10</td>
<td>40.19</td>
<td>36.24</td>
<td>35.91</td>
<td>35.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

panic over British decay seized the public imagination, there was interest in and puzzle over the deaths of British infants. While rates of adult mortality had declined noticeably from the late 1870s, infant mortality rates had changed little. From 1839 to 1900 they fluctuated around 150 per thousand. The worst rate ever recorded was in 1899, when the figure peaked at 163.

A body of opinion had long attributed deleterious effects to industrialization, urbanisation and poverty in Britain, and excessive infant mortality could be explained as one of these. Surveys showed that rates were highest in the slums. But as Smith has observed,

The persistence of these high rates in the face of advances in medical science prompted several fashions in explanation. Those explanations which laid the blame on mothers were attractive to doctors and moralists because they were at once economical, exonerative of the profession, and often fitted the facts.67

Mother-blaming assumed a class character. Working class mothers, whose children suffered the highest mortality rates, were described as negligent and ignorant. Later, middle and upper class women were also reproached: though considered the fittest mothers of empire-makers, they had fewer children than their working class sisters and were accused of avoiding their 'primitive duty'.68

In the 1890s, there was no discourse on 'British decline' focussing on 'the mothers of the race' comparable to that prevailing in France. But some of its antecedents were established and many of the considerations which were to influence the discussion that emerged after 1900 were already in public consciousness. As the country intimately known to the Commissioners and most of their respondents, Britain was bound to figure in their thinking as a basis for comparisons or contrasts. On various occasions the Commissioners indeed compared or contrasted Fijians with the labouring classes at home or with England's simple rural folk, while Fijian mothers were coupled with 'the uneducated mothers of Lancashire and other factory districts'. One correspondent referred specifically to studies in England linking infant mortality to the early return of mothers to the work-force, and recommended that the restrictions suggested for the employment of English mothers should be applied to the Fijian.69

Analyses of Fijian and British infant mortality shared not just a common emphasis on but also ambivalence in 'mother-blaming'. The emphasis was understandable in the sense that the survival of a child is heavily dependent on the nurturance provided by the mother or in some circumstances her substitute. Yet while maternal nurturance is a precondition for infant survival, it is no guarantee, and many factors can take the life of a

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child despite it. Where 'maternal incompetence' is suspected, one can perhaps make a
 crude distinction between two types. On one hand, this alleged shortcoming could be
 seen as a constitutional characteristic of the woman: she is physically or mentally ill-
suited for the role, or in other words, congenitally defective as a mother. On the other
hand, maternal incompetence could be seen as due to incapacitating circumstances: the
mother would be competent if external factors did not compromise her. In 'mother-
blaming' it is easy to shift from one slant to the other and to invoke both simultaneously,
though each implies, so to speak, different degrees of 'guilt'. While the first suggests
the fault lies innately with the woman, the second suggests she is the victim of faults in
her social or environmental conditions, often ultimately in the control of men.

The thesis that the mothers of the Taukei were innately defective, though stated
baldly by Thurston and his Commissioners in other texts, was not stated by the Decrease
Report with the same stark simplicity. While most of the 36 proposed causes for decrease
and most of the 36 remedies gave prominence to women in one way or the other and gave
the general impression, as Macnaught noted, that Fijian mothers were thoroughly bad70,
there was a constant ambivalence between theories of 'congenital' and 'circumstantial'
maternal incompetence. In keeping with the latter, some commentators were convinced
that the changes to Fijian society wrought by Christianity and British rule had been
harmful to Fijian women and had disadvantaged the discharge of their maternal function.
In some respects this line of argument resembled those explanations in Britain which
stressed that maternity was a casualty of industrialization. On the other hand, varieties of
theory that contrasted the colonised races with the colonisers, and the native mother with
the caucasoid, propounded that Fijian mothers were inferior by nature.71 These
explanations compared with those in Britain which construed the lower classes as a race
apart and their women constitutionally inadequate as mothers.

Aside from this essential ambivalence in the diagnosis of 'maternal
incompetence', the multiple and inconsistent vision of Fijian women was also an effect of
the Report's polyphony. It printed in full the 66 submissions received in answer to the
circular, and excerpts from these were categorised and quoted in the main body of the
document. In addition to the voices of all the European respondents were those of the
three Commissioners. Bolton Glanville Corney was Chief Medical Officer and the one
permanent fixture in the Medical Department during the early colonial period till his
retirement in 1908. Other doctors succumbed to sickness, death, alcohol, opium, or the
promise of more rewarding work elsewhere, but Corney carried on.72 He was fascinated
by his theory that coko, or yaws, had caused the degeneration of Fijian female's
reproductive system.73 Basil Homes Thomson had risen rapidly in the service and later
achieved some fame as an author of detective stories and books on the Pacific, among
them a volume that drew substantially upon the research conducted for the

70 Macnaught, The Fijian Colonial Experience, p. 4.
71 Nor did the native policy escape criticism - DR, pp. 45-61; 96-101.
72 CSO 3602/1898.
Commission. He was fond of expounding the effects of the transition from 'barbarism' to 'civilisation' on 'the savage mother' and appears to have done most of the research on the connection between the decrease and epidemic disease. James Stewart was Assistant Colonial Secretary and died on the Panama Canal shortly after the report was published. He deplored the Church's alleged treatment of Fijian illegitimates and the deleterious effects of smoking on mother's milk. 'As a non smoker (to which category every infant also belongs) I have a lively appreciation of the manner in which one wd be affected by the flavour of tobacco in milk'. Though these three spoke as one, occasionally the author of a particular passage is betrayed by the display of his pet preoccupation.

Finally, and to a lesser extent, the report incorporated the views and voices of non-Europeans - even if only indirectly. A Tamil, two Banks Islanders, two Solomon Islanders, two Tongans, one Futunan, three Samoans, two Rotumans, three Gilbertese and seventeen Fijians were interviewed by the Commissioners. Of the Fijians, some are mentioned by name: Ratu Marika, Native Stipendiary Magistrate; Adi Alisi, a niece of Cakobau, widow of the former Roko Tui Ba and a respected midwife; Adi Lusiana, also a midwife and probably the same Adi Lusiana who was Cakobau's daughter; and Adi Ama, a midwife from Namata and wife of Ratu Marika. Though elsewhere Basil Thomson describes an interview with a Fijian lady for the Commission, the historical accuracy of this account is doubtful and the manner in which these interviews were conducted and their quality remains obscure. The commissioners also quoted the comments of two Native Medical Practitioners, Ratu Joni Mataitini later Roko Tui Rewa and Laisiasi Cadro of Kadavu. Ratu Joseph Lala, Roko Tui Cakaudrove, was the solitary Fijian respondent to the circular. The greatest single identifiable Fijian contribution to the Report was Ilai Motonicocoka's essay on the lila and coka.

Yet maternal incompetence, however varied and contradictory were the theories under this head, was not the only explanation for na lutu sobu itaukei advanced by the Report. The range of causes and remedies considered was bewildering. Some related to general conditions - such as 'Epidemic diseases' or 'Premature civilization'; some were attributed to both sexes - such as 'Mental apathy'; and others carried primary associations with men, such as 'Want of virility', and the recommendation for the 'Creation of incentives to industry, stimulus to exertion, and motives for thrift'. While agreeing with Thurston that Fijian mothers were defective, and proposing a myriad of corrective measures to this end, perhaps the one solution to na lutu sobu itaukei which most tickled

74 Thomson, The Fijians.
77 Basil Thomson, The Indiscretions of Lady Asenath, London: George Bell & Sons, 1898, ch. 9. Thomson describes Lady Asenath as a lady from Ba, who lacked the social pretensions of the Bauan ladies. Yet in this account (p. 190), he attributes to Lady Asenath statements which in the Decrease Report are ascribed to the Bauan Adi Alisi (p. 115).
78 DR, p. 106.
79 Motonicocoka, 'The Story of the Lila Balavu (Wasting Sickness).
80 DR, pp. 7-8.
the Commissioners' collective imagination was a project of mass miscegenation: they proposed importing Barbadians to interbreed with Fijians to produce a new vigorous hybrid. 81 Thus were the fantasies of race and rule at one with animal husbandry!

Fijian perceptions

The authors of the discourse on Fijian depopulation were overwhelmingly European. They often claimed that Fijians simply did not care that they were 'dying out'. Fijian dissent from some European explanations of decrease or from some of the remedies foisted upon them was probably often misconstrued as apathy or unconcern, for the Taukei were neither unaware nor indifferent. Before Cession Fijians appear to have had a lively interest in population as a resource to be managed for power. The naturalist on board L'ASTROLABE was impressed by the estimates which Cakobau's elder half-brother Tubuanakoro furnished him for some sixty three inhabited Fijian islands. 82 And when Europeans and Fijians discussed population, the subject was not limited narrowly to indigenous decline. Baron Von Hügel recounted a lively conversation with Fiji's leading chief, Cakobau shortly after Cession:

"Europe was his great forte and I had to tell him about the Franco-Prussian War, population, men-of-war, etc etc. About London I told him the number of births and deaths there are in a day. This quite staggered him... Then he thought and said with a sigh: 'In Fiji, even in the large towns, the births are now only two, three or even less per year. The women are no good, we ought to import fresh girls." 83

During the colonial period, the Council of Chiefs, Provincial and District Councils and articles in the official Fijian language paper Na Mata kept the issue constantly before those Fijians in government employ - so much so, Thurston argued, that 'an undesirable and unhealthy tone of thought' had been produced, 'without any instructive results'. 84 The records of the Bosevakaturaga sometimes support Thurston's conclusion. In 1884 for instance another 'lengthy discussion' on the subject took place, 'but no reason for the decrease was arrived at; the reason has been sought for in vain, just the same, for years; and some have said that it is owing simply to death, and that all Fijians will die out'. 85

Yet there continued to be thoughtful Fijian responses to na lutu sobu itaukei. In 1898 the Roko Tui Bua, in answer to another circular on the decrease, returned a report of his investigations together with a number of tables to support his findings. He was

84 Thurston to Secretary of State, 23 Jun. 1891, CO 83/54.
85 Council of Chiefs, 20 May 1884.
attempting to back up Fijian explanations with the kind of evidence Europeans found persuasive: statistics. The Roko maintained that many infants were dying due to the violation of the taboo on post-partum sexual intercourse, a large percentage of children were still-born, and many women took contraceptive medicines or drugs to procure abortion. The Native Commissioner could not help but remark that this was an impressive effort 'for a native who cannot write'.

Other Fijian responses were unsolicited. The anthropologist Hocart translated and published an essay of unidentified date and authorship, though clearly the writer was a civil servant. His mental wrestling is described by his introductory words:

Concerning this great matter, to wit the continual decline of us natives at this time, it is a great and weighty matter. For my part I am ill at ease on that account; I eat ill and sleep ill through my continual pondering of this matter day after day. Three full months has my soul been tossed about as I pondered this great matter, and in those three months there were three nights when my pondering of this matter in my bed lasted even till day, and something then emerged in my mind, and these my reflections touch upon religion and touch upon the law, and the things my mind saw stand here written below.

His thesis involved a theological distinction between two domains of divine responsibility: that of the spirit and that of the flesh. Jehovah was supreme god of the spirit, but had abrogated dominion over the flesh to his earthly deputies. In Fiji, these deputies were the ancestral gods. To worship Jehovah through Jesus was therefore a terrible procedural error for Fijians: it only offended the ancestral gods who in return 'crush our little children and women with child'. Because this theory required some rejection of Christian observance, it would have been unacceptable to the Government or the missions and the essay was probably never intended for an official readership. Perhaps it was never intended for any readership, for it seems to have resulted from a strenuous, solitary and personal endeavour to understand the problem.

Another original essay relating to na lutu sobu itaukei was written much later in 1926 by Opetaia Dreketirua, assistant master at the elite Queen Victoria School for Fijian boys. This too is characterised by deep thought and painstaking analysis. It addresses the causes of infant mortality and posits a number of interlinking factors: physiological, social, economic and cultural. Dreketirua had helped write the first book on sanitation for Fijians, and his thinking was much influenced by European notions of cleanliness, diet and regularity of habits. He combines these with ideas relating to breast milk and 'bad

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86 Minute 21 Dec. 1898, CSO 5154/1898.
88 Hocart, 'A Native Fijian on the Decline of his Race' p. 86.
89 Hocart, 'A Native Fijian on the Decline of his Race' p. 90.
90 John V. Thompson & Opetaia Dreketirua, Ai Vakatekivu ni hygiene me nodra nai Tauke i Viti, Suva: Government Printer, 1915.
blood' which appear to owe more to Fijian explanations of infant ill-health; and his analysis of the effects of economic hardship on infant mortality - an analysis that depicts many Fijians stranded between the economies of kin and the economies of money - bespeak the perspective of a Fijian inter-war progressive.91

These isolated examples are mentioned to show that apart, beneath and often in attempted dialogue with the colonial discourse on *na lutu sobu itaukei* were Fijian explanations. Fragments of this Fijian discourse are preserved in the minutes of native councils, in official correspondence and reports. Some Colonial Officers, in their private writings, also noted discussions initiated by Fijians on the subject. Ross in 1910 recalled staying at Wailotua where the Buli one evening asked him why Fijian numbers were declining, despite the peace of British rule:

In the *vakatevoro* [lit. 'devil-like' or 'heathen'] days, we are told there were many more villages than there are now, and we seen [sic] the indications scattered over our territory. All the villages were fenced one against the other, and war was a daily occurrence...Yet though this implied a difficulty in getting food - a condition we do not have these days - yet we are told there were more people and stronger people than exist today. I am not an old man and yet in my time I have noticed the decrease. What is the cause of this decrease.92

The Fijians provided a haunting symbol of their decrease: the image of *yavu lata* or empty house-foundations. The *yavu* is the raised platform on which a lineage has its *vale* or house. These platforms have their own names. In heathen days, the people of that lineage were often buried there.93 The *yavu* remains forever the property of that line, impregnated with its *mana* and the presence of those who had gone before.94 The deep respect for the sacredness of the *yavu* and for the generations it embodies is perhaps not felt so strongly today as formerly. Still, Sahlins in the 'fifties remembered visiting a site, the old village of Naroi, which had been abandoned generations earlier for the new Naroi where some men still professed 'to know many of the platform names, who lived in them, and who among the present Naroians are the 'owners' (taukei).

In 1982 Christina Toren saw an old man at Sawawake on Gau weep as a bulldozer tore through some abandoned house foundations on the village edge.96 Crosby identifies *yavu* as 'the very connection between people, places, history and *mana*'.97

91 SNA 1032/1926. See also ch. 11.
93 Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, p. 191; Waterhouse, *The King and People of Fiji*, p. 43.
95 Sahlins, *Moala*, p. 98.
Yavu could be abandoned for many reasons; but in the village landscape during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, empty house-foundations were often poignant signifiers of population decline. The present, as Dreketirua explained, was an age of yavu lala in contrast to an earlier time when villages were crowded and the house platforms were full - so crowded, as was quoted in the Decrease Report 'that there was no space between them...'.

Colonial Officials later invoked this image in urging measures which would see the platforms crowded once more; and sometimes they remarked, in reports of tours of inspection, on the abundance of empty platforms which gave some villages a neglected and semi-deserted feel. To thoughtful Fijians, this sight must have spoken eloquently - of changed times, of absence, of lost kin: '...the mounds whereon stood the houses of the living are now full of the bones of the dead'.

When offering explanations of their decrease, Fijians of the 1880s and 1890s often, also, implicated women. This was reflected in the Decrease Report too. The Roko Tui Cakaudrove stated that one of his Buli attributed the death of children in his district to their mothers: 'They take their infants to bathe early in the morning, and the result is that they contract bowel complaints and die. Another cause is that the mothers sling their children on their backs whilst too young. I agree with this Buli, and have told him to prosecute any mothers found guilty of these acts. David Wilkinson quoted an old speaking chief, or Matanivanua, who was said to have presented the Council of Chiefs with these five reasons for the decrease:

1st 'In this age our women have liberty to wed or reject whom they please. It is not as in bygone days when their elders and relatives chose the husband most suitable for them...' ...
2nd 'Our women, both young and married, smoke tobacco and drink yaqona, both of which were tabu in our bygone age.' ...
3rd 'Gone Dabe' - [Cohabitation before the last child is weaned]...
4th 'There are no buinigone - [Grandmothers, or nurses] - to take care of and feed the child when the mother casts it off. The measles devoured all the old women off the face of the land.'
5th 'In these days, Sir, the birth of the child is not prepared for as of old. No oil or turmeric is prepared, and, Sir, when the child is born, proper food is not given the mother. She is left to do the best she can, and we soon hear that her child is dead.'...

Sometimes Fijian spokesmen perhaps emphasized women because they thought this was what white officials wanted to hear. Yet frequently their explanations expressed beliefs which European commentators did not share and reveal distinctive concerns about

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98 SNA 1032/1926; Dr, p. 36.
99 Na Mata, Mar. 1899, p. 44.
100 Mitchell to Secretary of State, 31 May 1887, CO 83/45.
101 The quote here is not by a Fijian, but the Tongan missionary, Joeli Bulu. See Bulu, The Autobiography of a Native Minister, p. 21.
102 Dr, App. 4, p. 101.
103 Dr, App. 4, p. 83.
Fijian maternity. More intimately than Europeans, they knew the social and cultural changes Fijians had undergone during the nineteenth century and inferred that these may have been harmful to the mothers of their children. But there was also a tendency among Fijian commentators, analogous to that in metropolitan debates, to accuse Fijian women of evading, through contraception and abortion, maternal responsibilities.

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Women's voices - whether European or Fijian - in the discourse on Fijian decrease are few and muted. The voice of pontification is almost always male: the subject of pontification often female. While at times 'mother-blaming' may seem an exonerative excuse for inaction, at other times it bespeaks frustration over less than complete masculine control of reproduction and justifies masculine intervention. Curiously, while women as mothers are - situationally though not necessarily causally - at the centre of any questions relating to birth-rates and infant mortality, often the focus on maternity, in a male-authored consideration, arises only when these trends seem to threaten (crudely put) the interests of men. In the contexts of metropolitan discourses on decrease, alleged maternal incompetence was unpatriotic - detrimental to the fatherland; in the context of na lutu sobu itaukei, it was undermining a system of native administration, designed and led by white men nominally to preserve and advance Fijian men. In Fiji, as in Europe and the Neo-Europes, controversies over population made mothers and babies matters of state.

To late twentieth century readers the analysis of indigenous depopulation provided by the Decrease Report may seem profoundly strange. Many, accustomed to the shorthand explanation of native depopulation as due to 'non-immunity to new infectious disease', may think the report's discussion of so many possible cultural and historical causes beside the point. But since, as the previous chapter discussed, monocausal or biologically deterministic accounts of disease have now been strongly criticised, there may be merit in the Commission's wide range. Moreover the contemplators of na lutu sobu itaukei clearly lacked the conceptual equipment to think in later terms of non-immunity. Nonetheless, in some ways the Decrease Report was quite advanced medically: without discarding older disease etiologies, it embraced the novel theory of germs; and did establish a strong link between native decrease and epidemics, which, though patent in retrospect, was evidently unclear to many contemporary observers.

By late nineteenth century standards, the strangest quality of the Decrease Report was however its theoretical resistance to the inevitability of Fijian extinction - no matter the Commissioners' private views. While wishful thinking often coloured white prognoses of indigenous extinction, for many decrease was a process deeply perplexing in its relentlessness, as Darwin's own reflections on this issue seem to show.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, it was not a fate to which Europeans consigned native races alone; in some

currents of thought, decay and extinction were vividly European prospects. In both the metropolitan and Fijian discourses, 'blaming mothers' and the consequent agenda of 'changing mothers' served to keep extinction at bay.
Figure 2: A man with two women
Chapter Three

'Polygamy'

'Polygamy' was the first heading under which possible causes of Fijian depopulation were considered in the Decrease Report. Many respondents believed that the marital circumstances of Fijian women crucially affected their reproductive performance and as the Commissioners explained, opinions regarding polygamy divided into two camps. Some claimed that the past practice of 'polygamy' had caused Fijians to decline. The other, and far more popular theory, was that 'the abolition of polygamy' had contributed to na lutu sobu itaukei: under monogamy, it was argued, Fijian wives found it harder to bear and care for their children. Since Fijian chiefs also maintained that the erosion of customs intrinsic to the traditional conduct of marriage and child-rearing were killing Fijian infants, their theories too were entangled in the polygamy debate.

But was 'the abolition of polygamy' really detrimental to Fijian mothers? Before we attempt that question, we need to probe the terms themselves. This chapter is devoted to 'polygamy'; the next to its 'abolition'. They explore those changes to marriage and family life which have generally been elided from historical consciousness in and of the Pacific. Once that context is established for Fiji, we will be better placed to consider whether Christian marriage proved fatal.

Polygamy in Fiji

'Polygamy' in nineteenth century texts designated pre-Christian marriage in Fiji. More specifically it denoted the conjugation of one husband with more than one wife, for which the more accurate term today is polygyny. I however use the terms interchangeably, usually preferring the older usage. Fijian polygamy was in practice limited to men of standing. High chiefs of the eastern and coastal polities had many wives. Tanoa, the vunivalu of Bau and father of Fiji's paramount chief at Cession, in the 1840s boasted 100 - but that number was probably extraordinary. In Lakeba the Tui Nayau was said to have 30. Chiefs of the smaller scale polities in the interior of Viti Levu had two or three. Some Fijian men doubtless had but one wife; and many, according to the Reverend Joseph Waterhouse, had none.

Polygamy was essential to the economy, operation and symbolism of chiefly power. In his consideration of the widespread myth of 'the stranger king', Sahlins suggests ways in which Fijian chieftainship could be seen as predicated upon the granting of many women to a powerful man. The chief-to-be is imagined as a disruptive and

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1 DR, pp. 1-11.
3 Waterhouse, The King and People of Fiji, p. 310.
destructive interloper who has come among the people of the land: but by furnishing him with their women, the people encompass the stranger; socialise him as their chief; and convert his mana to the giving of life to the collectivity. These life-giving powers are manifest in his sexual and reproductive prowess within their midst; while his death-dealing powers are deflected upon outside foes and converted to the nourishment of his people through a process symbolised and literally embodied in the corpses of enemies brought back for distribution and eating. In Sahlin's view, the cooked men shared around for consumption complement the raw women offered to the chief for sexual consumption. In fact, one of the verbs for a man having sexual intercourse with a woman - kania - is primarily the verb for eating. Thus a chief's enjoyment of many women was, as this interpretation implies a means of enriching the people.

Yet European commentators in the nineteenth century were wont to comment that only rich Fijians could afford many wives. In a sense, the relationship between wives and wealth was circular, since having many wives also made men rich. Early missionaries acknowledged this too, noting 'Polygamy is looked upon as a principal source of a Chief's power and wealth'. Women constituted this in themselves, but also through their productive and reproductive efforts. The most important of these fruits were children, who could be a valuable, if sometimes ambivalent political resource for their father. A son, for instance, might come to rival his father for power, while competition among half-brothers for precedence sometimes resulted in the division and destruction of their father's chiefdom. On the other hand, offspring were of great value in transactions of power. A son, as vasu or nephew to his mother's people was entitled to privileges among her kin that could be exploited by the father - for instance, in levying men or goods from his son's mother's people in wartime; while giving daughters in marriage was an essential means of consolidating alliances with other chiefs.

Aside from the wealth women and children embodied, riches were created by women's handiwork. A large polygamous establishment was a manufacturing concern, producing items of value for ceremony and exchange such as mats and bark-cloth. So, for example, in the 1840s the chief of the Levuka people at Lakeba, Wetasau, 'had many

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6 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 178.
7 This structural weaknesses of the chiefly polity is a central theme in Thomas, Planets around the Sun.
wives who were very valuable to him, being celebrated for the wealth they gathered by
their work, and the position thus given to their husband. Chiefly wives also acted as
conduits of wealth to the husband’s establishment, for, as Waterhouse remarked, ‘In the
higher classes, the wife’s friends are constantly taking property to her...’

Some later colonial commentators doubted that polygamy could ever have been
very common in Fiji. Since its practice implied that a few men commanded many wives,
too few women would remain for marriage other men - and it was hard to imagine the
social utility of a pool of bachelors. As the Decrease Report explained,

Then, as now, practically all the women were appropriated. As it is certain that the
females did not exceed the males, and in view of the custom of female infanticide
more than likely that the males were then, as now, in excess, it stands to reason that,
if polygamy was practised at all generally, a large number of males would have had
to go without wives altogether - a state of things that could not have been
advantageous.

Yet there may have been advantages in this arrangement. The prospect of being
awarded a woman was an incentive to young men to excel in roles such as warriorhood.

Waterhouse remarked

Some of these [bachelors] will court favour with a chief, to secure the loan of a wife;
in compensation for which, the man so obliged becomes the willing instrument of
villanous [sic] deeds, at the instigation of his wife’s master. Others eagerly engage
in the promotion and continuance of war, under the hope of terminating their
forced celibacy by securing the female prize. In any treacherous dealings with any
of the enemy, the promise of a woman generally turns the scale. To encourage
warriors to fight, two or three women are sometimes given to the army.

Waterhouse, clearly, saw the hankering of bachelors for the regulated and perhaps scarce
supply of women as a ‘bad thing’, making young men too amenable to their chief’s
injunctions to violence. But from another angle the ability of a chief to bestow women on
men who might otherwise go without was a means of extracting and utilising their best
energies in projects for the defence or aggrandisement of the community. Darwinians
have argued further that in a social system where men earned the right to reproduce, and
where the powerful, through their greater access to women, enjoyed a reproductive
advantage, a process of masculine selection favoured the genetic transmission of stronger

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[1858], pp. 131, 135. For the value of women and their manufactures, which was inadequately recognised
in much ethnography, see Weiner, Women of Value and Men of Renown, and subsequent works on the
bibliography. Weiner’s tenets were applied to Fiji in Belainish Teckle, ‘The Position of Women in Fiji’,
11 DR, p. 11.
12 Waterhouse, The King and People of Fiji, p. 310.
13 For the mutual identification of polity and chief, see Sahlins, Islands of History, esp. pp. 35-54.
strains. One of the Decrease Commissioners, in his personal submission, expressed similar views. Polygamy, by excluding 'some of the inferior males from procreating', and by granting the best men 'a choice of the best women', had to some extent 'a salutary influence as far as the physical improvement of the race was concerned'. Evidence for this, Corney said, was still to be seen 'in the marked pre-excellence of physique met with in chiefly families and their descendants still surviving from the polygamous times'.

Underlying the inability to credit a society where many men would go without wives was perhaps an inability to conceive that any men could live without regular heterosexual intercourse. Prostitution in nineteenth century England has sometimes been seen as a necessary complement to the ideals and institution of Victorian marriage, and was certainly an option available there to unmarried as well as married men. However, no such option was evidently available in Fiji. Whereas early European observers of societies such as Hawaii described sex there as remarkably 'free', and came to view and perhaps to shape the relationship between Islander women and European men as one of large scale prostitution, in Fiji opportunities for sex seemed much more limited.

Types of 'licentiousness' were described by missionaries in the early period, but with the exception of the sexually free-ranging behaviour of chiefs, these were apparently circumscribed. Rituals in the highlands to ensure fertility and yam harvests were said to involve orgies, though it is likely that these had required, in a complementary fashion, ritual celibacy. Victories in battle could be celebrated with sexual effusion. 'On these occasions,' according to Williams, 'the ordinary social restrictions are destroyed, and the unbridled and indiscriminate indulgence of every evil lust and passion completes the scene of abomination'. Sometimes the punishment of a woman provided an opportunity

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15 Bolton G. Corney, DR, App. 4, p. 97.
18 A. B. Brewster, The Hill Tribes of Fiji, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1922, pp. 91-97, esp. p. 93. Brewster was earlier known as Adolph B. Joske, the name used during most of his career in the Fiji administration. His mother's maiden name was later substituted for the paternal German surname. I refer to him by his later name.
19 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 54.
for sexual outlet. Hunt called the practice *tulevutaki*, or pack-rape, by which a woman who had offended her husband or chief 'is taken into a boori, a house where young men sleep, and all the men of the place are ordered to her; so that sometimes they are going all night long'.  

Hospitality was another circumstance. Hosts sometimes offered women to their guests. Lyth reported

the custom of Rewa, Bau and SomoSomo, but especially the last, to provide women - their own wives and daughters for their visitors both for the chiefs and also their people. It was the practice to take them in a drove to the Stranger’s Bure while there visitors were assembled and then by the chief or his mata to be distributed to the different parties composing his retinue...

This he likened to prostitution: ‘The Thakaudrovi people were in the habit of bringing a number of their women, servants or secondary wives to Lakemba during the reign of heathenism - in order to lend out to their Lakemba friends for gain’. But perhaps the clearest description of a custom approximating prostitution was outlined by Hunt:

Another strange practice obtains among the Chiefs of Bau and some other places. I believe it is by no means general. A number of women are generally kept by these chiefs, not exactly as wives, but as servants. They are however, often used as wives. These women are sent to the town around to beg for food, firewood, etc which they pay for with themselves. These women have their husbands in all the towns around, who understand what they want when they pay them a visit.

Viwa was formerly very much noted for this kind of thing. Being near, the Bau women were continually coming, and a Viwa man was considered a fool if he saw one of them and did not procure for her what she needed for the accustomed price. When a Bau canoe was seen coming towards Vewa, the young men used to run to the landing place that each might claim his mistress.

Yet, as Hunt suggested, this practice was perhaps ‘by no means general’. Finally, there may have been certain women - of low status and sometimes the victims of a physical or mental disability - who were sexually available and promiscuously used. Overall however, intercourse between the sexes in pre-Christian Fiji appears to have been subject to numerous constraints. Though by the 1890s these were said to have relaxed, even so the Decrease Commissioner Basil Thomson claimed, with perhaps ordinary people rather than chiefs in mind, that there were few opportunities for ‘sexual immorality’; and in the

20 John Hunt, Journal, ML: A3350, entry for 19 Feb. 1844. He continues to describe how the punishment of two women for setting fire to Cakobau’s house in Bau was of this type: ‘a great number of warriors who were at Bau at the time were ordered to go to them [the women]. When these had abased them at their pleasure, the men of Bau went to them. All this is done without any shame. A house full of men assemble at the same time, and urge one another to make haste that they may have their turn. All manner of indecencies and brutality is of course committed on the poor creatures.’ After the rape, the women were killed and eaten.


absence of prostitution, '...the Fijians have a better title to be called monogamists than the men of civilized Europe'.

For men without regular access to women, quite possibly there were compensations in masculine society. Very little historical research has been concerned with the kinds of relationships which bachelors, in pre-Christian Fiji, may have had with one another. Demonstrations of physical affection - which between men and women were frowned upon - were noted between men by some European observers: 'Full grown men, it is true,' wrote Williams, 'will walk about together, hand-in-hand, with boyish kindliness, or meet with hugs and embraces...'. There is also evidence of intense attachments between men and even partnerships in which one party assumed a feminine role. Williams noted the phenomenon of 'military marriages':

Instances of persons devoting themselves specially to deeds of arms are not uncommon. The manner in which they do this is singular, and wears the appearance of a marriage contract; and the two men entering into it are spoken of as man and wife, to indicate the closeness of their military union. By this mutual bond the two men pledge themselves to oneness of purpose and effort, to stand by each other in every danger, defending each other to the death, and, if needful, to die together. In the case of one of the parties wishing to become married, in the ordinary style, to one of the other sex, the former contract is duly declared void. Between Mbetelambadai and Mbombo of Vatukarakara such a union existed. The former was slain in war. Mbombo on hearing that his friend was in danger, ran to the rescue; but, arriving too late, died avenging his comrade’s death.

Similar examples could be given. For instance, when Rewa waged war in Kadavu a young Kadavu chief surrendered himself to be killed and eaten as demanded, but his male friend and companion faithfully went with him. When Cakobau’s half-brother, Ravelete was killed, his male friend 'Salem' was strangled like a widow. 'They had been companions from childhood, and loved each other much'. Cakobau himself appears to have had a special attachment, dating back to their days as young warriors, for Varani, the Viwan chief. The close male-to-male partnerships, and indeed the marriage

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25 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 137.
26 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 45-46.
28 Wallis, Life in Feejee, p. 105.
between young fighting men, may suggest something similar to the ideal espoused by speakers in Plato’s *Symposium* - who praised the love between warriors as more noble than that between a man and woman, and a keen incitement to selflessness and valour.30

Whether and what kind of sexual expression such relationships assumed is open to question. Lyth, on the authority of his informant Nathaniel Semani, reported that sodomy existed to a certain extent in various parts of Fiji. The Rewan chief Cokanauto, who adopted the name of Phillips, ‘was said by his companions to be addicted to it’ and elsewhere Cokanauto was described as being surrounded by his ‘fancy men’ [sic].31 But there was some suggestion that European sailors had introduced Phillips and perhaps others to these tastes. Margaret Cargill on one occasion reproved him ‘for the commission of a crime which originated in the shameless sensuality of the commanders and crews in vessels trading in Feejee, and which is now practised by most of the Chiefs’.32 Much later K. J. Allardyce, who had served in many posts in the administration and was considered an expert on Fiji, answered the anthropologist Hocart’s query about buggery among the Taukei by claiming that the Fijian language had no real word for the act and ‘I have heard that the first person to practice sodomy in Fiji was one Lyttleton and that it was spoken of as to ‘vakaLyttletonitaka’!’ (that is ‘to Lyttleton’).33 These details only confirm that homosexual interaction between crews and Pacific Islanders is an area in the study of ‘first contact’ that may warrant further work, since the emphasis in most primary and secondary writings has hitherto been heavily heterosexual.34 Yet even if sodomy was never a common practice in Fiji, other forms of homosexual expression cannot be precluded.35

The argument that limitations upon heterosexual activity would therefore necessitate homosexual behaviour would not however be entirely valid either. Norms relating to sexuality are often understood by those who subscribe to them as necessary universals, and not culturally variable. One mode of male sexual behaviour which European observers in Fiji found highly implausible and in principle undesirable was that

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34 See Besnier, ‘Polynesian Gender Liminality’, esp. pp. 288-295. I believe this subject is addressed in Lee Wallace, ‘Too Darned Hot, Sexual Contact in the Sandwich Islands’, paper presented to David Nichol Smith Seminar IX, Voyages and Beaches, Discovery and the Pacific 1700-1840, University of Auckland, 24 to 28 Aug. 1993. I have not had access to this paper.
35 Herdt gives a few references which he considers may possibly indicate the existence of ritual homosexuality in Fiji - though admitting the evidence is scant. The references to Waterhouse, *King and People of Fiji*, pp. 341, 345 do not amount to much. The references to Seemann, *Viti*, pp. 160-162; 169-170 are not persuasive, the first having nothing to say on the subject, the second referring to a ‘court fool’ who feigned being a woman. Herdt’s references to further work by Hocart in J. Layard, *Stone Men of Malekula*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1942, p. 491 suggest that Hocart did further research on this matter and may not have shared Allardyce’s conclusion. Gilbert Herdt, ‘Ritualized Homosexual Behaviour in the Male Cults of Melanesia, 1862-1983: An Introduction’, *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, ed. Herdt, p. 12.
involving men in prolonged periods of celibacy as a matter of course. Except for a period in the 1890s and early 1900s when a late Victorian and early Edwardian cult of manliness prized ‘purity’ and ‘restraint,’ and viewed various forms of sexual expression - masturbation, sexual activity on the part of adolescents and young adults, or sexual excess - as inimical to virility, most Europeans found it difficult to credit that any man, including Fijian men, might go for long periods without sex.36

Yet ideals of masculinity and efficacy, like the particular British imperial ideal cited, may in certain contexts demand and prize sexual restraint. A. B. Brewster, who served the administration in the interior of Viti Levu during the 1880s and 1890s, recalled, ‘I have often heard the elder men talking of the rising generation, and eulogising the young fellows as growing up proper men of Tholo, restraining their lusts and passions till the right time’.37 In belief systems where sexual release is understood as depleting men of a source of vital power, or as exposing them to sources of danger, masculine strength may in fact seem reliant on restraint - and perhaps an analogous logic informed such practices as sexual abstinence before battle, or before rituals intended to endow men with spiritual power for special feats like firewalking, or in observances to ensure the abundance of crops.38 Again, ideas of this sort may vary from place to place or according to ones role and status. The chiefly ideal analysed by Sahlins, and the behaviour of high chiefs evidenced in the historical record, suggest that the exuberant sexual behaviour among chiefs was an expected and celebrated chiefly type - but not necessarily the only one.39 High chiefs were an order apart and beliefs relating to the chiefly condition may have made meaningful contrasts, not just within themselves, but with those relating to lesser men.

In traditional Fiji, periods of intense sexual activity were perhaps considered necessary for the conception and formation of the child in the womb, while periods of celibacy seem to have been widely understood as imperative for the child's ante-natal maturation and survival after birth. According to a general belief, if a mother had sexual intercourse in later pregnancy the child would be harmed; or if she had sex while breastfeeding, her milk would sour and kill the child. To avoid feeding the child such milk - said to be gaga, that is bitter or poisonous - the infant could be suddenly taken from the breast; and suckling would usually stop abruptly if the mother fell pregnant. In the absence of a suitable substitute for mother's milk, the risk of malnutrition and

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39 A complementarity and alternation between the active and immobile ideals, between the expression of power and its latency has been discerned in many Pacific societies. See Sahlins, *Islands of History*, esp. pp. 90 ff; Jolly, 'Hierarchy and Encompassment', pp. 133-167, esp. p. 145.
possibly death for the infant was therefore high. The Fijian term for a child weakened as a consequence of violating this sexual taboo was *dabe*, from the word for 'sit,' which thus invoked the image of a child too thin and weak to stand. Another term was *save*, indicating that a second child had been conceived or born before its predecessor was of proper weaning age, thus weakening the first. The abstinence of the mother from sexual intercourse during most of her pregnancy and the years in which she was breast-feeding was therefore of vital importance for the survival of her child. But this did not always mean that her husband could sleep with other women. Excluding polygamous chiefs, whose behaviour was evidently exempt from this law, not just the mother, but also the father was required to abstain.\(^{40}\)

The belief that abstinence was required of the father too is evidenced in some of the inquiries into infant deaths held during the 1890s. Though a number of examples are available, take just the case of the infant Viliame, whose mother Salaniata and whose father Aleposo testified before the Native Magistrate:

Sworn: I am Salaniata, Viliame was my child, he suckled for eight months then Aleposo began sleeping with me again. My child therefore became 'dabe' and this was the cause of his growing weaker. Then I also got sick. When my body was weak my husband still came to me - yes, even though I and the child were weak. My child passed away in February 1893. He was afflicted with chest pains. Aleposo was then questioned and admitted to this.\(^{41}\)

Men appear to have been blamed for the taboo's violation more than women. This suggests that male sexuality was regarded as normally more powerful than women's, with greater life-giving and life-taking properties.\(^{42}\) The curtailment of the latter, through the ban on the father having sex during the gestation and suckling of his child, was enforced in various ways. The value placed by Fijian men on their children, and the belief that abstinence was necessary for their survival, were doubtless compelling reasons in themselves. Observing that parents in the highlands often refrained from intercourse for five or six years until the child was weaned, Brewster gave his version of the beliefs and values supporting this practice:

Considering the strong animal passions of the average male this custom may perhaps be considered to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. But this was not so, neither is it so now. The one strong deep-rooted belief of the average Fijian is the worship of his ancestors, which Christianity has certainly, so far as the district in which I live is concerned, failed to obliterate. The average Fijian believes that his deceased ancestors watch over and protect him in this life as long as he duly performs the obligations of family life; and in the hereafter will welcome him in Burotu, the Fijian paradise. The chief obligation imposed upon him is to leave descendants to perpetuate the family name, and to worship and serve the

\(^{40}\) *DR*, pp. 145-148.
\(^{41}\) Case No. 5, CSO 1651/1893.
\(^{42}\) On female sexuality being imagined as ideally less ardent than the male, see Toren, 'Transforming Love...', passim. An exception is the case of a younger man with an older woman, whose sexuality, according to Toren, is overpowering. See also Toren, *Making Sense of Hierarchy*, pp. 52 ff.
departed. The man who fails to do so will surely in the next world receive dreadful punishment. Thus it is that a man who has got a child is seldom himself guilty of causing *dabe*. It is generally caused by the meeting of unprincipled men with other people’s wives, who are unable when opportunity arises to resist importunity. Such at least has been my experience as a magistrate.\(^{43}\)

The scenario described here - of a man seducing the mother of another’s child - is the subject of one Fijian *meke* which also illustrates the belief that sex for the suckling mother can prove fatal to her child: the woman in this *meke* submits to her seducer, though lamenting it will cause her infant’s death.\(^{44}\)

Another consideration was the prospect of humiliation and physical punishment for those who broke the prohibition. Williams remarked that the woman’s family felt disgraced if another child was born before three or four years.\(^{45}\) Brewster supplied a more graphic description: ‘for a man to transgress in this matter was considered an outrage on public decency, and his wife’s relations would combine and inflict the horrible punishment of *mbuturaki* on him. That implied his being knocked down and stamped upon. Fijians,’ he added, ‘are strong, heavy men, and when a number of them got a victim down and jumped upon him, he generally bore the marks for the rest of his life’.\(^{46}\) In 1883, Buli Naboubuco averred that in olden times, a man who *dabe’d* his child was clubbed at once.\(^{47}\) Fijian informants have also told me that the erstwhile custom of covering the mother with turmeric deterred her husband from making physical contact. If traces of turmeric appeared on his skin, he was in trouble!

Sexually segregated accommodation for adults was perhaps the most effective way of separating husband and wife. Despite Fiji’s cultural diversity, a common practice was for women and children to live separately in dwelling houses while men slept in the men’s houses or *bure*. Kleinschmidt, who journeyed through interior Viti Levu in the late 1870s, made drawings of the sleeping stalls of one *bure* and provided this description of life inside,

> It is generally pretty rowdy in these ‘mbure,’ what with ‘yanqona’ being mixed amidst chanting and clapping, while more or less the whole night long you can hear chatting, coughing, fearful snoring, or fire-raking going on. The ‘mbure’ is the place where the men of a village meet, and where all business and messages are discussed in detail. It is also usually the place where the menfolk put up male visitors for the night.\(^{48}\)


\(^{44}\) Meke on the seduction of Tina na Bale, Heffernan Collection, Stanmore papers, BM (mf).


\(^{46}\) Brewster, *The Hill Tribes of Fiji*, pp. 189-190.

\(^{47}\) Council of Chiefs, 30 May 1883.

The strictness with which this segregation was observed may have varied.49 Williams remarked ‘Husbands are as frequently away from their wives as with them, since it is thought not well for a man to sleep regularly at home’.50 Other sources suggest more stringent segregation. In Macuata, ‘the men, both young and old, gathered in the meeting house to spend the night whereas the young girls rested elsewhere with their mothers or some other female relative. Such was the custom - it was considered honourable and was accepted without question’.51 The Stipendiary Magistrate in the neighbouring province of Bua during the early colonial period suggested that habits of sexual separation created two social worlds:

From their earliest years the sexes keep apart. In all their occupations they keep apart. And when they join hands in marriage they are distinctly two in all their proclivities as in their antecedents. All the props of a woman’s life are of woman. They sign their names and go their several ways, the woman with the women and the man with the men.

In polygamous times, Blyth argued, husbands had to use extraordinary violence to fetch their wives and consummate their marriage. If so, then the 'season of prolonged seclusion' for a woman heralded by the birth of a child may have represented - in effect - return to normal.52 In the highlands Brewster remarked that though a couple were ritually secluded for several days to ensure the consummation of their marriage, thereafter they never slept again together in the family house. ‘That was considered effeminate and unbecoming in a warrior, whose proper quarters were the great Mbure or tribal hall...’. Man and wife would cohabit during the planting season in little huts in their gardens, or tryst in the bush.53

Let us turn from men to women. Wives, in a polygamous establishment, were differentiated from one another by status. Mary Wallis observed, ‘The household of the chiefs is composed of three classes of women: - First, the marama lavu, which is their highest title; second, a solanga, which answers to our word for concubine; and lastly the kaises, which means a poor person; these are the servants’.54 Wallis’ scheme many not have fitted all chiefly establishments, and in many there were a number of principal wives even if one had precedence; however, her comment probably indicates broad common categories in the larger households of the eastern chiefdoms.

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49 It is also likely that this segregation was accentuated when Europeans visited, by the customs of hosting guests. Cf. Margaret Jolly, 'Sacred Spaces: Churches, Men's Houses and Households in South Pentecost, Vanuatu', *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly & MacIntyre, p. 220.

50 Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, p. 137.


52 CSO 1601/1879.


The hierarchical relationships among wives, with the exception of the *kaisi* or servant class, were often construed as those among sisters. The principal wife, as Waterhouse stated, was expected to treat the subordinate wives as younger sisters.⁵⁵ Often, subordinate wives were literally sisters, in keeping with the widespread, if not quite universal principle of cross-cousin marriage, according to which a man had sexual and marital rights to the daughters of his father's sister or mother's brother.⁵⁶ The term used to describe this relationship was *veidavolani* which some have translated as literally 'for lying together'.⁵⁷ Even if a man's wife was not his cross-cousin she became by marriage his defacto *davola*, and so too her sisters. According to Thurston's much later comments, the junior sister in many places was referred to by the husband as 'my water carrier' or *noqu taki wai*.⁵⁸ Her subsidiary role to the principal wife was in keeping with the deference owed to one's older sibling. But seniority was not the unflawing determinant of wifely precedence. For instance, at the time of his conversion Cakobau had some eighty women in all, but four or five main wives: Adi Samanunu, whom he later married in the Christian ceremony, was top wife, though her sister and another principal wife, Adi Qalirea was older.⁵⁹

One of the main advantages of the ‘sister principle’ was for child care. Sisters were regarded as the mothers of each other's children, just as brothers were regarded as the fathers of each other's children. This is reflected in the terms for one’s mother's sisters, who were either ‘big’ or ‘little mothers’ depending on whether they were older or younger than the child’s biological mother.⁶⁰ Again, this principle worked even when the biological link between wives was lacking. Mrs Wallis noted that in the household of Cakobau, Adi Samanunu ‘adopts the children born to her husband of women of rank who are his wives [sic] and always calls them her children’.⁶¹ If a mother died, the child would usually be entrusted to a mother’s sister. So after the death of Cakobau’s mother, Adi Savusavu, he was eventually sent to live with his mother’s younger sister in Rewa, then Râdi Dreketi.⁶² The death of a wife in some circumstances necessitated the widower’s marrying his deceased wife’s sister. Similarly, when the husband died the widow was sometimes obliged to marry her deceased husband’s brother. Indeed if a

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⁵⁵ Waterhouse, *The King and People of Fiji*, p. 310.
⁵⁶ *DR*, pp. 15-17. Lester maintains that marriage between first cousins in western Viti Levu was *tabu*. W.H. Lester, 'A Few Customs Observed by Fijians in Connection with Birth, Betrothal and Marriage and Death,' Fiji Society of Science and Industry Transactions and Proceedings, 3:2 (1946), pp. 118-119.
⁵⁷ *DR*, p. 16.
⁵⁸ Thurston’s marginalia, 9 Dec. 1889, CSO 3134/1889.
⁵⁹ Deve Toganivalu, ‘Ratu Cakobau,’ Transactions and Proceedings of the Fijian Society for the Years 1912 and 1913 (copy consulted unpaginated) names the following four wives: Adi Samanunu; Adi Qalirea; Adi Lalaciwa; and Adi Uvu. Heasley adds Adi Maramanikaibau. Heasley, 'The Life and Times of Cakobau', figure 'Abstract of the Genealogy of the Tui Kaba to Ratu Joti Kadavulevu'.
⁶¹ Mary Wallis, Journal of Mary Davis (Cook) Wallis...1851-1853, PM, entry for 28 May 1852. This journal has now been edited by David Routledge and published by the Insitute of Pacific Studies, Suva.
⁶² Toganivalu, ‘Ratu Cakobau’.
widow was not strangled, the levirate was the only way, according to James Stewart, in which she could legitimate her children as the offspring of the deceased.  

Another advantage of this ‘sister principle’ was perhaps that it afforded women an actual or metaphorical basis for common cause and compassion, despite differentials in rank. The transcendent potential of sisterly feeling in polygamous marriage is the poignant theme of one Fijian meke from the Heffernan collection about two sisters who share a husband. Heffernan, who was an unsuccessful planter before his employment in the government, had a Fijian wife and it may have been through her connections that he was able to transcribe this meke which paints the emotional landscape of a marriage from the viewpoints of two wives. The first narrator is the inferior and less favoured wife, who, contemplating her sleeping sister, Adi Vavereusa, laments that Adi in her sexual love for their husband has forgotten sisterly feeling. ‘Being the second wife is a painful thing/ its piercing like that of the orange thorns/ Being the second wife is in truth/ like the cut by spines of sea urchins’. So, the less-loved sister goes away, across the landscape, and suicides by casting herself from a tree. The narrator’s voice then becomes that of Adi Vavereusa, who, when her sister fails to return, bids farewell to her small child from whom she finds it difficult to part and then traces her sister’s footsteps. From the same tree she sees the locks of her one and only sister, lying dead below, and throws herself to the same fate. Adi Vavereusa’s sisterly love in the end exceeded the love for her child, husband and home.  

This meke does capture the potential for both love and conflict in relations between co-wives. Other sources - both missionary and non-missionary - testify to violent conflict. In 1833 Eagleston recounted  

At one time while the King was on board the ship to pass two or three days, the Queen who was the better trump, being jealous of one of her maids of honour, had her killed and cooked and when about ready for their cannibal appetites, she sent a hasty message to the King requesting him to hurry home at one and partake of the good feast she had prepared him. This was the first news to his Majesty of the inhuman act, and expressing some surprise, he left at once to join the Queen and gratify her revenge in having him eat a fancy cut from the arm or breast of one with whom he had been dividing his affections.  

Some time previous to this feast of love and revenge, her majesty having a jealous score to settle with another of her court ladies, had in the King’s absence, her nose cut off to stop if possible this free love business, but finding it did not have the effect desired, she adopted the cooking course as the surest plan. 

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63 Stewart, minute 21 Jun. 1894, CSO 1251/1894.  
64 ‘Na Veitacini’ or ‘The Sisters’, Heffernan Collection, Stanmore papers, BM (mf). I have departed a little from Heffernan's translation and thank Pio Manoa for checking my own. This meke is also reproduced as 'The Double Suicide' and discussed in A.H.G. Stanmore, ‘On Fijian Poetry’ (no imprint), pp. 746-748.  
There were recognised measures for minimising conflict between wives. Mary Wallis once asked Tanoa if his hundred women did not quarrel. He replied ‘that they did sometimes, but when that was the case he had them clubbed, and the matter was ended’.\(^{66}\) A special staff inlaid with ivory was said to be reserved for this purpose.\(^{67}\) However, one basic strategy was to provide wives of rank with separate accommodation. The Tui Bua in 1852 removed two of his wives to a separate house away from his third wife ‘who scratches and bites them so badly’.\(^{68}\) Kleinschmidt remarked that in the interior ‘a man’s two or three wives will often live in separate villages to avoid jealous squabbles, and the husband has to move from one to the others’.\(^{69}\) The provision of a special house was also taken as a sign of respect. The expression ‘Sa vakavaletaki Adi....Ko Ratu...’, literally ‘Sir... has built a house for Lady...’, meaning the two had married, refers to this practice.\(^{70}\) Mary Wallis made numerous remarks upon the grand house which the high chief of Viwa, Namosimalua, was building to honour his new young wife, Vatea, the niece of Cakobau; and when the girl whom Cakobau’s half-brother Ravalete abducted to Bau fell ill, the priest announced the god was angry, because she had been taken ‘to the house intended for the king of Rewa’s daughter, to whom he (Raivalete) is betrothed’.\(^{71}\)

Women at the bottom of the hierarchy of wives lacked the respect or protection afforded by status or powerful kin. In the large polygamous establishments of the coastal chiefs, they appear to have slept where they could, usually in the house of a more powerful wife. They were vulnerable to cruelties from other wives, their husband and, in some circumstances, other men. A case from the early colonial period affords one illustration. The Roko Tui Ba made one of his servant girls pregnant. His wife - though married to him in the Christian manner nevertheless occupied a position equivalent to that of the principal wife under polygamy - arranged for a group of women and a man to beat her and penetrate her with wood, in the \textit{rara} or open village area, consistent with the traditional practice of using pack-rape as a punishment for women. The girl’s pregnancy subsequently ‘disappeared’, whether as a consequence of this ordeal, through deliberate abortion or for other reasons.\(^{72}\)

The inquiry in 1895 into the alleged murder and eating of one Loatu Tuicagi, thought to have occurred years earlier in 1878, also illuminates the disabilities of a low status wife. Tuicagi had been taken as a captive from her people before Cession to the village of Naloto by Tui Vuna, who at the time of the inquiry was Buli Muaira, or the chief appointed by the Colonial Government to administer the district of Muaira in interior Viti Levu. As Tui Vuna explained, she ‘was my wife - not a real wife - a concubine’.

\(^{66}\) Wallis, \textit{Life in Fiji...}, pp. 79-80.
\(^{67}\) Williams, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, p. 178.
\(^{68}\) Wallis, Journal of Mary Davis (Cook) Wallis, entry for 4 Apr . 1852, PM.
\(^{69}\) Kleinschmidt, ‘Theodore Kleinschmidt’s Notes...’, p. 151.
\(^{71}\) Wallis, \textit{Life in Feejee}, pp. 49, 54; 58-59; 55.
\(^{72}\) CSO 732/1876.
When Tui Vuna acquired a proper wife Loatu was put aside. The two women lived in separate houses but quarrelled fiercely. When Tuicagi was rumoured to be having an affair with a cousin of her 'husband', Tui Vuna called for one of her relatives to come and take her away. This man disposed of her in marriage to a new husband, from whom she was again forcibly taken by another of Tui Vuna's relatives and brought back to Tui Vuna's village. In the gardens near Naloto she was said to have been murdered to the cry of women bystanders 'That's the end- and good riddance - to the woman who gets raped - who fornicates', after which she was alleged to have been carved up and distributed for eating. If there is any truth in the testimonies of the witnesses at this inquiry, it is quite clear that Loatu Tuicagi had little say in what happened to her body, alive or dead; and that her own people were either unable to ensure it was treated with respect, or were simply content with the tabua presented in compensation.73

Immediately before and after Cession women who were found guilty of adultery or other transgressions appear to have been treated in a manner analogous to the treatment of female prisoners of war, in that they often became prisoners-cum-concubines of chiefly officials within the new government structures; and were sexually used by these office-holders and other men granted access to them. During the life of the Cakobau government, a short-lived experiment in European constitutional forms before Cession, a number of complaints were received regarding the behaviour of Ratu Isikeli, a chief of Viwa who was Roko Tui Ra or Governor of that Province. He demanded that women convicted to sentences of hard labour be attached to his household. One woman, Bula, wife of Tui Sabeto had been convicted to three months hard labour in the household of the Tui Ba, but Ratu Isikeli demanded that she serve her sentence with him. Ratu Isikeli's sexual demands caused her physical discomfort:

I always told him that he hurt me severely by lying on me so heavily for such an unnatural length of time but he held me down in spite of it. It caused a swelling in my womb which nearly killed me and I told him that he was making me ill. Ratu Isikeli the Governor had connection with all the women of his household, among them the women prisoners. It was a month ago that I ...nearly died..of the swelling in my womb. 74

Many women, not just in Ratu Isikeli's establishment, were in similar situations. Eastgate, a Stipendiary Magistrate in the interim government following Cession, reported that a number of women in Bau and the chief towns of the province had applied to him to be released from services to the chief. 'From instituted inquiries I found a great number of persons, principally women, were in forced servitude and had been for periods varying from two to ten and more years'. Eastgate stated this matter was intimately connected with the practice of attaching women convicted of crimes to the households of chiefs, with the result that the women 'become the prostitutes of the neighbourhood'.75

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73 CSO 2722/1895. My thanks to Paul Geraghty for his comments on the Fijian which is loosely translated here.
74 CAIG 317/1874.
75 CAIG 105/1875.
The sufferings of the servant girl made pregnant by the Roko Tui Ba, the allegations concerning the disappearance of Loatu Tuicagi, the plight of women serving their sentences as prisoners attached to chiefs in the immediate pre-Cession and post-Cession governments - suggest, if only by analogy, that for the low status wife-cum-concubine, life could be very hard. In contrast, principal wives enjoyed many advantages. Berthold Seemann recounted his conversation at SomoSomo in 1861 with Adi Elanoa, a niece of Cakobau and the principal wife of the future Tui Cakau.

As we were taking luncheon, the Queen asked numerous questions about our system of monogamy. For her part, she could never bring herself to esteem a man contented with one wife, and she was glad her husband was a polygamist. Of course, we tried to convince her of our ways of looking at the subject, but having fairly refuted our assumption that women do not like to see their husband’s affection distributed over a whole harem, she almost got the best of the argument.76

Seemann also remarked that she valued her status: ‘She ... never allowed any other wife of Golea’s, and he had a great many, to take any liberties with her or refuse her proper respect’.77

A high ranking wife could exercise authority over inferior wives, and men and women in general whose status was lower than hers. Women might also sometimes exert influence via their son or husband.78 The principal wife of the Tui Macuata, Adi Macuata, was described by Wilkes in 1840 as ‘one of the largest women, if not the very largest, in the Feejees. She is upwards of six feet high, very stout, and seems to understand her own dignity’. Wilkes found ‘that the queen was the principal adviser of the Tui Macuata, and that in all his difficulties her judgment rules the state’.79 Adi Macuata’s political role may be due partly to the traditions, including matriliny, in Vanua Levu and Taveuni which granted distinctive status to women - and indeed, a history of Macuata abounds with references to women who wielded great power in their own right.80 But elsewhere too, it may not have been a matter of a high-ranking wife exerting

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76 Seemann, Viti, p. 191.
78 The mother of Koroitamana influenced him to revolt against his father, Waterhouse, King and People of Fiji, pp. 36-41; Williams, on the other hand, highlights the influence of Radi Dreketi who replaced Koroitamana’s mother as principal wife, in turning the king against his son by her predecessor and quashing his revolt. Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 131-132.
80 Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, stated the general rule that women in Fiji were kept in great subjection, but noted that in the Wailevu District west of SavuSavu on Vanua Levu and in the district of SavuSavu itself, women ‘are treated with more consideration and equality than is usual among these islands.’ pp. 332, 200. One observer in Macuata noted women there were well treated; W. Endicott, Wrecked Among the Cannibals in Fiji, Salem: Marine Research Society, 1923, p. 42. Another account of Macuata frequently mentions such women. For instance, Adi Caginitoba, who succeeded her father in about 1755, ‘was, through her family connections, superior to any of the other chiefs’ though she could not take her father’s title. ‘As often happened in Macuata, women could give orders, preside over a solevu or initiate such family matters as the planting of crops or the building of a house, but they could not have bestowed upon them honours traditionally reserved for men. And as they
Figure 3: Adi Qoliwasawasa
influence through her husband, but over her husband. According to Eagleston, Adi Qoliwasawasa, wife of the Tui Dreketi, 'wears the Bretches[sic]' and her husband stood in as much fear of her 'as he does of a shark'. In 1847, a Bauan chief, banished to Viwa for supporting Christianity, 'had been advised to marry the widow of the late Lasakau chief; but he said he should be happier with one of meaner birth'. In a later generation, the Roko Tui Bua explained that he had taken a commoner and not a lady to be his Christian wife because: 'If I marry a kaisi she looks after me; but if I marry a marama I should require to look after her'. Notwithstanding variations in the means of influence and the standing traditionally granted to chiefly women in various parts of the group, early European traders often found it worthwhile to curry their favour.

Yet much of the authority exercised by chiefly women in polygamous establishments was incidental to rank rather than as a result of being one of many wives. And though polygamy may have provided a context in which the prerogatives of rank could be exercised more intensively, there were also, for high ranking women, some disabilities associated with, or intrinsic to the institution which could prove especially irksome to women of this class. Chiefly women, owing to their importance in political alliances made through marriage, probably had less scope for exercising a degree of personal preference in the selection of their spouse than lower ranking women. Eagleston relates how one sailor shipwrecked on Turtle Island around the year 1830 was saved by a family and 'one of his preservers claimed him as her property, and with the consent of the father, they became one' - suggesting in this case the woman's initiative. More dramatically, elopement or wife-snatching were conventions in themselves through which some Fijian 'love matches' could be effected, with the complicity of the bride. Occasionally arranged marriages, on the unwillingness of one partner or the other, were

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81 This contradicts the view, stated strongly by Nayacakalou, that Fijian women, by virtue of their sex, are always inferior in status to men and that wives are axiomatically inferior to their husbands. See Nayacakalou, *The Fijian System of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 47; cf. Annette Schmidt, *Language in a Fijian Village: An Ethnolinguistic Study*, PhD thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 1988, esp. ch. 4. However other studies qualify the axiom of female inferiority. See for instance Toren, *Making Sense of Hierarchy*, esp. pp. 41-49 and ch. 3; Toren, *Transforming Love*, passim; and Tickle, *The Position of Women in Fiji*, passim. I suspect that formerly a high chiefess could exercise much authority in her own right; and that Christianity, codified law and colonial rule, while entrenching and curtailing male chiefly power, eroded the recognition and legitimacy of power once enjoyed by prominent chiefly women.


84 CSO 2883/85.

85 Early traders often noted the prominence of chiefly women in exchange, trade and decision making, and sometimes dealt directly through them. To give just some examples, see William Lockerby, *The Journal of William Lockerby*, pp. 11-12; 23-24; John Davies, *Journal of the Missionaries put ashore from the 'Hibernia' on an islet in the Fiji Group in 1809*, *ibid.*, p. 146; Richard Siddon, *Captain Siddon's Experience in Fiji in 1809-1815*, *ibid.*, pp. 168-169, 173-174.


Figure 4: Roko Tui Bua and wife

Figure 5: Sleeping stalls in a men's house
allowed to drop. Williams noted, 'If a man does not approve of his betrothed, he quietly neglects the usual advance. If a woman rejects the suit of a man, after being promised to him, property must be taken to him or his friends, by whom vakalutu, the 'letting drop,' is generally accepted'. However Williams continued, 'This...does not apply to persons of high rank, marriages among whom are so interwoven with the civil and political interests of the country, that no deviation from form is allowed, out of regard to the wishes of the female concerned, who, in these matters may have no will of her own'.

A comparison suggests itself with aristocratic daughters in eighteenth century Britain, whose parents were slower to endorse the principal of their daughter's free choice, since family name and fortune were at stake.

Another aspect of polygamy that high ranking women often found difficult was the instability of their status within the polygamous household. The acquisition of a new high ranking wife by the husband could redefine the hierarchy among wives, with those formerly better placed losing their position. When Vatea, Cakobau's niece, was married to the high chief of Viwa, Namosimalua, she became his principal wife, displacing her predecessor, Drodovakawai, who found this demotion difficult to bear. Similarly, when the principal wife of the Tui Dreketi, a lady from Kadavu, was superseded, she deeply resented her reduction to 'a state of comparative dependence and poverty'. The position of a high ranking wife was not only vulnerable to 'official' demotion following the arrival of higher ranking co-wives, but to a kind of de facto demotion for a number of other possible reasons, such as her failure to have children, especially sons, or her lack of charm. In 1849 Wallis described the polygamous household of Ritova, observing, 'The ladies composing the harem of the chief are mostly of equal rank. The daughter of the late king ranks the highest, but seems not to be a favourite. She is childless, too, so that Retova has no benefit of a "vasu" to the territories of his enemies'.

Correspondents to the Decrease Commission who maintained that the practice of 'polygamy' had been a cause of the decrease stressed its association with abortion and infanticide. This linkage had also been emphasized by missionaries in pre-Cession Fiji. Women living under the tensions of polygamy, according to Williams, terminated their pregnancies or killed their infants to avoid the jealous reprisals of other wives, to keep their husband's sexual attentions, or to disappoint him of a child. The Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missions in Polynesia, Walter Lawry declared that so
intrinsic were these practices to polygynous marriage that '...polygamy will not be followed by increased population; but on the contrary, the more the wives are multiplied the more the children are murdered'.

More numerous were submissions which contrasted polygamy favourably with monogamy, and argued that its abolition was a factor in the Fijians' demographic decline. The following excerpt from one submission is a typical exposition of the argument.

The infant mortality is indirectly traceable to the monogamous life. Fifty years ago a man, in addition to his duties as one of the warriors of his tribe, had, as now, his food to plant for himself and his family, his quota for solevus and magitis - he was far more industrious in that respect than now. If he had more mouths to provide for, he was himself better looked after by the women of his household. A woman bearing a child in every four years was the rule - any lesser interval was looked upon as a disgrace; she, in her turn, was well looked after when her child was born, by the other women - not allowed out for at least a month - and, beyond nursing the infant, relieved of her domestic duties - thus enabled to rear a healthy and strong child to add to the tribal numbers.

Contrast the family life then with that now. The husband has fewer wives to feed it is true - less to provide for magitis and solevus- but he has grown more indolent; his one wife bears children more often, she is only the one to see to her husband's food, mats, &c, has to do more fishing (which is a most body-killing practice as they follow it), bears, as I said, children more frequently, is weaker herself by consequence- the drain upon her system is greater- and her child suffers in consequence: neglected, and often badly nourished, it dies.

Most statements concerning 'polygamy' and its demographic effects tended to portray - as these examples do - a typical picture of 'polygamous' family life. Yet even within Fijian marriages that were polygynous the variety of arrangements was, as this survey indicates, wide. Polygamous establishments could be large or small, concentrated in one location or dispersed, there could be wives 'in action' and 'out of action'. Indeed, 'wife' was a polymorphous entity. Some like Loatu Tuicagi could be 'a wife, but not a true wife'; likewise those women of Bauan chiefs, described by Hunt, who were really 'servants used as wives'; and a certain ambiguity of marital status, as we shall see in the next chapter, could attach to wives of low or high rank who were in a sense, abeyant or latent, living far from their husband or for long without his attentions. The sexual and maternal aspects of being a wife were also differentiated, and those wives whose reproduction was supported appear generally to have experienced these aspects in rhythmic, mutually exclusive, alternating phases of their life.

Nor did 'polygamy' preclude monogamy. Plain monogamy must have been the lot for a significant proportion of husbands and wives; while many 'polygamous'

arrangements, especially those which involved just two or three wives, in practice perhaps resembled serial monogamy. And, while the majority of women were probably a wife of one sort or another, many men were possibly never a 'husband' - at least in any heterosexual sense.

The reproductive advantage bestowed upon chiefly men by the institution of polygamy has been stressed in some analyses. Yet it also bestowed a reproductive advantage upon chiefly women. Their children were politically more useful and important. While lesser wives may have fulfilled sexual and other functions, their children lacked a comparable premium and so the energies of these women were frequently conscripted to the service of higher ranking maternity. This concentration of female energies on the reproduction of the few was symbolised in the practice - which survived the 'abolition of polygamy' - of chosen nurses, day and night, for the first ten days of life, holding a chiefly infant so as not to let his or her body touch the ground.97 The breast-milk of lesser women could also be commandeered. Calvert recorded the following actions of a Rewan chief on the birth of a son by a wife whom he evidently desired both sexually and reproductively:

She being a favourite, when confined with the fine young boy who is a vasu to Bau, was not allowed to nourish him for more than a month. The chief required a healthy and good-looking woman who was five months advanced in pregnancy to destroy her child, in order to give his child her breast. She did not like to have to sacrifice her own child - or to endanger her own life by puncturing, but she dared not object.98

Aside from chiefly husbands, chiefly wives also endeavoured to manage or limit, in their own interests, the reproductive capacities of inferior 'wives'. The case involving the Roko Tui Ba's wife is suggestive; and while Adi Samanunu adopted children fathered by Cakobau with women of rank, Wallis recorded an instance when she disclaimed one as 'born by the roadside' and urged, 'do nothing for it, let it die lest evil should come, if it lives'.99

The idea that 'polygamy' in pre-Christian Fiji was a boon to motherhood appears to have taken the advantages enjoyed by favoured or high-born wives in polygynous establishments and attributed them to women in general. In fact, the advantages such mothers enjoyed may often have been at the expense of lesser wives and concubines. While to some extent, this was an advantage of rank that survived into 'monogamous' times - when it was often observed that the children of chiefly women were pampered,

99 Wallis, Journal of Mary Davis (Cook) Wallis, entry for 28 May 1852, PM.
waited upon and often suckled by other women as well as their own mothers\textsuperscript{100} (and parallels could be drawn, for instance, with the advantages enjoyed by upper class Englishwomen, with maidservants and wetnurses who in some cases sacrificed their own infants to sell their breast milk\textsuperscript{101}) - polygamy probably accentuated these advantages in placing lower-ranking wives beneath higher-ranking wives within the one reproductive hierarchy of a single man. It is safe, at any rate, to conclude that 'polygamy' is in many respects a misleading label for the diversity of marriage in pre-Christian Fiji; and, if defined simply as a union of two or more women with the one husband, did not in itself provide a standard set of marital circumstances favourable to the child bearing of all wives. Just as the category 'polygamy' was internally heterogenous, so was the category 'wife'.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{DR}, p. 142; see also my comments in ch. 11.

Chapter Four

Polygamy's 'Abolition'

The term 'abolition' suggests a sudden finality. In Fiji the language used during the late nineteenth century by colonial texts - such as the Decrease Report - to describe the end of polygamy creates an impression that this form of marriage abruptly disappeared. From the 1830s, Methodist missionaries - whether European, Tongan or Fijian - had been the first and most zealous attackers of the institution. Later their efforts were in the main aided by the British administration. Nevertheless, while polygamy was 'abolished' on paper, its demise in practice was messy and incomplete.

The Missionary Opposition to Polygamy

The first missionaries sent to Fiji were three Tahitians of the London Missionary Society who arrived in Lakeba in 1830. Five years later they were followed by the pioneer Wesleyans William Cross, David Cargill and Josua Mateinanui. By 1844 when the first Roman Catholic missionaries appeared, the Wesleyan organisation included Tongan and Fijian Teachers, and the families of seven white missionaries. Eventually most Fijians became followers of na lotu weseli, or the Wesleyan faith.¹

On the matter of polygamy the Methodist Instructions to Missionaries were strict: No man, living in a state of polygamy, is to be admitted a member, or even on trial, who will not consent to living with one woman as his wife, to whom you shall join him in matrimony, or ascertain that this rite has been performed by some other minister; and the same rule is to be applied, in the same manner, to a woman proposing to become a member of the society. No female, living in a state of concubinage with any person is to be admitted into the society as long as she continues in this sin.² Yet this rule is insufficient to explain the zeal with which the Methodists attacked the institution. Christian missions often differed from one another in their attitude to indigenous customs of marriage - as Bowie has observed in Cameroon and Langmore in Papua.³ In Fiji one nineteenth century observer, the botanist Berthold Seemann,

2 Calvert, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 58.
remarked that the Catholics seemed more relaxed than the Wesleyans on the question of marriage.\(^4\)

A number of objections could be raised, even within Christian opinion, against the strict preclusion of polygamous men from Church membership. Aside from the biblical counter example of polygynous Old Testament patriarchs, there were humane and strategic considerations. Why should a woman powerless to leave her husband or a man obliged to care for his wives and offspring be debarred? What of the rejected wives and children? Would it not be wiser to accept polygamy among first generation converts, and require monogamy only from subsequent generations and those not yet married? Later visitors to Fiji maintained that the lotu would have gained many more converts had the mission been less opposed to polygamy.\(^5\) Calvert was clearly sensitive to some of these criticisms - emanating even from 'high ecclesiastical position' - in his defence of the Methodist stance.\(^6\)

The pioneer Wesleyans were heirs to the eighteenth century transformation of the marriage ideal. This had led to wider acceptance of the principle of free choice in the selection of one's spouse - and as a life-long contract imagined as freely made between man and wife, marriage was infused with contemporary ideals of liberty. The mid-century passage of the Marriage Acts had also sharpened the sense that marriage was monogamous and that de facto polygamy was to be eradicated from the land. In popular conceptions, the possession of many wives was the mark of an oriental tyrant - and orientalist imagery was sometimes applied by missionaries to Fiji.

The early missionaries' own brand of religiosity and social experience imparted a particular value to their vision of marriage. 'Holy Matrimony' was the spiritual pattern for social life. Like Our Father, God in Heaven, the husband was the supreme authority in the family; his dominance was modified by respect for his wife, her domestic domain and her spirituality, and by their mutual humility before God; marriage was to preserve (the man in particular) from temptation, adultery and fornication, by providing a sanctified preserve for sex; the family home was its church; and also socially and architecturally, a clearly defined, detachable unit.\(^7\)

This separateness and detachability were important attributes, particularly for the first generations of missionaries. The family provided the vehicle in which missionaries made their own social and religious progress, marked off from the society which

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\(^5\) Seemann, *Viti*, pp. 32-33. Seemann and others also found their thoughts turning to the Mormons as an example of polygamy practised on the fringes of European Christendom, for example: Seemann, *Viti*, p. 192; Julius L. Brenchley, *Jottings during the Cruise of the HMS Curacao among the South Sea Islands in 1865*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1873, p. 175.


\(^7\) Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, esp. chs. 2 & 3; and pp. 100 ff, 422-423.
surrounded them, and in some instances, from the social circumstances of their birth. The family unit as 'church' was all the more salient for pioneer missionaries in the field, isolated and little supported. What 'the family' could do for the missionaries, it might do for Fijians too: facilitate a kind of disassociation from surrounding heathenism while affording a space for spiritual and social betterment. The metaphor of the family went further. By becoming full Christians, in each their own heart, and in the heart's social equivalent, each their own family, these descendants of Adam who had strayed so far, could claim their place in the human family at large.

In the missionary critique of polygamy, the most elaborate thesis was that polygamy degraded Fijian women. Williams gives this the fullest treatment. Polygamy he declared was 'certainly the source of female degradation, domestic misery, and personal suffering'. Abortion and infanticide, as we have seen, were attributed to polygamy and so were violent conflicts between wives. To the question why so many Fijian women were noseless, Williams reported this as the reply of a 'native wife': "It grows out of a plurality of wives. Jealousy causes hatred, and then the stronger tries to cut or bite off the nose of the one she hates." Other forms of bloodshed were attributed to it too - such as the rivalries between half-brothers or between son and father that in paramount dynasties often led to war. The chiefly house of Rewa was one good example. Waterhouse tells how the Tui Dreketi, Roko Tabavalu was killed by his son Koroitamana (ironically, his name meant 'defender of his father') who had been caught in the struggle between his mother and the new principal wife. The fates of several of Koroitamana's high-ranking brothers included two killed by other brothers; one killed in war while intending fratricide; another killed by cousins. These fraternal tensions came into play in the Bau-Rewa war which ended in the loss of Rewa's power: while Ratu Qaranaqio held the title Tui Dreketi, his half-sibling Cokanoauto, as vasu to Bau, joined that party against his brother.


Another form of killing which indicted polygamy deeply in missionary eyes was the killing of parents by their children. Aside from political parricide, this included widow-strangling and the killing of parents who were infirm. Many observations of this latter practice were made by missionaries and others. Lyth recorded how the wife of the Tui Cakau in 1840 gave orders for the strangulation of her own elderly father; and described the agitation felt by the missionaries when Ratu Ligana and his brother strangled their old and ailing mother. Missionaries stopped another sick old woman in the Tui Cakau's household from being strangled, and when she died a few days later, Mrs Lyth remarked, 'they are now relieved of their charge her daughter appeared to have no feeling, such is heathenism in Feejee'.

A causal link is sometimes clear between polygamy and the conflicts among co-wives and half-brothers, but the link between polygamy and such customs as killing infirm parents is not. Missionaries however maintained that children born under polygamy were shaped into adults without humane cultivation. Such children, Williams claimed, had 'but slight advantage over the whelp of the brute': under polygamy they received no care, no affection, no discipline. 'Thus the children grow up without knowledge, without good morals or habits, without amiability or worth, fitted, by the way in which they are reared, to develop [sic] the worst features of heathen life'. Though this argument was often contradicted by other details in missionary accounts and comments by contemporary Europeans which referred to such qualities as affection, tenderness, and love of home, rhetorically it supported the Methodist's policy on marriage. As Stocking remarked, polygamy was projected as 'the rotten core of Fijian society'.

The missionary opposition to polygamy was not shared by many other Europeans in Fiji. Though numerous beachcombers, traders, explorers and naval officers opposed customs like widow-strangling and cannibalism, the attitude to polygamy varied. Occasionally a visiting naval captain urged its abolition. Sir Everard Home in 1852 exhorted Cakobau to convert and set an example to his people so that 'they will live and bear children, to be good subjects to you, each having one wife only...'. Some early settlers who lived with Fijian women also tried to organise their lives on a Christian model which the missionaries approved. Most visitors however made no criticism of polygamy and a number of white residents took many local wives. Before his death in

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14 Mary Anne Lyth, Papers 1838-1853, ML: MSS 3642, entry for 11 Jan. 1840.
15 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 180.
17 Quoted in Waterhouse, The King and People, p. 198.
1813, Charlie Savage in Bau had two wives of rank and many others of lower status; in 1840, Paddy Connell in Rewa claimed to have had 100. David Whippy, leader of the early part-European community at Levuka, and contemporaries like Charles Pickering and William Simpson were legendary for their 'harcms'. As Young has argued, in many instances these were apparently stable and dignified arrangements, but their example did not assist the missionary campaign. Cross, exhorting the high chief of Viwa, Namosimalua, to adopt monogamy felt sure that 'Amongst other things which produces an evil influence upon his mind is, I think, the conduct of certain foreigners at an island near us, who I am informed have six or seven women each as their wives...'

Even where a European had a formally married wife, this was evidently no bar to his relations with other women or fathering children out of Christian wedlock - thus in practice very little different from non-coresidential polygyny. Mary Wallis recorded Fijians asking incredulously whether she was really Captain Wallis' only wife, but may not have realised that her husband had been known to procure local women on earlier trips. Eagleston had a European wife in Tahiti and kept a Fijian woman in Rewa - 'urging that such things are common in Britain & America'. The natives, noted Cargill, assumed polygamy was the practice of all white men.

Fijians also observed that Europeans traded and exchanged for women. The variety and nature of these transactions will not be analysed here, for they are often misrepresented by the language of simple buying and selling and this is a more complex subject. But when a party from the London Missionary Society was anchored off Macuata in 1809, Davies wrote that the Fijians were most curious about their women and several times 'offered to buy them for a quantity of sandalwood or else exchange them for some of their own' - inverting the European practice with Fijians. If Williams is to be believed, Europeans were also assumed to conduct such transactions among themselves: 'the natives have gravely asked the Missionaries whether they bought their wives, and what they cost, supposing that such was the custom in the white man's land.

24 See generally Samson, 'Rescuing Fijian Women?' also ch. 3, footnote 17.
These inconsistencies and ambiguities must have confused and handicapped the message about marriage which the early white missionaries tried to convey. However, they were greatly outnumbered by native teachers. When Calvert wrote his mission history in the 1850s there were still only eight white missionaries in the field, but more than 200 Tongan and Fijian.\textsuperscript{29} The wives of these men were expected, like white missionary wives, to be helpmeets for their husbands and models of domesticity. They often impressed European visitors as such.\textsuperscript{30} These men and women were probably more effective translators of the marriage message into the Fijian context.

\textit{Adopting Monogamy}

The adoption of Christian marriage - denoted in Fijian by the verb of Tongan derivation \textit{vakamau} - posed the greatest difficulties to those already a part of polygynous establishments, or with heavy personal and political investments in the institution.

Chiefs, on the whole, were most reluctant to renounce their wives. The resources a chief derived from polygyny have already been mentioned. Perhaps these Fijian concepts of wealth were in the mind of Tanoa's son when he explained to Hunt 'That Christianity is a good thing for Englishmen because they have plenty of property, but that it is a bad thing for poor Feejee, and that \textit{poor} Fiji would become poor by Christianity.'\textsuperscript{31} Wetasau, chief of the Levuka people at Lakeba stated his difficulties plainly: he could not afford to dismiss his wives, since they produced the required tribute to Bau.\textsuperscript{32}

By dismissing wives, a chief could also incite the antagonism of his former in-laws. Verani, on conversion, dismissed three of his four wives by giving one to his cousin, another to his nephew, but returning the third to her father the Tui Bua. Wallis remarked that consequently the people of Bua were 'very much opposed to the Christian religion, or not so much on account of the religion itself, as the insult which they fancy they have received on account of it...this insult they will not forgive. The old men of the place declare she shall have no other husband, that the insult may not be forgotten'.\textsuperscript{33}

Verani's conversion in 1844 involved considerable upheaval regarding both his self-perception and his standing in the eyes of others. Whereas a few other chiefly contemporaries, including Wetasau and Verani's uncle Namosimalua preferred instead to renounce heathenism and remain for a considerable time in the status of one who merely professes the \textit{lotu}, and as such 'were never admitted as members of the Society, because

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{29} Calvert, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, pp. 433, 430. \\
\textsuperscript{31} Hunt, Journal, ML: A369, entry 29 Apr. 1839. \\
\textsuperscript{32} Calvert, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, p. 131. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Wallis, \textit{Life in Feejee}, pp. 72, 370.
\end{tabular}
they refused to part with their many wives. Verani was the first to go all the way and disband his household.34 Despite the remonstrations of 'old men of rank and influence', he refused to retain his extra wives even as servants. Calvert recorded him saying, 'If my wife cannot manage in our house, I will help to get wood, and cook our food; but I will not continue to sin against God'.35 Hunt similarly noted that Verani '... has of course some curious notions, as many people have when they first feel the working of Divine Grace. He has dismissed all his servants as well as his wives and wishes to cook his own food, nurse his own child and such like things as a kind of penance for his past sins'.36 Verani's rejection of the wives who symbolised the masculine prowess of a chief, and his willingness to do such menial female work as carrying wood, suggest that his conversion unsettled his own gendered identity.37

He also fell in the estimation of other Fijians. 'Verani feels a little discouraged,' Hunt observed, 'Like all other new converts he wonders why everyone does not lotu now as formerly'.38 Verani's death at the hands of the Lovoni people, with whom he was trying to negotiate peace but who no longer stood in awe of his chiefly authority is perhaps the final indication of his loss of stature. There were parallels in the fates of other converted chiefs: Ratu Jioji of Dama similarly lost his life while trying to make peace; and Ra Esekaia, realising that he could not operate both as a Chief and as a Christian, let the title of Tui Bua pass over him to his brother.39 Christianity and chiefliness were clearly difficult to reconcile, both in practice and ideals; and marriage was one point in this complex conflict.

Lower status men doubtless had a different perspective. For those who already had only one wife the mission ban posed no problem. Bachelors might have welcomed the prospect of more women becoming available upon the disbanding of chiefly establishments; but the increased supply of women may still not have guaranteed every man a wife. If, as seems likely, the female population was outnumbered by the male, a shortfall of women would have remained.40 Moreover, for a man to marry, he needed the support of kin to conduct negotiations and to accumulate the gifts for the prospective bride's people. The inability to fulfil these prerequisites, which was correlated with low social status, could prove an insurmountable barrier to a man's marriage. 41 In any case,
the views of lower ranking men on the abolition of polygamy were unlikely to influence the views of chiefly men on this matter.

Yet curiously, when chiefly husbands were reluctant, often their wives were conspicuous in their support of Christianity and Christian marriage. In some instances, women's marital grievances may have been a factor in their conversion, as some studies of Africa have suggested. The investments of wives in polygyny contrasted with that of their husbands, and differed among themselves. From the previous chapter, one could conjecture that for Fijian women of the lowest class in a polygynous establishment, its dissolution may have offered escape from the intimate domination of superior wives, while women of rank stood to lose less from the abolition of polygyny than their husbands.

The advantages of wealth and political manoeuvre deriving from polygyny were the husband's perquisite. Though principal wives could enjoy the prestige of their husband's establishment, and revel in their power over inferior wives, their personal standing and authority was in the first instance a matter of birth. Well born women could demand deference from low born women, whether or not they shared the same husband. And for chiefly women, Christian marriage probably offered some attractions. Stability of status may have been one. Monogamy removed the threat that one's position in the household might be downgraded on the arrival of a new, higher ranking wife. The emphasis of missionary teaching on the principle of free choice in the selection of one's spouse may also have had appeal. Higher ranking women had less scope than those of lower birth in this matter. Perhaps Williams was referring to blue-blooded marama when he remarked 'Such of the young women as are acquainted with the way in which a wife is secured in England, regard it with strong admiration, and envy the favoured women who wed 'the men to whom their spirit flies.'

On occasion women in a polygynous establishment may have enjoyed making common cause in opposition to their husband on the matter of the lotu. Such coalitions could ease the tensions among wives and divert energies from same-sex to cross-sex conflict. There were certainly rituals in which women were allowed to express antagonism towards men and the normal gender hierarchy was reversed. In the game of veinasa, a part of burial ceremonies, husbands were not allowed to defend themselves against the attack of their wives, and a hapless husband might be seen pursued by a club-wielding wife. Similar examples could be cited to indicate a kind of female subalternity in relation to male authority, and to suggest that the teachings of European missionaries and native teachers may have provided new social and symbolic means for its expression.

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43 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 169.
44 Waterhouse, The King and People of Fiji, pp. 326-327. For similar games, see Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 162-163.
These speculations find some corroboration in the records. For women taking to Christianity in opposition to their men, Waterhouse's journal, in November 1839, makes a poignant reference to 'five professedly-Christian women, who had formed a dislike to their husbands, and left Oneata in a small canoe belonging to that place' and were now presumed lost at sea, or shipwrecked and eaten.\(^{45}\) Though Cakobau trenchantly resisted Christianity for nearly two decades, his wife Adi Samanunu was a strong advocate of the \textit{lotu}, his niece Vatea exhorted him to convert, his daughter was a prayer leader at Bau well before a mission station was established there, and as early as 1839 Cross had been given assurances by high-ranking Bauan women that the \textit{lotu} had their support.\(^{46}\) In Rewa, Cross early secured the favour of the king's mother, daughter, and principal wife; while Vatea preceded Verani as the leading Christian convert in the early mission days at Viwa.\(^{47}\)

The desire of women to follow the \textit{lotu} often involved rebellion against their husbands. Lyth mentioned that two women in Lakeba were 'allowed to meet in class on trial on condition that they were no longer concubines' of the Tui Nayau. The Tui Nayau had recently professed Christianity so it was hoped that he would leave the two women alone. But when the Tui Nayau heard of this, Lyth reported him as saying 'I'll see whose [sic] master, I or the \textit{lotu}' and obliged them to be slaves of his will'. Another woman was allowed to meet in class on trial because though nominally married to the Bauan chief, Ratu Mara, their relationship had been in abeyance for some time. When he reappeared in Lakeba, the woman tried, against her father's orders, to avoid him 'but at length he (Mara) went and took her by force there [sic] was no redress - power was on the one side - abject slavery on the other'.\(^{48}\)

Among the first prize chiefly adherents to Christianity were high-ranking women whose conversion involved a revolt against an arranged marriage. Adi Tagici in 1842, the daughter of the Tui Nayau, protested to no avail against her marriage to Tanoa, a man according to Williams 'quite old enough to be her great-grandfather', but continued in her married state to support Christianity;\(^{49}\) Adi Tovo, a woman of the highest rank from Ono, had been promised to the Tui Nayau, but swore 'to die rather than fulfil her heathen betrothal';\(^{50}\) the daughter of Wetasau, chief of the Levuka people at Lakeba, refused to go to Ratu Mara, to whom she had been promised, unless she could be his one wife.\(^{51}\) Chiefly women such as these could only become members of the Church, or wives in Christian matrimony, when the Fijian men with authority over them permitted.\(^{52}\) Among the bulk of the population conversion awaited the example of their superiors. The

\(^{46}\) \textit{Cross, Journal, MOM} 336, entry for 24 Nov. 1839.
\(^{48}\) Lyth, \textit{Reminiscences, ML: B548, p. 110.}
\textit{Cross, Journal, MOM} 336, 1 Feb 1839.
\(^{50}\) Calvert, \textit{Fiji and the Fijians}, p. 63.
\(^{52}\) See, for example Waterhouse, \textit{Vah-Ta-Ah}.
conversion of the highest chiefs, and their admission into church membership, was therefore crucial for the spread of the lotu.

Cakobau's eventual profession of Christianity in 1854 thus assumed great symbolic significance. As the most powerful Fijian chief (though he converted when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb) his 'bowing before Jehovah' was celebrated by the missionaries as the single most influential conversion in Fiji.\(^{53}\) Waterhouse called it 'the great religious reformation in 1854,' and saw the year as 'the commencement of a new epoch' - though, as Tippett argued, the conversion of all Fijians even under Cakobau's sway did not instantly ensue.\(^{54}\) According to one estimate in 1861, only one Fijian in three was nominally Christian.\(^{55}\)

For 'the abolition of polygamy', Cakobau's dissolution of his own polygynous establishment is similarly symbolic. In January 1857 he dismissed some eighty wives and married Adi Samanunu. Why did he not remain merely a professing Christian, in which state he could subscribe to the lotu as well as retain his wives? Many possible answers could be given, but there was an uncomfortable contradiction in being simultaneously a high chief and a holder of low status in the Church. Hocart used the metaphor of a church to describe the Fijian polity: '...little Churches all come together at times to form one big Church, which itself may pay tribute to a bigger Church. The head of the church is the head of the community'.\(^{56}\) The chief was thus a central embodiment of spiritual power in the social design. If the mana now authorising the Fijian hierarchy was that of the Christian God, how could a paramount chief not be a member of His Church? Lesser chiefs and ordinary men were not faced with this dilemma so acutely.\(^{57}\)

The dramatic stories of chief's disbanding their households or anecdotes about cynical converts who dismissed their old wives to marry a young one doubtless belie a more varied process.\(^{58}\) Some couples already living in monogamy probably simply took new Christian vows.\(^{59}\) Others stayed in their polygynous arrangements till they were widows or widowers and then remarried vakamau. Young people marrying for the first time might choose a Christian rite. Others - as will be seen - adhered formally or

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53 Tippett, though he credits a spiritual dimension to Cakobau's conversion, gives an analysis of the political and pragmatic considerations behind his decision. Even contemporaries like Waterhouse acknowledged that Cakobau's conversion contrasted with Verani's, which was represented as a genuinely spiritual experience. In Cakobau's case, according to Waterhouse, God did not work directly on his soul, but on the historical circumstances which compelled him to lotu. Tippett, *The Christian*, pp. 16-19; Waterhouse, *The King and People of Fiji*, pp. 251 ff.

54 Waterhouse, *The King and People of Fiji*, contains in its subtitle 'the great reformation in 1854'; 'the new epoch' is proclaimed p. 151. According to Waterhouse, in the mid fifties Cakobau exercised direct authority over about 15,000 Fijians and indirectly influenced perhaps another 100,000 - about half of Waterhouse's total estimate for the population of Fiji. Waterhouse, *The King and People of Fiji*, p. 338.

55 Smythe's report, 1 May 1861. GBPP, Vol 36 (1862) [2993].


57 The articulation of chiefly hierarchy and church hierarchy is analysed in a contemporary context in Christina Toren, *Making Sense of Hierarchy*, pp. 127-137; 142-144.

58 For an instance of the latter, see Hunt, Journal, ML: A3350, entry for 24 Feb. 1842.

59 For example, Cross, Journal, MOM: 336, entry for 1 Jan. 1840.
informally to polygamy. Within twenty years of Cakobau’s conversion most of coastal Fiji was nominally Christian - but even here one can doubt that tidy monogamy prevailed.

*Polygamy Post Cession*

The British flag was raised on 10th October 1874 and with this act all Fijians were symbolically brought under the Crown. The following January, at Navuso on the Rewa River, chiefs of the *kai colo* or hills people of inland Viti Levu were called together to have explained to them the significance of the Deed of Cession, on which they had not been consulted and which none of them had signed. This meeting is better known for its part in spreading the great measles epidemic into the interior, for those attending contracted the virus there and took it home.

The mountaineers, as they were called, had hitherto been little touched by Christianity. Not till 1867 did the first European missionary attempt to penetrate the island’s centre, where he was killed and eaten. So the Crown, the Cross and the measles descended on the mountain districts hard upon each other. An urgent topic of discussion at Navuso that day was marriage. According to the minutes of proceedings, the mountaineers feared they would now be forced to abolish polygamy and declared that they ‘could not do without their women, the chiefs especially...’. Reassurances were given that the Government would not interfere: ‘There are other nations under the British Government wherein polygamy was tolerated, but if they accepted the "lotu" from their hearts, they would find out that one woman was enough for one man for his wife’.60 These assurances reflected certain basic tenets to which the colonial administration, initially, adhered: that the duties of government pertain to the public rather than the private sphere; and that to meddle unnecessarily in private matters was costly and a provocation of unrest.61 When a revolt of the highlanders had to be quashed in 1876, the soundness of this policy was confirmed.62 '[T]he people,' wrote Brewster, 'ascribed the new mysterious malady [i.e. the measles] to the wrath of the ancestral gods', and wanted to return 'to the old way...'.63

A certain recognition was therefore accorded to polygyny under the 1877 Native Regulation regarding marriage.64 While henceforth only monogamous marriages could be contracted under law, those unions formalised ‘according to custom’ before the passage of the regulation were granted legal status. The Methodist Mission deplored this provision and in the highlands its agents campaigned vigorously against polygamy.

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60 Minutes of proceedings at a meeting with Mountain Chiefs from Interior Viti Levu at Navuso on the Rewa River on the 22nd January, 1875, in Robinson to Secretary of State, 17 Mar. 1875, CO 83/6.
61 For the public/private distinction see footnote 58, ch. 2.
64 Native Regulation No. 12 of 1877, regarding marriage and divorce.
Some insight into the sensitivity of the issue is given by the official Le Hunte who declared, 'I can see nothing but utter confusion arising in Colo if the married men are allowed to change their wives for new ones in a moment'. In 1877 he spoke on the question at a Church meeting, because 'the old mountain men had in some instances been told they must put away all their wives but one'. Le Hunte objected to this injunction 'on political as well as social grounds' and informed his audience 'that they were not to do so unless they wished to' [sic]. Sir Arthur Gordon later visited the district, addressed a large throng and

most emphatically told all present that they were not to put away one of their wives, but that they were as much bound to cherish them all as if they had been married after the custom of the Church.

The satisfaction with which this and other directions relating to the oppressive injunctions laid by the teachers on the mountaineers was received by them, was expressed in a most striking buzz of approbation, which left little doubt in His Excellency's or the teachers' minds as to what the 'voice of the land' was on these points.65

The limited recognition granted to polygyny denied total government endorsement, and to a small degree impeded, the missionary project to reconstrue Fijian marriage. The difference between church and state on polygamy was but one aspect of a greater conflict over the regulation of marriage. At Cession, the mission was the largest organisation in Fiji with an intelligence-gathering capability and power structure which early administrators envied. Fiji's first resident Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, described the European missionaries as potentates not unlike 'the political bishops of the middle ages'.66 Aside from the ideological significance of marriage to the Methodist brand of Christianity (though this significance was arguably less vivid now than it had been to the missionary pioneers67), marriage remained an important juncture in Fijian social relations at which the Church could interpose, flex muscle and raise revenue. These capacities were now restricted by the law which provided the alternative of a civil ceremony, required that a couple be licensed by a Stipendiary Magistrate before the Church could marry them, and imposed limitations on the fees that the minister could charge. The marriage regulation remained a topic of bitter quarrel between the mission and colonial administration for many years.68

The government's conflict with the Church over polygamy was influenced more subtly, perhaps, by other factors. The kind of colonialism promoted by Gordon and his adviser John Bates Thurston sought to maintain a clear distinction between ruler and ruled which cultural difference could serve to dramatise. Indeed, from the viewpoint of a cultivated administrator, a satisfying adjunct to colonial rule was to be found in the

65 CSO 1258/78.
67 I would like to thank Ross Mackay for his conversations on this point.
Figure 6: Fijian Preacher

Figure 7: Fijian minister, with wife, and kneeling two children
reflection upon cultural diversity and in the characterisation of racial types. The desires of the Methodist missionaries however were more assimilative. Their aim was to produce natives who, despite the marks of a subordinate status, resembled their white Christian mentors.

Alongside the interest, among Gordon's coterie, to preserve and proclaim cultural differences between rulers and subjects, there was a countervailing tendency to assert affinities between the colonial and the colonized elites. While identifying with and lauding the Fijian aristocracy was useful politically, the European administrative elite and their hangers-on also sought to distance themselves from lower class white residents, a category which was taken to include Methodist missionaries. One who constantly appeared in descriptions of this aristocratic rapport between the races was Cakobau's daughter Adi Arieta Kuila. Sir Arthur Gordon's secretary and young relation, Arthur John Lewis Gordon, gave this portrait:

A daughter of the Great Chief Cakobau, she inherits from her mother yet higher rank. The widow of a chief of a large district in South-east Viti Levu, she has wisely ruled the people, who, since his death, have regarded her as their Chief...

In her own house she makes a charming and admirable hostess, and notwithstanding numerous occupations which engage her attention - now hearing some complaint, - now issuing an order, - now intent upon reading, - now receiving and writing letters, - she does not despise the simpler duties of a good housewife...

The personal appearance of Adi Kuila is prepossessing and dignified, and her manner both graceful and ladylike. Both by character and natural attainment she is fitted to take her part in any society, far better so indeed than some so-called ladies as frequently met with in the colonies as elsewhere, who in their self-conceited ignorance, would consider it a condescension on their part to speak to her did they not, indeed, positively refuse to do so.

Gordon's party endlessly admired Adi Kuila and vaunted her over lesser white women. After a dinner which both Adi Kuila and the missionary's wife, Mrs Waterhouse attended, Baron Anatole Von Hügel wrote, 'But Oh, Oh what a difference there is- as the Governor remarked tonight - between her and Adi. The latter so infinitely superior in manners, thought and ways'. Those who made such appreciative appraisals of Adi contrasted themselves with those whose conclusions on the same subject were less flattering. Lady Gordon noted that her children's English nurse 'cannot get over her feeling against natives. When she had seen Adi Kuila she said, 'Great coarse thing. I did

69 Aside from more specific political interests in contemplating and documenting different peoples, and gathering their artifacts, the indulgence of 'curiosity' has its satisfactions, see Nicholas Thomas, Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific, Cambridge MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 126 ff.
71 Cf. both France, The Charter of the Land, ch. 7; Thomas, Entangled Objects, pp. 167-175.
73 Von Hügel, The Fiji Journals, p. 150.
hope to see something better than that!" The inability to discern quality across racial lines was taken to indicate a European's lower class.

Adi Arieta Kuila became, for her European adulators, the archetypal Fijian woman. Doubtless with her in mind, and disregarding the bulk of the Fijian female population, Gordon asserted that among the characteristics which marked the Fijians as a superior people was the fact that 'women are respected, hold a high social position and exempted from agricultural labour'. By contrast, white missionary wives - like Mrs Fison, with 'her poor ugly face' and 'rufous sausagey curls' - far from being paragons of womanhood and exemplars of female dignity, were often depicted as unprepossessing, and surrounded by children they could not control. Implied in these portrayals was a certain denigration of the Methodist missionaries not just for their class, but for their desire to shape Fijian domesticity in their own inferior image and for the sort of claims upon which this project was based.

Yet colonial rule did on the whole support the attempts of the Mission to change the Fijian family. Government and Mission had more in common on this matter than differences. Notwithstanding a certain reluctance to intervene, the administration passed a number of Native Regulations intended to impact on Fijian marriage and home-life.

Gordon proudly described the Native Regulations as reflecting the concerns, values and even the language of the Fijian people. The bulk of the regulations indeed arose from recommendations made to the Governor by the Council of Chiefs or Bosevakaturaga, which were then referred, if the Governor saw fit, to the Native Regulations Board on which some Fijian appointees sat. Under this system, Gordon declared, the Council of Chiefs 'wields far more influence on the course of legislation than can be enjoyed by half a dozen natives sitting as members of a legislature otherwise wholly composed of white men, as is the case in New Zealand'. Yet his claims for the Fijian provenance and character of the Native Regulations are a little disingenuous. Matters on which the European administration intended to formulate Native Regulations were seeded in the Council of Chiefs and the final form of any regulation was left to the European administration. Only the odd Native Regulation appears to have had a genuinely Fijian origin and only occasionally was a regulation which the white administrators supported dropped on the advice of Fijian members of the board.

The vast majority of Native Regulations pertaining to marital, domestic and sexual matters bear the stamp of those values which church and government held in common. The belief that monogamous marriage was the basis of the family, and in turn that the nuclear family was the fundamental unit of society, was clearly expressed in the marriage

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Like the missionaries, the law also treated marriage as a life-long contract. The regulation stressed 'Take Notice: The putting asunder of man and wife is not a good thing...' and magistrates were explicitly commanded to promote reconciliation. While divorce could be granted on grounds of adultery, impotence, abandonment for three years, habitual cruelty or ill usage, and though missionaries complained that these grounds were too generous, in fact couples were now denied many avenues for divorce formerly available. As one woman seeking divorce in 1876 explained, 'I was only a girl when I married and I did not know what I was doing I thought it was like old times and that I could change if I wished...'. Other regulations sought to block ways through which women protested against unhappy marriages, such as fleeing from one's husband and staying with relatives or friends. The harbouring of married women became a criminal offence; and a married woman who abandoned her home could be, on the husband's complaint, compelled by a magistrate to return. Striking contrasts between European and Fijian marriage are here suggested: while marriage, in the European ideal, was 'freely entered into' by each party, Fijian marriage was ideally in the interests of their respective kin, who could rightfully coerce it; and while the legal dissolution of a European marriage was normally by death since divorce was a most exceptional resort, Fijian marriage could lapse in a variety of ways.

One solution to the problem of ill-matched marriages was to prevent them. In this the government, like the missionaries, opposed the practice of joining couples in matrimony who disliked each other. The regulation required the magistrate to question the prospective groom as to whether he and his intended bride had personally conversed about their marriage, and whether it was clear that she wished to marry him 'of her own free will'. Girls over 16 years of age were stated as free to marry whom they pleased. And under a more general provision, any person guilty of bringing about an improper marriage, inducing or coercing someone to marry, or failing to comply with the provisions of the regulation, could be fined up to ten pounds or imprisoned up to twelve months. Under this last provision, the interest of the male party as well as the female could be protected, but the marriage regulation demonstrated a greater concern - as the missionaries had - for women forced into marriages than for men similarly coerced.

78 Native Regulation No. 12 of 1877.
79 Case No. 18, CSO 776/1876.
80 Native Regulation No. 2 of 1877, respecting courts; Native Regulation No.11 of 1877 with regard to adultery and fornication;
Finally, the makers of the early native regulations, like the missionaries, believed that marriage was a partnership in which husband and wife discharged productive and reproductive duties in a sexually exclusive and complementary manner: with man the producer working outside the home, and woman the reproducer working within. The engagement of women in outdoor productive activities and often in physically demanding work offended the concept of female domesticity. This of course was a middle class ideal of the period and Brewster, who worked in the highlands from the 1884, in retrospect recognised its class-bound origins: 'Seeing the hard work that Fijian women do, I mean those of the same social degree as our poor working people, I used to think how sad their lot was. I had left England when I was very young, and until I returned in my old age, I did not comprehend the hopeless and incessant drudgery of our own poor women'.

Initially, however, it was the male, productive role with which the native regulations were more concerned, in keeping with the plan to turn Fijian men into peasant producers. Regulation prescribed the minimum an able-bodied man was to plant: 'not less than one hundred bananas, five hundred hills of either yams, dalo or kawais, or kumalas'. Another regulation proclaimed man's role as provider and protector, and stated 'It shall be the duty of every man to take care and provide for his wife, his children or his elders,...and all dependent on him for support...'.

The regulation concerning adultery and fornication was, however, said to reflect Fijian rather than European values. In contrast to the laws of England, fornication and adultery were made criminal offences for Fijians. While these harsh measures were certainly congenial to the mission, which placed great weight on strict morality, the government claimed that it acted, not from respect for the mission, but in pragmatic acknowledgment of indigenous attitudes. Thurston argued that if no legal redress was provided for the aggrieved Fijian parties in such cases, 'individuals will seek it in their own crude way, and then English law will be invoked to punish murder'. The regulation against adultery may well have been popular since prosecutions were common.

But were the provisions of the other regulations implemented and did they cause the desired changes? Many European Magistrates were in practice reluctant to implement laws that conflicted with custom. Brewster recalled being reprimanded by his superior for licensing a couple whose marriage, though perfectly legal, offended custom. While members of the Council of Chiefs were ready to recommend all manner of regulations, Fijian officials at the village, district and provincial levels would often not enforce them. When these factors are combined with a small European personnel of limited capacities for surveillance, the circumvention of Native Regulations, particularly in minor matters, was endemic.

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81 Brewster, *The Hill Tribes of Fiji*, p. 162.
82 Native Regulation No. 5 of 1877, respecting planting.
83 Native Regulation No. 5 of 1878, concerning the duty of heads of households and chiefs of mataqalis.
84 Regulation No. 11 of 1877, with regard to adultery and fornication.
85 Inclosure 2 in No. 11, GBPP Vol 54 (1876) [C.1624].
Many of the provisions regarding marriage were evaded or contravened. The stipulation that each intending couple have a house of their own is one good example. To meet this requirement, a house was often temporarily vacated for the prospective groom and bride, but once the marriage ceremony was over, the former inhabitants returned. The use of coercion upon the parties of a marriage was not eradicated by legislation either. Many divorce cases from the early colonial period testify to involuntary marriages and these continued. Sometimes the applicants were men. In one file of cases, a certain Katonio claimed that the Tui Vabea had ordered him to marry and care for the woman and her five children - she was considerably older than he; one Simioni explained 'I married to please the old people who desired it because we were relatives'; a man named Avakuku had married against his wish and found his wife so violent and abusive that 'I am frightened that I shall do her a serious harm some day'. The testimony of a woman called Anasini, was not unusual:

My father and mother knew that I did not wish to marry Saumaki. They willed that I should marry, & they knew I was opposed to it. I never have wronged my husband. In my father's house when first asked I did not dissent - Before the Kovana/Rokotui/ I did not dissent. In the presence of the minister I did not dissent, but all the time my heart was opposed tho' I did not express it but after my marriage I could not live with my husband. I went before the Kovana, I went before the Minister I kissed the book but it was my mouth not my heart. I did not like the man.

Instead of going to her husband, 'I slept in the bush, anywhere'. Her marriage, like many others, had never been consummated. Merelaisita's case in 1903 was another of this type. The Buli Cakaudrove was said to have forced her to marry the groom. After the wedding she took to the bush and successfully avoided her husband. But on inquiry it was found 'that she consented to marriage three times, 1st when interrogated by Buli Cakaudrove, secondly when NSM gave licence and 3rdly when Native Minister asked her if she desired to marry Sakaia'. Women like Lusiana Sewasewa, who wrote to the Native Stependiary Magistrate wanting to know her legal rights to marry the man of her heart despite her father's opposition, seem exceptional. Brewster maintained that by the time he had retired 'public opinion had completely come round, and, to make use of a

87 Cases Nos 15, 17 & 19, CSO 776/1876.
88 Case No. 1 in CSO 776/1876. In this file, of the 26 cases in which divorce was requested, the coercion of unwilling parties figured in roughly 16, and antipathy, particularly on the part of the bride for the groom, was responsible for 7 not having even been consummated - a not uncommon grounds on which divorce in the early colonial period was requested. Some of the other women in this file gave evidence similar to Anaseinl's. Alilia followed the wish of her stepmother and her father, Tui Kadavu and 'obeyed the will of the chiefs,' but after the marriage 'I never went into my husband's house. I went into another house and have kept away from him ever since'. Lewaniuia claimed that after she married Sailaisa 'I never lived in his house I live and eat in other houses and in my father's house I have been taken to Sailasa's house on several occasions but always ran away.' Amelia claimed, 'I never liked the man I was forced to marry him by my old people I have never lived with the man the marriage has never been consummated I eat & sleep anywhere & everywhere.'
89 Minute 20 Jul. 1903, CSO 3113/1903.
90 CSO 3538/1894.
modern catchword, women were accorded the right of self-determination, and no more pressure was brought upon them than is done with ourselves when relatives endeavour to bring about desirable matches'; but his claim may be too sweeping.91

Nor did the difficulties in obtaining legal divorce ensure that marriage became a life-long commitment. A complaint that was to be repeated again and again from the 1870s was that in Fiji there were too many married couples living apart and unable to remarry. From the 1880s, this predicament came to be seen as especially undesirable, since the population was decreasing and it was argued that men and women who might otherwise find partners to their liking and have children were prevented by their inability to divorce their previous spouse.92 This argument was spurious, since estranged husbands and wives often did find new partners and raise families, but their children in the eyes of Church and State were illegitimate.

Finally, let us turn to the effects of the law regarding polygamy. Despite limited recognition, the native regulation was designed to phase out its official practice and this indeed was the outcome. A few legally recognised polygynous marriages survived in the highlands into the 1890s. Thomson described them as serene: '...the wives were all stricken in years, and they lived harmoniously together, dividing the labour of wood-cutting, water carrying, and tilling their husband's gardens between them'.93 As in the coastal regions, a number of factors conduced to the gradual demise of official polygamy among the kai colo. Christianity became the accepted creed and the mission teachers and their families (the interior of Viti Levu never had a resident European Methodist missionary) were authoritative exemplars of the Christian family ideal. Those polygynous establishments riven by discord no doubt took the opportunity to dissolve. High mortality also promoted a turn-over. From Cession onwards, any men or women widowed by disease had no legal option for remarriage except monogamy. Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming described the 'matrimonial fever' which was one of the sequelae of the measles. In the highlands on Christmas eve in 1875 she observed the mass-weddings of young and old, widows and widowers. Among these couples were a number of 'old hands,' men and women who had previously been married to one another under the polygamy but who now, presumably after the death of other wives, could marry vakamau.94

Yet to say that polygamy was by the 1890s largely 'abolished' is deceptive in all but its official sense. Occasional references in government records testify to the continuance of old habits - such as the Turaga ni Koro who took two wives or the married Roko Tui Tailevu who lavished honours befitting a wife on the woman who gave birth to his ex nuptial child.95 In 1893, the Wesleyan mission collected data on

91 Brewster, The Hill Tribes of Fiji, p. 162.
92 CO 1155/1886.
94 Cumming, At Home in Fiji, pp. 98-99.
95 CO 92/1890; Governor's Native Commissioner (D. H. Wilkinson) Memos 13/1/81-1/7/82, NAF, pp. 141-143.
polygamists which show that polygynous families - usually with wives numbering in the range of two to three, but sometimes with ten or more - were by no means uncommon.96 These do not seem to have been surviving unions formalised before the passage of the native regulations, but suggest instead that many men and women continued to form polygamous arrangements. Consequent exclusion from Church membership was probably no special hardship. Only a minority of Fijians were actually classed Church members, indicating that those banned on grounds of polygamy belonged to the majority who for one reason or another were similarly placed with respect to the Church.97

Marriage was a particularly messy area. As the Fijian civil servant Ratu Savenaca Seniloli explained in 1904, 'After thirty years under Religion and Government there is a great diversity in those who wish to marry - some wishing to do so, while others object, preferring to have two or three (wives)'.98 Late nineteenth century marriage practices in Fiji thus encompassed Christian monogamy, civil monogamy, *de facto* monogamy, serial monogamy both legal and *de facto*, surviving traditional polygyny, as well as *de facto* polygyny - and perhaps other varieties as well.

Despite this confused picture, the contrast between 'the days of polygamy' and the present monogamous regime was in some ways meaningful. Even men like Seniloli clearly perceived that the ideas and institution of marriage had undergone major upheaval and certainly 'polygamy' and 'monogamy' were related conceptually to opposite sides of the religious, cultural and chronological divide between heathenism and the *lotu*. Nevertheless, before we can more closely investigate whether *na lutu sobu itaukei* was in part caused by 'the abolition of polygamy', we need to appreciate that the phrase itself rests on two sets of social and historical simplifications.

96 'Native Papers Relating to the Families of Polygamists 1893', MAF: M/18.
97 Thornley, 'Fijian Methodism', table 2, following p. 19, pp. 122 ff; 131 ff.
98 CSO 2663/1904. Ratu Savenaca Seniloli's words in the Fijian original were: 'Ia ni sa tu na lotu ka tu na Matanitu e Viti, e na gauna oqo sa oti yani ka sa sivi beka oqo e yabaki ruasagavalu, ia sa duidui na tamata e so e via vakamau, e so sega sa tu na lomadrau e rua se tolu...'
Chapter Five

Was 'Polygamy's Abolition' a Cause of Decrease?

Did the 'abolition of polygamy' - however misleading the phrase - contribute to na lulu sobu itaukei? This chapter explores the arguments advanced in the 1890s which asserted that it had. Two contradictory postulations were made: first, under monogamy Fijian women avoided pregnancy and childbirth, so fewer children were born; second, Fijian women were now locked into a syndrome of frequent pregnancies, maternal depletion and high wastage of infant life. Though a key premise of the latter was that the lengthy taboo on post-partum intercourse was impossible if a husband had only one wife, proponents of both theories concurred that, under monogamy, women had to work harder - and this is the first point to consider.

Women and Work

The work-load of Fijian women may have increased in the course of the nineteenth century, but how much of this is directly attributable to changes in marriage? Let us consider some activities in which Fijian women were engaged, and how these had changed.

The performance of heavy physical and agricultural labour by women was subject to variables: lower-ranking women everywhere tended to do the more physically demanding work; while as a rule women in the islands of the Lau group, in Taveuni and Lomaiviti were said to be exempt from heavy tasks.1 Carrying firewood and water were certainly common female tasks on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. (The term for 'water-carrier' was synonymous with 'concubine'.2) At Bau, the kaisi women waded across the shallows to fetch wood and water from the mainland when the tide was low. In 1856 on the Rewa, Macdonald and his party tested the load of firewood one woman was carrying and estimated its weight at 80 pounds.3 Wilkinson, writing from Bua, declared, 'It is almost incredible the weight some women will carry, wet or fair, not always over the best roads..... women from some of the inland towns here will carry 80 to 90 lbs., six or eight miles to the coast, and have to climb and descend again a range over 700 feet high.'4 'What ... can be more ridiculous, or more repugnant to one's sense of what is fit, and becoming,' wrote Governor O'Brien, 'than the sight, which may be seen any day in Fiji, of a stalwart man striding freely along with a stave in his hand, while his wife stags behind him under a heavy load?'5 Many Fijian women still do this work.

1 DR, pp. 41-42.
2 Thurston's marginalia, 9 Dec. 1889, CSO 3134/1889.
4 DR, App. 4, p. 87.
5 Governor O'Brien to Secretary of State, 31 Dec. 1897, CO 83/67; Cf. DR, p. 42.
They also had agricultural tasks. Here again the women of Viti Levu, particularly of the interior and the west, were noted for their contribution. Generally women's duties were considered 'lighter', but these were often of a more protracted and tedious kind. The degree of women's involvement in agriculture was - and is - often disguised by the claim that this is primarily men's work. In the 1970s Griffen's study of Namosi showed that though the plantations were regarded as a male responsibility, women were the 'backbone' of gardening and worked alongside men in all the tasks. In 1894 the Buli Muaira recalled that he had given his two wives each 'a taro and also a yam garden really mine, but nominally theirs' and had threatened one wife with the withdrawal of his assistance. These and other comments from the colonial period suggest that much of the day-to-day management of plantations in inland Viti Levu was a female affair.

During the nineteenth century women's carrying of fuel and water would have remained little changed, despite a regulation passed in 1885 forbidding them to bear burdens, while their agricultural labour probably increased. The government, by requiring Fijian men to pay tax in garden produce, expanded agricultural production. The minimum each able-bodied man should cultivate was prescribed (if rarely enforced) by law. Men did not however exclusively undertake all the extra work and there were many occasions when white officials objected to Fijian women labouring on the tax plantations. In 1876 for instance the Roko Tui Kadavu sent the women out to work the cotton, while he and the men stayed behind to bake the women food; elsewhere women helped with the cane, maize and other tax crops. With men supposedly devoting more of their time to the extra crops designated for tax, they may in fact have reduced their contribution to subsistence cultivation, leaving even more work for women in that department. Male absenteeism must also be considered. Though the tax system and the labour laws were intended to keep Fijian men in their villages, as 'Atu Bain has argued, the legal impediments to the employment of Fijian men were regularly circumvented. At the

[Figure 8, overleaf: Man, with woman carrying heavy load]

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7 CSO 4250/1894 contained in CSO 2722/1895; see also the reference in the previous chapter to the wives tending their husband's gardens. More recently Asasela Ravuvu surveyed the work performed by men and women in the interior village of Nakorosule and found that though women had less 'non-productive' time than men, men spent more time than women in cultivation. Asasela Ravuvu, *Development and Dependence: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village*, Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1980, pp. 180-183.
8 Native Regulation No. 7 of 1885 respecting burdens carried by women is further discussed in ch. 6.
9 Native Regulation No. 5 of 1877, respecting planting; *DR*, p. 78.
10 Council of Chiefs, 23 Nov. 1876; see also CSO 1743/1899.
censuses in 1881 and 1891, roughly 3,000 men were estimated away from their koro on European plantations. Other men were away with no good reason. Thurston again and again objected to what he called a growing 'predatory class' of vagabonds and loafers around Suva and Levuka. To the extent that men were absent from their villages, the demands on women in cultivation were bound to have increased.

Gathering foodstuffs from the bush and tidal flats, fishing in the rivers and inside the reefs were also female tasks in the nineteenth century as today. Women's involvement in these activities was unlikely to have lessened as the century proceeded. Whereas war-time conditions would formerly have curtailed such excursions for periods at a time, under peace these limitations no longer operated.

Women moreover were manufacturers. As Thomas Williams noted, a great part of Fiji's products came from women's hands, adding, 'In respect of its manufactures ... Fiji has always had a pre-eminence over other groups'. Items of female handiwork included fine back-cloth and pottery for which Fiji was famed, mats and other woven goods, salt, turmeric and scented oils. Typically women of a certain caste or locality specialised in one product, which could be traded or exchanged with the speciality of another group. The women of Lakeba, Matuku, Somosomo and Vatulele were celebrated for their masi. The Rewa and Sigatoka rivers, Oneata, Kabara and Lakeba were pottery centres. Potters were often the womenfolk of sailors and fishermen, like the Levuka people who had been dispersed from Bau and had settled in different places from which they sailed and traded. Mat-making was more widely spread - though some parts of Fiji were without it. 'An intelligent native,' according to Williams, 'on seeing a mat, can generally tell whence it was brought, each island showing a peculiarity, whether in the material used, or in the manner in which it is plaited ... The worst plait comes from Rewa, the best from Moala'. Women of coastal Viti Levu and Vanua Levu produced and traded salt with the interior. In 1856 Macdonald visited a 'turmeric manufactory' on the Waidina, where he described a party of women busily making an article 'much valued elsewhere'.

12 CSO 271/1885.
13 Increased work by women due to male absenteeism was remarked by Reverend Frederick Langham, DR, App. 4, p. 57. For further discussion of absenteeism, see ch. 11 below.
14 DR, pp. 128-129. Penelope Schoeffel, 'Women in Fisheries of the South Pacific,' Women in Development in the South Pacific: Barriers and Opportunities, ed. R. V. Cole et al, Canberra: Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1985, pp. 56-175.
15 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 65.
17 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 69-71; Laura Thompson, 'The Culture History of the Lau Islands, Fiji,' American Anthropologist, 40:2 (1938), p. 188; Smythe, Ten Months in the Fiji Islands, pp. 38-39; Cumming, At Home in Fiji, pp. 149, 245-248; Clunie, Yalo i Viti, pp. 2-14.
19 CSO 142/1902; CSO 3887/1894; Laurel Heath, 'Social Change in Fiji During the Mission-Contact Period, 1835-1874, with Particular Reference to Fijian Women', BA thesis (History), Australian National University, 1974, pp. 29-30; Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 94.
Related to their role in production was their role in managing tribute, exchange and trade. In describing one island, where the men fished and the women made pots, and then exchanged their goods for products of the mainland, Williams observed, 'The trade is often left to the women...'. In 1876, Constance Gordon Cumming was at Batiki when 'the young women of Levuka had come over by appointment to bring a great present of English cloth to the chief, and to the women of Batique. Of course, they expected mats, and painted cloth, and cocoanut oil in return; so all the Batique girls had been working for ages'. Often a man in authority informed key women of the need to organise goods for a specific event; but evidently there were areas in which women were the initiators. Roth was one later administrator-cum-ethnographer who sensed that the part played by Fijian women in economic life was poorly appreciated: 'it must suffice here to say that they take a much more active and effective share in it than meets even an observant eye'. He might have been gratified by the trends in Oceanic scholarship which more recently have reassessed the value of women's artifacts and the power and significance of the female roles associated with them.

Most of the established intra-Fijian trade and exchange networks survived well into the twentieth century, though the demand for some items lessened. Turmeric, for instance, ceased to be used widely as a body covering and calico replaced masi as everyday clothing for men. But despite these replacements and despite the interaction with the European economy, Fijian villagers still relied substantially on traditionally produced articles. Macnaught described some of the old networks as they persisted in the 1930s, which traded salt, pots, masi, mats, rope-fibre, wooden bowls, yaqona, timber and kauri gum. The continuation of Fijian customs within the neo-traditional colonial system ensured that the value of many traditional articles did not depreciate. The ceremonies of church and state created further demands for these goods.

The ceremonial economy, under colonial rule, was in some respects more demanding than before. In pre-colonial Fiji, as relationships waxed and waned, tribute was not performed according to clockwork, whereas now some occasions for prestations - such as meetings of Provincial Councils and the Council of Chiefs - were not only held regularly according to the European calendar, but could be events of a national rather than a localised scale. Under the British umbrella Cakobau was able to draw goods from parts of Viti Levu, where, as Scarr remarked, 'before Cession he could only have levied with

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21 Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, pp. 94-95.
22 Cumming, At Home in Fiji, p. 180.
24 See footnote 9, ch. 3. For the symbolism of masi see Sahlins, Islands of History, pp. 85ff.
great difficulty'. Sir Arthur Gordon had deliberately required that meetings of native councils should involve a *solevu*, or presentation of goods, believing this would be a healthy stimulus to production. As the Decrease Commissioners remarked, the main burden fell on women 'whose especial duty it was to produce the commodities required'. To grant women some relief, and to free them for domestic tasks, *solevu* were outlawed in 1892 for Provincial Councils, but not for the Council of Chiefs.27

Missionaries deplored the strains imposed on the people by government *bose* or meetings, but the demands of the Church were also heavy.28 Here the role of women again was great. Brewster observed that in the interior, Fijian women provided the local pastor with food and goods.29 David Wilkinson described Fijian women as the financial and material mainstay of the Mission.30 And though the Church demanded contributions in cash, the *vakamisioneri*, or annual collection for the support of the Mission, were also occasions for the lavish display of traditional wealth in which people took great pride.31

Alongside these ceremonies of the colonial state and church, other occasions for the presentation of goods - marking life cycle events, kin obligations, chiefly installations and so forth - continued uninterrupted. Government reports often described, with concern, the prolonged and arduous preparations for such events, as in 1899 when all the women of Bau were so busy preparing goods for the approaching confinement of the wife of the Roko Tui Rewa and for the marriage of Adi Viniani that they had no time to cook.32 All in all, the engagement of women in the manufacture and organisation of goods for the ceremonial economy may well have intensified in the colonial era.

Another area of largely female responsibility was the care of the young and infirm. The sickness and death caused by new diseases must have created extra work for carers. Nursing, the procurement of medicines, and devising new therapies placed demands on the time and skill of both specialist female (as well as male) healers and ordinary women. The death of many older women in the measles epidemic also had implications for women's work in the period that immediately followed.33 It was the task of older women to care for small children and the infirm while younger women went out to garden, fish or gather. Where the elderly had been wiped out, younger women were left with the work of two generations.34

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27 *DR*, p. 59.
28 A typical missionary complaint about government meetings is William Weir Lindsay, *DR*, App. 4, p. 27.
29 Brewster, *The Hill Tribes of Fiji*, p. 163.
30 David Wilkinson, Memorandum to the Wesleyan Mission District Meeting of Fiji assembled at Bua in October, 1894, *MOM* 338.
31 See also A. W. Thornley, 'Fijian Methodism', pp. 106-108.
32 CSO 683/1899.
34 As Sahlins observations suggest, older women perhaps have more social uses than older men. Sahlins, *Moana*, p. 114.
Finally, let us turn to what Europeans described as 'housework'. White missionaries and colonial administrators were hoping well before the 1890s that in due course 'the duties of the wife [will] become more and more domestic'. Two changes in this domain were probably underway in the nineteenth century and related to laundry and cooking.

Laundry was a nineteenth century introduction seen as exclusively female work. The extent to which women did laundry depended on the degree to which cloth had been adopted, how frequently they thought it should be washed and the availability of freshwater, the lack of which in some places was a handicap. Nevertheless, what Europeans regarded as a menial job appears to have carried status in Fiji - identifying the washer-woman with a prestigious import, and with a skill linked to European ways and mission teaching. Brewster reflected on the wives of native officials posted to Suva and elsewhere, who in their home villages would normally

preside over large establishments and superintend the plaiting of mats, making of bark-cloth, fishing and the maintenance of the food supply. Knowing that they could not pursue these avocations in a European community, I one day asked them how they managed to pass away the time. After a short silence, Andi ... Senimili, a granddaughter of King Thakombau and wife of one of the native officers ... slowly replied, as if deeply pondering her words: 'Oh! Ah! yes; there is certainly not much for us to do, but we can call upon each other and take tea together, and then there is always the washing.

He added that laundry 'amounts to almost a passion with South Sea ladies. Mine has been done by some of the members of the bluest-blooded families...'.

Formerly Fijian men did much food preparation. The *lovo*, or earth oven, was (and is) a male province. Williams also noted that the organisation and preparation of major feasts was largely handled by men. In sexually segregated living arrangements, men were observed to 'club and live together' and presumably looked after much of their own food - though wives sometimes left dishes for the husbands at the men's *bure*. Female cooking was 'pot-based' - soups and stews cooked over fires. In pre-Christian days, low status men and male slaves helped women in these tasks. To call a man a

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35 Report of a Commission appointed on Investigate Certain Alleged Errors in the Recent Census of the Native Population, CSO 1880 (copy in NAF does not have a more precise CSO reference), p. 46.
38 Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, p. 146 ff.
39 Von Hügel, *The Fiji Journals*, p. 32. Heffernan tells the story of an old woman who continued leaving food she had cooked for her husband at the men's house, without realising that at his own request he had been buried alive. 'Customs and Superstitions', Stanmore Papers, BM (mf).
'cook' - or tell your enemy that you would turn him into your 'cook' - was traditionally an insult, connoting, not masculine food preparation, but its feminine complement.40

In the nineteenth century, a trend commenced for men to do less food preparation and women to do more. This shift may in part have been due to the shift away from polygynous and non-coresidential patterns of marriage to the monogamous and coresidential ideals. Mission teaching in fact made a religious ritual out of the family meal - with food prepared by women, and eating preceded by grace.41 With more men, perhaps, now married and spending more time in the family home, they probably spent less time tending the lovo and eating with other men. The gradual diminution of the role of men in everyday cooking has been regretted by nutritionists. The lovo, as Susan Parkinson has said, allows for all kinds of nutritious bits and pieces to be thrown in, while variety is restricted in a woman's cooking by the number of pots and the space on her fire, not to mention her lack of time owing, paradoxically, to the increased burden of cooking.42 Kleinschmidt was one visitor to interior Viti Levu in the early colonial period - where men's houses were still normal and when a shift to more women's cooking had probably already occurred in many of the coastal regions. He was vividly impressed by the variety of foodstuffs in the highland diet - many of which were amenable to the lovo: pigs, dogs, cats, flying foxes, rats, poultry, wild birds, fish, lizards, snakes, frogs, beetles, grubs, cicadas, butterflies, caterpillars, snails, shellfish, roots, leaves and buds, ferns, fruit, fungi and mushrooms.43

Changes to women's work, particularly with respect to laundry and cooking, accelerated in the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century their manifestations were probably uneven. Of all the areas of work considered here - and this is not a complete survey - only women's increased responsibility for cooking appears to have been at least partly necessitated by the 'abolition of polygamy', if that can be taken to imply more co-residence, co-mensality and a missionary influence on the family meal.

For those who maintained that the 'abolition of polygamy' had resulted in more work for Fijian women, a crucial consideration was the imagined re-organisation of female labour, both intra- and inter-sexually, under monogamy. According to one correspondent, the 'abolition of polygamy' meant:

40 For the male and female food preparation and their relative status, see also Thompson, 'The Culture History of the Lau Islands' p. 188 and footnote 56; Christina Toren, 'Making the Present, Revealing the Past: The Mutability and Continuity of Tradition as Process', Man, 23 (1988), p. 701.
41 Toren, 'Making the Present, Revealing the Past', esp. pp. 701-703 and Toren, Making Sense of Hierarchy, pp. 56-64.
42 Susan Parkinson, 'Nutrition Trends in some South Pacific Islands', Women in Development in the South Pacific, ed. R. V. Cole et al, Canberra: Australian National University Development Studies Centre, 1985, p. 188. European influence has further increased this burden by promoting three rather than two meals a day. However, I doubt that three meals became common until more recent times. Ravuvu, Development and Dependence, p. 182.
Figure 9: Women potters.

Figure 10: Men and boys at lovo, or earth oven.
Households were thinned out, and the thousand and one domestic duties, such as cooking, fishing, carrying firewood, making mats, &c., &c., which were formerly performed by the female members of the household, devolved upon one, assisted perhaps by an aged relative. These duties have to be performed irrespective of the condition of the woman. It is a common sight to see a woman, whose maternal condition is painfully apparent, staggering under a load of firewood, or standing in the water up to her waist fishing. She has to work up to within a day or two of her confinement, and, when in travail, has to trust to the good offices of some old woman, instead of being, as formerly, well looked after by other female members of the household, who took as much interest in the welfare of the unborn babe as the mother herself.44

A number of questionable assumptions operate in depictions such as this. Were the majority of traditional households really polygynous? Were they really characterised by harmonious and egalitarian relations among the women? Given the discussion in earlier chapters, these questions cannot be answered with a confident 'yes'. And were the 'new' monogamous households strictly nucleated, as such pictures imply? The typical pattern was probably closer to that still seen of a multi-generational and extended family constellated around a 'core couple'. Moreover, the suggestion that cooperative arrangements among women were impossible under the monogamous regime is amply disproven - not least by the continuance of collective female manufacture. With respect to the assistance given to lying-in women and nursing mothers, the Decrease Commissioners were assured by Fijian witnesses that there had been no 'radical change in modern days' - though treatment would have varied according to the individual woman's rank and other circumstances.45 Other commentators believed that the 'abolition of polygamy' subjected women to a new tyranny in the form of worthless, indolent husbands who would never previously have had the chance to marry. 'These women are now the wives - and unfortunately too often the slaves - of these very low class men, who, now that they are left to their own devices, are too lazy to work...'.46 Another correspondent claimed he quoted the words which a Fijian used to describe the ideal wife - 'a yalewa dau tei, dau qoli, dau cakacaka....' a woman who always plants, always fishes and always works'.47 Yet this notion of the wife's enslavement under monogamy wrongly implies that under polygamy no woman was 'enslaved' or badly treated - either by her husband or by the other wives.

A final point should be made in relation to the European depiction of Fijian monogamy. The idea 'that their wives are the main workers and the men the drones' was also influenced by a remarkable shift in the European representation of the Fijian man.48 In the early nineteenth century, missionaries and others praised Fijian men for their

44 Hamilton Hunter, *DR*, App. 4, p. 43.
45 DR, pp. 141-142.
intelectual acuity, industry, mechanical skill, gardening and 'active disposition'. Gordon and his associates concurred. But after the first flush of colonialism, the Fijian man was increasingly described as a spasmodic worker and an unwilling traveller up the evolutionary ladder of economic development which the government had erected for him. Many commentators deduced that the removal of warfare - as a time-consuming and invigorating activity which required Fijian men to plan ahead and make weaponry, canoes and defences - had left a great lack in masculine existence. Certainly the lotu and matanitu had put an end to some of the traditional avocations of men without successfully introducing substitutes; while the involvement of women in many traditional tasks during the colonial era continued and possibly intensified, to which novel duties related to the European ideology of domesticity were then added. Yet, even if the abolition of polygamy was the complete and tidy process which the previous chapter has shown it was not, the degree to which it solely increased the amount of work the female population had to do, and the degree to which it altered the organisation of female labour so as to make life more arduous for individual women, is hard to determine. Moreover, assuming women's workload did increase in certain areas, they also had respite from many of the strains - described in chapter one - of pre-cession existence.

Lowered Fertility?

Fijian birthrates were widely believed - by both Fijians and Europeans - to have dropped. Women, it was said, were drinking medicines to cause barrenness - wai ni yava - or to cause abortion - wai ni vakalutu - or were resorting to mechanical means to prevent conception and terminate their pregnancies. The argument that monogamy oppressed and overworked Fijian women provided one basis for the further thesis that they now deliberately avoided the additional strains of motherhood.

A variety of medicines and techniques were indeed known to be available to Fijian women for the control of their fertility - though, as the Decrease Commissioners observed, frequently these practices were concealed from men. Fijian women were also said to find large families objectionable. One respondent claimed that his wife, of mixed Fijian and Tahitian parentage, had only two surviving children but wanted no more: 'the feeling against having more than two or three children is the natural feeling of every native woman ...'

50 For Gordon's positive assessment of the Fijians see for instance Gordon, Fiji: A Lecture Delivered before the Aberdeen Philosophical Society. As Nicholas Thomas has discussed, the craftsmanship displayed in Fijian woodwork and other artifacts was taken as proof of industry and the Fijians' ability to progress, Nicholas Thomas, Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific, Cambridge MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 175-177.
51 For example, see G. A. Peat, DR, App. 4, p. 66: 'The people, once the hardest working race in the Pacific, and surely, therefore, one of the most easily elevated, now do no really steady work at all, except when compelled thereto by the planter or the prison.'
52 For example, see DR, pp. 44, 72-74.
53 DR, pp. 120-124. See also discussion, ch. 6.
54 E. R. Ball, DR, App. 4, p. 13.
feeling of shame if they become pregnant too often, believing that those women who bear a large number of children are laughing stocks of the community'.

Fijian families indeed appeared - to Europeans - small. Some pondering na lutu sobu itaukei and the scarcity of Fijian children no doubt recalled metropolitan explanations of 'depopulation' which stressed declining birthrates and the alleged unwillingness of women to have babies. But the commissioners had no option but to repudiate the idea that abortion and contraception were responsible for the Fijian decrease. They conceded that these practices may have been a factor in the provinces of Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove on Vanua Levu where birthrates were noticeably lower and rates of still birth noticeably higher than elsewhere in Fiji and where the midwives were renowned for their skill in procuring abortion; but Fijian birthrates were plainly too high for any artificial suppression of fertility to be significant. In addition to the government's vital statistics, other findings confirmed that infant mortality - not suppressed fertility - was the problem.

By any measure, the scale of infant mortality was great. In 1890 and 1891, the Fiji-wide averages were respectively 40 and 58 deaths under one year of age for every 100 births, with a mean of 45.1% over an (unspecified) seven years which presumably extended back into the 'eighties. In some provinces, the statistics were astonishingly high. In 1891 the infant mortality rates recorded in Serua, Cakaudrove, Macuata, Bua and Ra were 82.2%, 86.1%, 89.4%, 90.8% and 101.2%! [tables 4 & 5]. These extraordinary levels were due in part to the virulent influenza which reached Fiji in that year combined with whooping cough and dysentery. The year 1893 was also bad. On figures to hand infant mortality rates subsided in the latter 1890s, but still suggest that between one in four or five infants was reported dead within a year of birth [table 6].

Infant death inquiries introduced in the 1890s give an impression of the losses individual mothers could suffer. In one file of reports, Tarisa had borne six children, five of whom had died of coka (dysentery); Salome had borne four children two of whom had died, the last from a combination of cough and coka; Taqiri had borne three children, of whom only one was alive, the last having died of fever. In some cases, mothers reported that all their children had died, such as Dominika whose fifth infant contracted a fatal respiratory infection and followed the rest. One marama interviewed

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56 DR, pp. 121-123, 124 and see ch. 2.
58 Ibid.; Report entitled 'Epidemic Influenza' concerned with outbreaks in late 1891 and early 1892 in LCP 14/1893 ok; for whooping cough see LCP 23/1891 and the pathetic accounts in CSO 3480/1891 and CSO 3294/1891 ok. See also P. B. Smith, The Russian Influenza in the United Kingdom, 1889-1894, Social History of Medicine, 8:1 (1995), pp. 55-73.
59 Table D, CSO 2122/1901.
60 CSO 1651/1893.
61 CSO 1312/1893.
Table 4
Crude Fijian birth rates and infant mortality rates, 1890, by province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Crude Birth Rate per 1,000</th>
<th>Infant Mortality %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewa</td>
<td>35.57</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo East</td>
<td>40.26</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasawa</td>
<td>36.29</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bua</td>
<td>34.89</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomaiviti</td>
<td>37.69</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau</td>
<td>42.56</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>38.02</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakaudrove</td>
<td>30.09</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namosi</td>
<td>30.78</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Colo West</td>
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<td>Tailevu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naitasiri</td>
<td>43.41</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Crude Fijian birth rates and infant mortality rates, 1891, by province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Crude Birth Rate per 1,000</th>
<th>Infant Mortality %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Naitasiri</td>
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<td>28.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lau</td>
<td>35.15</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadavu</td>
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<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lomaiviti</td>
<td>42.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colo East</td>
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<td>41.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>34.27</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tailevu</td>
<td>31.09</td>
<td>45.8</td>
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<td>Yasawa</td>
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<td>Nadroga</td>
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<td>62.8</td>
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<td>Colo West</td>
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<td>Serua</td>
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<td>Cakaudrove</td>
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<td>Maluata</td>
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<td>89.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bua</td>
<td>30.47</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>37.17</td>
<td>101.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for the Decrease Commission - who can assumed to have enjoyed the advantages of rank - had been pregnant 17 times: four pregnancies ended in miscarriage, nine of her children had died and four had survived. Though many of these mothers may have been unusually unfortunate, one is left with the impression that their experience was nonetheless shared with many women.

A special census conducted for the Decrease Commission is also revealing. Four hundred and forty eight couples were surveyed in twelve villages in Rewa, Colo East, Serua and Ba. They admitted to a total of 2,032 children born either to their current marriage or to an earlier liaison. Of these only 914 children still lived - slightly less than half. Given the tendency for informants to 'under-report' the deaths of infants in some circumstances of special pain or shame, the proportion of survivors was quite possibly smaller. From other sources it is also clear that genuine ambiguity surrounded the status in people's minds of those children who lived for only a short time after birth: they were often treated as 'stillbirths' and therefore not counted together with the other live births or with children who had lived longer before they died. This consideration might also lead one to suspect that the findings exaggerated the rate of survival.

The census also indicated family size. Out of these 448 couples, there were four with six surviving children of their union, and ten with five surviving, typically after many of their siblings had died. Other couples had little to show for several pregnancies. One couple had lost all their six children; five couples had one child surviving from six; two had one child surviving from seven. The commissioners calculated that each married couple in their sample had produced on average 1.52 surviving children. Though this excluded children born to the husband or wife by other liaisons, it is roughly consistent with the impression of Europeans that most Fijian women had no more than two children. In her recent demographic research into several generations of Kadavu women, Chung too was struck by the small number, as far as she could ascertain, of children produced by women of the earliest generation she considered, those born between 1857 and 1879. Even assuming that the ideal number of children to which Fijian mothers aspired was fewer than contemporary European standards, a woman may have had to undergo many pregnancies before that ideal was secured - if, indeed, she succeeded.

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62 DR, p. 124.
63 DR, p. 21.
64 On 'telling the truth' in such circumstances, cf. Chung, 'Politics, Tradition and Structural Change', p. 104.
65 Report of a Commission Appointed to Investigate Certain Alleged Errors in the Recent Census of the Native Population CSO 1880 (the copy of this report consulted in NAF had no further CSO reference numbers), p. 43; see also CSO 3217/1907.
66 DR, p. 69.
67 Chung, 'Politics, Tradition and Structural Change', p. 120.
### Table 6

**Official Statistics on infant mortality for the years 1890-1912**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Births</th>
<th>Deaths Before One Month</th>
<th>Equal to %</th>
<th>Deaths Before One Year</th>
<th>Equal to %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>4,111</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>27.17</td>
<td>1,838</td>
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<td>805</td>
<td>20.58</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>30.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>3,644</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>26.51</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>37.84</td>
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<tr>
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<td>349</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
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<td>991</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25.22</td>
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<td>241</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>610</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>3,244</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>10.97</td>
<td>1,304</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>3,396</td>
<td>258</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3,431</td>
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<td>6.03</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>19.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>3,291</td>
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<td>6.59</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>20.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>673</td>
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<td>574</td>
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<td>604</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,377</td>
<td>182</td>
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<td>729</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,298</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>20.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3,340</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>15.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures compiled from the annual reports on the vital statistics of the native population for the years 1890-1912.

--- indicates data unavailable or unobtained.
More Frequent Pregnancies

Family planning agencies today advocate the spacing of children to ensure the health of each child and the mother. In other words, too many children too close together will deprive the child and deplete the mother. Thus a high frequency of births is seen to propel infant mortality. During the early colonial period there were European and Fijian versions of this theory holding that the lapse of traditional birth-spacing was causing infants to die.

Fijian chiefs claimed that the lengthy taboo on sex while a mother nursed her child was no longer observed. The violation of this taboo was often cited as a factor in na lutu sobu itaukei at meetings of the Council of Chiefs and other bose. As early as 1877 the Bosevakaturaga 'agreed that married men should keep away from their wives during the suckling of their children'.\(^68\) Two years later Nemani Dreu declared, 'With us there is but one opinion of the cause of the death of young children, the too early cohabitation of man and wife after the birth of a child. It is called dabe, which was not the custom during the age of bures, in our towns...'.\(^69\) In 1883, Jonaceni stated, 'Regarding dabe. I believe it. In the olden times males slept together in their bures; then came the lotu, and following it the government. Our old customs fell into disuse, then these things occurred. In each Annual Meeting dabe has been mentioned. This is plain to all'.\(^70\) Again in 1896, the Roko Tui Ra affirmed, 'Children are murdered by 'Dabedabe'. The parents lie together too soon after the birth of the child. In the old days the mother and child were put into a separate house and kept away from the father; and if the father went into the 'Bure' where the mother and child were he would have been thumped by the whole tribe'.\(^71\)

Many of the European respondents to the Decrease Report also stated that women were now falling pregnant before their infant was old enough to survive without breast milk. In a land without such alternatives as cows' milk, early weaning was seen to sentence the child to death. One planter claimed that the Fijian mother 'instead of suckling her child for three years, ... will become pregnant in half the time...the consequence is - the child dies'.\(^72\) Fijian informants, who explained that dabe was killing the babies, were frequently cited.\(^73\) Repeated pregnancies moreover were said to weaken mothers: 'nowadays many of the women bear children as often as is the case among Europeans; and ... have not sufficient strength to bear the double burden of rearing the children, and at the same time produce others'.\(^74\)

\(^{69}\) Council of Chiefs, 11 Dec. 1879.
\(^{70}\) Council of Chiefs, 30 May 1883.
\(^{71}\) Council of Chiefs, 23 May 1896.
\(^{73}\) For example *DR*, App. 4, pp. 26-27; 43; 80; 90.
Figure 11: Nemani Dreu, Roko Tui Ba (centre, by door) receiving whale's tooth.
The Commissioners argued that the sexual taboo attending lactation had assured each Fijian child of the milk necessary for survival and prevented maternal enervation. The guilty vandals of this custom were, according to their critics, the missionaries who promoted Christian monogamy and disparaged the post-partum taboo. Respondents lamented their 'monomaniacal' opposition to polygamy and called for 'a little nineteenth century common-sense', views echoed by the commissioners when they too criticised the attempt 'to introduce the European form of family life among the natives' and dismiss the taboo against *dabe* without first addressing the need for an alternative to mother's milk and for measures to preserve the mother's strength. Polygamy, as these Europeans saw it, was a fundamental precondition for this custom, providing a man other wives when one was sexually debarred. But to reverse 'the abolition of polygamy' and return to old ways was now considered 'out of the question'.

Yet the colonial government had largely endorsed the missionary endeavour to change the Fijian family and had certainly given the sexual prohibition against *dabe* no support. The standard penalty for its violation - to *buturaki* or 'do over' the guilty man - would have been classified under law as assault; and no legal redress was available to those who felt aggrieved by the taboo's transgression. Brewster recalled that Fijian women often appealed to him, as Stipendiary Magistrate, against 'what they considered the too great attentions of their lords' - but saw this as a matter in which he had no business or inclination to intervene.

Another traditional support for the custom was the men's house, which facilitated the separation of husband and nursing mother. The Commissioners advocated the formal reintroduction of this institution, both to aid birth-spacing and to restrain sexual immorality among the young, but had doubts as to its workability. Attempts were nevertheless made. The chief of Nawailevu in the province of Bua built a *bure* for uxorious husbands and reported their segregation a success. Buli Nawaka in the province of Ba and Yasawa proposed a variation on this theme: a special *bure* where women could give birth and 'be kept away from their husbands until the children are strong'. The Chief Medical Officer however objected that the *bure* would spread puerperal septicaemia.

But was the taboo against *dabe* really being flaunted? The strong support expressed for it by chiefs at all levels of the native administration suggests that even though the institutional bases and penalties for it were weakened, there remained the conviction that sexual abstinence was necessary for infant survival. Furthermore, even in villages where the *bure ni sa* was a thing of the past, traces of it persisted in more informal ways and evidence from later times shows that respect for the taboo

75 *DR*, App. 4, pp. 3, 44, 102; *DR*, p. 148.
76 Hamilton Hunter, *DR*, App 4, p. 44.
78 *DR*, pp. 64; 197; 198; 209; 215; 219; 226.
79 CSO 5154/1898.
80 CSO 3088/1897.
In 1930 the men of Namosi said they routinely abstained from sex with their wives for four or five years after the birth of a child - not much shorter that the period Brewster noted among the hills people 40 years earlier. In 1939 the District Councils in Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove sought authority 'to carry out their old customs regarding the care of their children which may mean that more cases of 'buturaki' might occur' - no doubt a reference to re-implementing the old penalty for perpetrators of dabe. In Southern Lau in the 1930s, according to Thomson, a husband normally abstained from intercourse with his nursing wife and would be blamed if she fell pregnant again too soon. In 1946 Lester recorded, 'Parents of a weakly child provoke the wrath of their relatives and the scorn of their neighbours' and that dau-vaka-dabedabe was a derogatory term for parents whose children came too quickly one after the other. 'The modern method adopted to maintain this custom is for the mother to make herself look as unattractive as possible: she will wear dirty, torn, clothes, her hair will be uncombed and unoiled and she thus makes herself look years older than she should and her dishevelled appearance makes her most unprepossessing'. As late as 1975 Cleland was surprised by the extent to which sexual abstinence after birth and while breastfeeding was observed among Fijian mothers in Suva and at least one Fijian doctor at that time was advocating the benefits of 'this old traditional method of Family Planning'. Seniloli more recently noted the continuance of these ideas in the village she studied, though the ideal period of abstinence had been shortened to one year while in practice it was shorter still.

This evidence suggests that the beliefs on which the taboo was based endured, though clearly they have been denied forms of support during this and the last century; and where they survive, the period of abstinence is probably short. In the 1890s however it seems likely that breaches of this custom were less common than many observers claimed. The more likely explanation for the shorter intervals between pregnancies is that which was mentioned in the first chapter: once an infant died - from whooping cough, tuberculosis, flu, dysentery or whatever - the mother became sexually available much earlier than if the child survived till its proper weaning age. We are talking here of a different causal relationship between high birth rates and high rates of infant mortality: instead of high birth rates driving high death rates, we have death rates driving birthrates.

81 Cf. A number of more recent ethnographies, for example Teckle, 'The Position of Women in Fiji', pp. 55-56; Christina Toren, Making Sense of Hierarchy, p. 39.
83 District Commissioner Northern to Colonial Secretary, 21 Sep. 1939, F/50/78.
Why the sexual anxiety?

Why then did so many Fijian commentators attribute *na lulu sobu itaukei* to, in effect, transgressive male sexuality? In one sense this explanation granted them, theoretically at least, an ability to manage infant mortality through their own behaviour and was thus an antidote to their feeling of total powerlessness - 'We cannot do anything, and are simply perplexed...'- expressed from time to time.88

The preoccupation with *dabe* also played on a conflict internal to the monogamous, co-residential ideal of marriage: that between the infant's need for milk and the parents' desire for sex - which was usually represented more narrowly as the husband's. 89 The taboo against *dabe* gave these two female roles - as lover and nursing mother - each its own space and time, thus preventing their conflict; but in mission monogamy they collided. Stone argues that Puritan moral philosophers, attempting to define their marriage ideal and writing when Europeans also believed that sex endangered breast-milk, wrestled with the same dilemma over whose claim to the mother's body was paramount: the infant's or the husband's. The need to save the husband from the sin of adultery prevailed. 90 But the tension between these interests remained. In Fiji they were keenly experienced by the heirs to the Puritan tradition, the early missionaries. The multiple pregnancies and reproductive ordeals of their wives sometimes caused their husbands remorse and theological rumination. They seem on occasion to have sensed that Fijians attributed the deaths of missionary babies to *dabe*, indicting the sexual incontinence of missionary fathers.91

Monogamy need not have implied, for nineteenth century Fijians as it did for European observers, the jettisoning of this taboo. The prohibition had probably been observed in traditional monogamous marriages and rested on an ideal of masculinity for which stints of celibacy were, perhaps, positively viewed. But the taboo also appears to be linked with what could be called a theology or social-theory of power, which, without reducing *mana* to sex, often understood power in its sexual and generative aspects and was vividly sensitive to its life-producing and life-destroying capacities. Sometimes a chief's *mana*, which was also expressed in fertility, could destroy the life he had

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88 Roko Tui Lomaiviti, Council of Chiefs, 18 May 1885.
89 The European and Fijian sources I have read largely agree in this construction. See also the discussion of Fijian perceptions of male and female sexuality today in Toren, 'Transforming Love', pp. 18-39.
90 Stone, *The Family, Sex And Marriage*, pp. 52; 176-177; 270.
conceived.92 Young men or women wasted and died from *dogai*, caused by a transient sexual encounter with an older partner.93 Adultery and other offences of marriage codes could cause sickness and infant death.94 Sex with a spirit could be lethal.95 These fatalities are due to some transgression of the boundaries that in a sense defined and channelled sexual energy, rendering it socially formative, life-giving and benign.

Some of the nineteenth century boundary-changes to Fijian society - at both the level of ideological 'blueprint' and in the lived demarcations of village space - triggered anxieties about the destructive effects of mismanaged sex. Contrary to the mission representation of heathenism as sexually immoral and unrestrained, the age of the *lotu* was characterised by some Fijians as promiscuous and lax. New teachings invited men and women to marry whom they pleased with no sense of social responsibility. Girls were imagined to be on the loose. As Adi Alisi told the Decrease Commissioners, 'They are throwing off the old restraints, and have not taken any new thing in their place' and she linked their mobility to extra-marital pregnancy and abortion.96 Male mobility was also linked with a lack of sexual restriction. The Roko Tui Ba complained that nowadays 'men were very forward in entering people's houses', and blamed their trespasses on the abolition of the men's *bure* and the new philosophy of marriage.97 A regulation was passed forbidding men to enter the houses of married women or to approach them with sexual intent.98

There was profound ambivalence, among both Europeans and Fijians, about the status and value of Fijian custom. The rationale for the rejection of some customs and the retention of others, for deploring the continuance of these while lamenting the obsolescence of those, was not always clear. Despite the characterization of the Fijian past by both church and state as a dark age, their attitude to Fijian tradition was uneven. The church attached a positive value to many Fijian cultural forms compatible with its teachings and the operation of the mission.99 Aside from the colonial romance with

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92 A well-known twentieth century instance where the disparity of rank between a chiefly husband and a lower-ranking wife was held responsible for the deaths - before or shortly after birth - of their children, was the marriage of Ratu Sukuna and Lady Maraia. Deryck Scarr, *Ratu Sukuna: Soldier, Statesman, Man of Two Worlds*, London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1980, pp. 84-85.
93 *DR*, p. 63; I follow Edward O'Brien Heffernan's stress on age difference, which is consistent with other instances of *dogai* I have encountered. Paper on *dogai*, Heffernan Collection, Stanmore Papers, BM (mf).
94 Dr. P. Harper, 'Disease and Decay in Fiji', *Transactions of the Fijian Society for the Years 1912, & 1913*, [copy consulted unpaginated]; Hocart, 'A Native Fijian on the Decline of his Race', pp. 90-91.
96 *DR*, p. 115. For this supposed linkage between female mobility and uncontrolled sexuality in a later period, see ch. 11.
97 Council of Chiefs, 29 Nov. 1878.
98 Native Regulation No. 2 of 1882.
indigenous ceremony, with cultural difference, and with tradition as a stabilising force in society, the Decrease Commissioners attributed to some customs beneficial effects: the fear that excreta would be used for witchcraft once kept Fijian villages clean; bure ni sa had checked deleterious sensuality; the application of turmeric to the baby's skin had been health-enhancing and should be revived; and so forth. The passing of these customs was therefore a matter of regret.100

Many Fijians in the early colonial period had lived a pre-Christian, pre-Cession existence as well as one under the lotu and the flag. They keenly recognised their continuities, disjunctions, antinomies. Some came to the conclusion that change had been lethal. As the Roko Tui Ba declared, 'It is my firm belief that the chief reason for such a number of deaths, is that many of our old customs are abandoned today'.101 Population decline suggested that the standard set of contrasts taught by the lotu and the matanitu should be reversed: instead of the Fijians exchanging an age of death for an age of life, they had done the opposite; instead of gaining the knowledge of how to live according to the spiritual powers which shaped human destiny they had abandoned it. This sense of things being radically out of kilter is conveyed by some of the responses to na lutu sobu itaukei. The Bua Provincial Council in 1895 resolved to dedicate the Province to the Lord and improve all its chapels, in the hope that He would halt the decrease.102 The essayist whom Hocart translated took the contrary view: praying to the Christian deity was the root of the evil and to prevent further decrease the Fijians should return to their ancestral gods.103 In 1883 the Bosevakaturaga was told that the decrease is alone owing to the British Government... The Europeans have come, and we are decreasing. In times past when a child was born, there was the smell of the native land, and he lived; but now the smell of a foreign land has entered us, and it is unsuitable - the smell of foreign importations - Na mawa cawa [steamy vapor] has found entrance by our navels, and thus afflicts us.104

The picture of Fijian sexual anarchy drawn by some indigenous and European commentators was of course exaggerated since restraints still operated. Marriages continued to be arranged; the taboo against dabe continued to command respect and new sexual boundaries became conventional in the novel and sexually mixed spaces of church and family home.105 But this was a period when the old and new paradigms could be perceived as conflicting, when the social ordering of sex and mana could be imagined as awry, and when this made a compelling explanation of decrease and infant mortality.

Within the metropolitan colonial culture strands of opinion also linked uncontrolled sexuality - especially male sexuality - to degeneration, national decay and

100 See discussion in ch. 2 above and DR, pp. 65-66.
101 Roko Tui Ba, Council of Chiefs, 24 Nov. 1880.
102 Resolution 2, Bua Provincial Council, 1895.
104 Ratu Marika, Council of Chiefs, 30 May 1883.
105 Toren's ethnography gives particular attention to gendered definition of space. Toren, Making Sense of Hierarchy, and 'Making the Present, Revealing the Past', pp. 696-717.
maternal and infant ill-health. The social purity movement in England since the 1870s had sought to promote masculine chastity. By the 1890s a particular cult of imperial virility celebrated sexual restraint.\textsuperscript{106} Feminists like Frances Swiney looked to the continence of primitive man as evidenced in customs like the post-partum taboo, to accuse his 'civilised' counterpart of violating 'the law of the mother' and bringing ruin to women, children and the race. Syphilis had become a potent symbol of male, mass-destructive lust.\textsuperscript{107}

This kind of language was applied, by some commentators, to \textit{na luta sobu itaukei}. The Decrease Report devoted one section to 'Sexual Depravity'. The 'sexual instinct', it claimed, had been fostered by the breakdown of old restraints: 'The young men acquire loose habits as soon as they have attained puberty; their ingenuity, formerly directed to more worthy objects, is now exercised in the endeavour to seduce the young women'.\textsuperscript{108} One writer enlarged on this theme in a response to an inquiry into population trends on Rotuma.\textsuperscript{109} He was deeply distressed by the numberless Casanovas roaming Rotuma's paths at night, declaring that no native of this island could ever be 'but a pitiable object, a prey to nervous exhaustion and all the string of diseases induced by sexual excess', and predicted 'the penalty which has been pitilessly exacted time and again in history from individuals, societies, nations, Empires, who have smothered their manhood in the mire of lust'.\textsuperscript{110}

Despite such examples, and strident as such language may have been in some metropolitan self-analyses, the emphasis on indigenous male sexual excess was relatively muted in the European discourse on decrease in Fiji. Indeed, the critique of 'the abolition of polygamy' emanating from disappointed settlers suggests a very different set of sexual valencies. A number of authors have toyed with a connection between imperial expansion and the export of a European, male sexual energy. The conquest of new territories was often figuratively described in sexual terms and in fact often involved sexual penetration and reproduction by European men, whose success in these activities (initially with indigenous, but often later with imported European women) was both a support to and a sign of their colonising success.\textsuperscript{111} In Fiji too, sex provided both metaphors for European expansion and a physical means of colonising. It may not be too far-fetched to compare 'the abolition of polygamy' - the denying of a Fijian husband his many wives by seemingly irrational and blighting edicts of the church - with the denial to the colonist in Fiji of fields for his expansion by seemingly irrational and blighting edicts of the colonial administration. For whites, the promiscuous, pragmatic and admittedly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} See ch. 3, footnote 37.
\item \textsuperscript{108} \textit{DR}, pp. 62-63.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Rotuma came under the Fiji administration in 1880.
\item \textsuperscript{110} G. A. Peat [undated] in CSO 3905/1897.
\end{itemize}
exploitative ethic of pre-colonial Fiji had been redefined, confined and finished. Their hopes for a plantocratic order and a thriving community had been dashed. In the first two decades of colonial rule, running parallel to na lutu sobu iaukei was na lutu sobu ivavalagi - the decrease of the whites. In 1871 they had numbered 2,750; in 1881, 2,671; ten years later, 2,036. The failure of the white population to thrive, so the *Cyclopedia of Fiji* later observed, 'leads one to suspect the existence of obstacles arising from artificial conditions...'.\(^{112}\) Blaming the decrease of the Fijian population on the abolition of polygamy, in a sense, was a vicarious protest against a policy that had extinguished the white settler dream.\(^{113}\)

**Conclusion**

At the early stages of my research I was inclined to think that the 'abolition of polygamy' had been a factor in the decrease, or at least had unfavourably changed conditions for child-rearing. The anguished reproductive histories of some of the early missionary wives made it tempting to conjecture that the introduction of the missionary marriage ideal meant replacing Fijian practices which favoured infant survival and maternal health with European practices that threatened both. Berthold Seemann's anecdote from his trip in 1860 to Namosi - where contact with Europeans had been slight - points to the contrast between the two.

I heard of a white man, who being asked how many brothers and sisters he had, frankly replied, 'Ten!' 'But that could not be,' was the rejoinder of the natives; 'One mother could scarcely have so many children.' When told that they were children born at annual intervals, and that such occurrences were common in Europe, they were very much shocked, and thought it explained sufficiently why so many white people were 'mere shrimps'.\(^{114}\)

Christian marriage clearly played havoc in other places with customs that had formerly limited fertility, and with regard to Fiji, some demographers have reiterated that the taboo against *dabe* was apparently an early casualty of 'European contact'.\(^{115}\) Chung also concluded that monogamy at least indirectly affected fertility and that the trend towards bearing more children in monogamous marriages may have been coupled with higher risks for infant survival.\(^{116}\)

Difficulties however beset the thesis that 'the abolition of polygamy' elevated fertility and infant mortality in early colonial Fiji. First, 'polygamy' and its later...

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\(^{113}\) For a study on the failure of the white settler community in Fiji, see Young, *Adventurous Spirits*.

\(^{114}\) Seemann, *Viti*, p. 191.


'abolition' are words which simplify what were probably diverse circumstances and a messy process. It is hard to construct from them two sharply distinctive sets of constants that would have characterized the reproductive setting for most women. Secondly, very little 'extra' work for women, which could have conceivably disadvantaged their maternal role, seems attributable to the 'abolition of polygamy'. Though Fijian women may have had overall more work to do in the era after Cession, perhaps only increased cooking can be closely linked with structural changes to marriage. The most important social determinants of maternal and child health discussed here have been rank and the post partum taboo. Rank clearly bestowed reproductive advantage, and possibly polygamy accentuated this somewhat - but the privileges of rank survived into the Christian era. And while the wide scale abandonment of the post partum taboo could have been detrimental to maternal and child health, this practice was not, as Europeans asserted, predicated on polygyny and I have also argued that the taboo against dabe was probably violated less often than Fijian and European commentators claimed. If one concludes, as I do, that introduced disease was the main reason why children died, and that in the first instance disease-induced infant death, not untimely sex, shortened the intervals between pregnancies, nineteenth century changes to the marital circumstances of Fijian maternity can have little bearing on the na lutu sobu itaukei.
Figure 12: Two women, two children and bucket
Chapter Six

New Mothers by Edict

...[T]he result of my observations lead me to fear that the maternal instinct of the average Fijian women of the present day is practically an absent quantity.

Governor Thurston to the Secretary of State
19 Dec. 1894, GBPP, Vol. 70, (1895), [c. 7679].

We cannot by legislation reimplant in the Fijian mother's nature that most precious of all the human instincts, but we may do much to counteract the evils that its absence must entail.

Basil Thomson, DR, App. 4, p. 61.

...I feel certain they will never work out their own salvation, & will eventually have to be coerced, the sooner the better.

James Stewart's minute, 22 Aug. 1892. CSO 1562/1892

Reshaping Fijian motherhood through edict, education and special training: this was the three-pronged project stimulated by the Decrease Commission and implemented during the two decades divided by the year 1900. The proposition that na tina ni gone itaukei lacked maternal instinct influenced all the initiatives to reduce infant mortality and 'save the race' which the following three chapters will discuss. This chapter examines the attempts to make 'new Fijian mothers' by way of lex scripta and administrative fiat.

Racially defective mothers

The most influential critic of Fijian mothers was Sir John Bates Thurston. He too had once argued that Fijian women were, so to speak, the 'innocent' victims of social changes following the abolition of polygamy - a theory which the previous section explored.¹ Yet over time his explanation of the decrease grew starker, simpler and more damning: na latu sobu itaukei was due 'chiefly to the callous indifference of the mothers'. No race of women, from thirty years of Thurston's observation and study, had the maternal instinct less developed than the Fijian and he repeatedly averred that '[i]n former days they would have been clubbed had their children, and more particularly the males, died at the present rate'.² A deterioration in baby-care had therefore occurred due to the removal of former mechanisms of coercion without substitutes having taken their place.

Thurston's claim that Fijian mothers were once kept to their duties by the club was reiterated by others in years to come. Before pax Britannica the club did have many applications in Fiji, but was this really one? Calvert in his diary mentioned the birth of a certain chiefly child with the question, '...was there not a woman also killed over this

¹ Thurston to Secretary of State, 21 Oct. 1886, GBPP 1887, Vol. 58, [c.5039].
² Thurston to Secretary of State, 12 Apr. 1892, CO 83/55; Thurston to Secretary of State, 19 Dec. 1894, GBPP 1895, Vol. 70, [c.7696].
child for neglecting him? Waterhouse related the legend of a chief's albino wife who was admonished for not keeping her child clean. These are the closest illustrations of Thurston's dogma upon which I have chanced, and hardly constitute ample confirmation. Indeed, if infanticide and abortion were as prevalent in pre-Cession Fiji as some writers said, the children who survived were probably wanted and cherished. Certainly many observers commented on the fondness of Fijian women - and men - for their children. Berthold Seemann found it deeply touching; and even missionaries, though willing to condemn Fijian family life, frequently noted the affection, solicitude and self-sacrifice of Fijian mothers. The fact that many Fijian chiefs blamed the deaths of infants upon their father's violation of the post-partum sexual taboo suggests that they often perceived the cause more vividly in paternal than in maternal frailties.

The idea that Fijian women lacked maternal instinct was elaborated in terms of racial and evolutionary theory. The Commissioner Basil Thomson probably authored the relevant sections of the Decrease Report in which the following explanatory schema can be discerned. The maternal instinct is 'strongly marked in some species of mammalia, weakly in others, and it attains perhaps its highest development in the Caucasian races of man'. While the incomparable maternal instinct of the Caucasian mother contributes to the racial ascendance and proliferation of her kind, she receives various forms of social and cultural assistance: 'Civilisation, tending ever to drive Nature at high pressure, has adopted the use of artificial foods for infants, so to leave the mother free to bear the stress of a second maternity', while the Caucasian husband also supports his wife's reproductive role. But fundamentally, the maternal instinct guarantees its own reproductive success, because Caucasian mothers assiduously care for their children. The Fijian mother, however, 'probably never equals the lower animals in attachment to her young'. Fijian 'barbarism' had compensated for this deficiency through various practices, including polygamy. Now, just as '[n]atural history tells us that it is dangerous to the lower animals to make artificial changes to their habits of life, ... it is to be feared that the same law has operated to render disastrous the attempt to graft the European idea of family on the Oriental and primitive man'. Under the 'mutilated barbarism' of Fiji in the 1890s the native mother is forced to do 'the high-pressure work' of her civilized sister without the aids afforded by either barbarism or civilization. While this diagnosis points to defects in the props to Fijian maternity, the Report nevertheless underscores that 'the original flaw' resides with her. Old Fijian customs intended to ensure the child's survival, such as the taboo against dabe 'would seem', it said, 'to show that maternal instinct was not a characteristic that could be relied upon for the preservation of the race'.

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3 Calvert, Diary, 20 Jun. 1855, MMS: M153.
4 Waterhouse, The King and People of Fiji, p. 387.
6 Basil Thomson's submission, DR, App. 4, p. 60.
7 DR, p. 147.
8 DR, pp. 176, 147, 223; Basil Thomson's submission, DR, App. 4, p. 60.
However effective the club was imagined to have been, British rule could hardly condone its use on delinquent mothers. 'Gentle coercion' was preferred. 'We do not', Thomson maintained, 'because they are British subjects, shrink from compelling our children to avoid that which hurts them, nor should we hesitate to control the race of grown-up children to whom we have been placed in loco parentis, and who have shown themselves so incapable of taking care of their own interests'.

**Lex scripta**

Among the first regulations passed in conjunction with the Decrease Commission were those which sprang from the conviction that the maternal instinct in Fijian women was 'an absent quantity'. In 1892 Commissioners Stewart and Thomson advocated magisterial inquiries into the deaths of small children and the punishment of mothers found guilty of neglect or of other crimes against the foetus or the child. Thomson wrote, 'This seems to me the last and only resort in the attempt to preserve the race since the maternal instinct among Fijian women is without doubt deficient, and the customs that forced mothers to look after their children are decaying'.

After Thurston aired the issue of maternal neglect at the Council of Chiefs in 1892, two native regulations were passed despite the Council's apparent lack of enthusiasm. Native Regulation No. 5 of 1892 required that the Native Stipendiary Magistrate (NSM) promptly inquire into all stillbirths and all deaths of children under the age of one year within his jurisdiction. On considering the NSM's report, the European Stipendiary Magistrate could prosecute the person suspected of neglect by the companion Regulation No. 6 of 1892, under which the guilty party could be fined up to thirty shillings or imprisoned with hard labour for up to three months. Prosecution might also proceed under other regulations - such as those prohibiting abortion, infanticide, those governing the care of the sick, the duties of heads of households and mataqali, and so forth.

Infant death inquiries were also intended to furnish the administration with useful information. Though Thurston, the Decrease Commissioners, and many of the Report's respondents were convinced that Fijian mothering was defective, there was little verifiably known about Fijian infant mortality beyond the registration of births and deaths. Reports from infant death inquiries were therefore referred to the Decrease Commissioners for scrutiny, who expected them to confirm the culpability of Fijian mothers and also to provide 'scientific' data.

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10. Thurston's phrase, Thurston to Secretary of State, 19 Dec. 1894, GBPP 1895, Vol. 70, [c.7696].
12. Governor's address and Resolution 1, Council of Chiefs, 1892.
The following is a translation of one report which - though slow and repetitive reading - gives some sense of this kind of inquiry. The case concerned an illegitimate male infant Cua, who was said to have died from recessive yaws or coko ca, and some preliminary remarks on the disease will make the proceedings more intelligible. Yaws, as earlier noted, existed in Fiji before European contact and was often mistaken by Europeans for syphilis. The Decrease Report noted that pains in the limbs, fever, and restlessness or languor usually signalled its onset; a sore, called the tina ni coko or mother yaw, marked the first stage; after a variable period, a crop of other papules appeared and then the matrix of the original sore extruded and wept; and tertiary ulceration could appear several years later. The disease afflicted virtually all Fijian children. Sometimes soft and bony tissue was destroyed leaving lasting disfigurement or disability, and yaws occasionally caused paralysis. But popular belief held that children needed coko to become healthy adults and they were sometimes deliberately inoculated with the disease. Coko ca (literally 'bad coko') or the premature recedence of the mother yaw was often fatal and therefore feared. This usually occurred when infants contracted yaws, and its deviation from the normal course was attributed to ramusu (a term which conveys the idea of something broken, fractured or gone wrong) or the violation of the sexual prohibition causing the child to sicken. This, as we know, was referred to as dabe or save.\footnote{DR, pp. 159-161; for a discussion of ramusu, see DR, p. 102.}

Inquiry into the small child who died at Namalata. Conducted at Dakuinuku on 7 March 1893 by Ilai Motonicocoka.

Vataileba, sworn: My village is Namalata, my husband is Rabuka, Kaivoro my daughter is the mother of the deceased child.

Kaivoro's child who died was a boy called Cua. Cua was born in the month of weeding (June and July). Cua was born to Kaivoro from adultery with Anasa.

He simply got fever, then coko; but his coko didn't last long, it dried up, so I asked Rabuka to go and get some medicine for coko ca and he went and got the medicine - he brought back some leba and some sasa ca, the juice from the leaves was squeezed out and drunk, and two days later the coko reappeared. [Then it disappeared once more, so] I said to Kaivoro go back to Vitila and get her to bring one of her medicines for coko ca, and she brought some and Cua drank it, but it did no good, and after that the fever returned and he got coka [ie diarrhoea or dysentery] in his stomach.

Then his right arm went bad, swelled and seized up. It was painful. Rabuka massaged it with his hand and after that the arm relaxed but the sickness went down to the stomach and then the genital area got swollen and painful.

On Sunday he died. That was two Sundays ago.

Question by the Magistrate: Did Kaivoro look after Cua?

Vataileba: She always took care, and fed him every day.
Question: Did Anasa see his child, and support him or give him clothes?

Vataileba: Anasa didn't give him a thing, right up till his death.

Vataileba, her X mark
This was taken on the 7 March 1893
Ilai Motonicocoka....

Kaivoro, sworn: My village is Namalata, my husband died a long time ago, I don't know the year of his death.

Last year, (1892) Anasa and I committed adultery at Namalata and I got pregnant and gave birth to a boy, his name was Cua. I gave birth in the month of weeding (June/July). I'm not exactly sure how old he was when he died, but I'm sure he wasn't a year old.

It was Sunday two weeks ago when Cua died. He died with a fever in his head and coka in his stomach, for his coko had dried up. But I think his death was probably because Anasa had a child by another woman making Cua save.

When his coko went bad and dried up, Rabuka and Vitila squeezed him some medicine for coko ca, but it was no use. On the Friday his right arm went bad and Rabuka massaged it, but on Saturday morning the sickness went down to his genital area and it swelled; and it was painful till the Sunday (26.2.93). And on the Sunday he died.

Kaivoro, her mark, etc.

Rabuka, sworn: My village is Namalata, my wife is Vataileba, our child is Kaivoro.

In the month of digging Kaivoro gave birth. When she was pregnant she used to gather reeds for our house. I don't know exactly how old he was when he died. But the child's name was Cua.

His death was due to fever. When the fever was finished, his coko dried up. I made him medicine of leba and sasaca and then his coko appeared again - but after four nights it dried up once more; then I went to back to Vitila to beg for medicine, and the medicine was squeezed but it did no good.

On the Friday Cua's arm got bad, it was swollen. I massaged it and it relaxed, but on the Saturday his genitals swelled and were painful and we couldn't do anything.

On the Sunday before last he died.

Question by the Magistrate: Cua's death was not because his mother wouldn't feed him or was in the habit of leaving him while she went to the gardens or to fish?

Rabuka: Kaivoro cared for her child, she never left him and always fed him.

Rabuka his X mark...etc

Josua Tale. sworn: My village is Namalata.

On Sunday before last Kaivoro's child, who was born of adultery with Anasa, died. The child's name was Cua.

I know that the three of them lived happily together and cared for Kaivoro's child.
I did not know the child was dead until I heard the crying of grief that Sunday.

Josua Tale, his mark, etc.15

This case shows how inquiries tried to identify maternal culpability. The magistrate Ilai Motonicocoka - who had worked closely with Commissioner Basil Thomson and authored the essay on the *lila* and *cokadra* discussed in chapter one - was no doubt well placed to understand that this was the primary aim.16 Questions like 'Did Kaivoro look after Cua?' or 'Cua's death was not because his mother wouldn't feed him or was in the habit of leaving him when she went to the gardens or to fish?' went right to the point. But numerous examples could be given of other magistrates directly or indirectly asking mothers to refute or confirm that they had caused their infant's death. Not surprisingly, most of the interrogated denied wrongdoing and behaved defensively. In the same file with Cua's case was an inquiry into the death of Matei, whose mother stressed that dysentery, and only dysentery, had killed him (and her other children) and whose father confirmed that the epidemic was the cause and rejected the imputation that she was to blame: 'his mother would always feed him and never left him to go wandering around.'17

For the purposes of our discussion, maternal culpability can be considered under the following heads: negligence, abortion, infanticide. The reports were certainly expected to reveal maternal negligence, 'Polynesian fatalism'18 and callous indifference. Had they actually done so, I could have argued that these phrases indicated quite justifiable responses. Despite Cua's death from a traditional Fijian affliction, most infant death inquiries refer to newly introduced diseases like *coka*, (diarrhoea or dysentery), *kiripi*, *vu*, *vu ni koli* (croup, cough, whooping cough), *katakata* (fever) or *matetaka* (meaning epidemic or more specifically influenza) - and those cases quoted in the previous chapter cited mothers who had lost most or all of their children to diseases such as these. Europeans were wont to say if Fijians had only fought the sickness, taken the necessary precautions, or nursed the ill, life could have been saved.19 When whooping cough struck in 1891, Corney remarked that little could be done as Fijians were 'even less alert and manageable than English factory hands, miners and their kin'; and when a swathe of infant deaths from whooping cough was reported in Kadavu during 1894, Stewart remarked, 'It is a disease that requires nursing, - just the thing a Fijian is least able to supply.'20 Yet in England too, doctors and nurses were powerless against

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15 Case No. 2, CSO 1651/1893.
17 Case No. 7, CSO 1651/1893.
18 *DR*, p. 174.
19 *DR*, p. 36.
20 LCP 23/1891; Stewart's minute, 2 Aug. 1894, CSO 2737/1894.
whooping cough and the disease was viewed with dread. Moreover some scholars suggest that even more advanced twentieth century medicine can sometimes do little to ameliorate the impact of exotic infections among newly exposed populations - and Fijians certainly seemed more susceptible to whooping cough than other populations in the colony. 'Fatalism' in such a context could indeed be a 'sober appraisal of life chances'. But infant death inquiries give little indication of apathy and surrender. Reports of deaths due to whooping cough conformed to a sad pattern: a healthy baby fell sick and the attentions of solicitous parents - distressed by the peculiar coughing of this sickness (in Fijian vu ni koli translates 'cough of the dog') - were to no avail. Whatever the affliction, most inquiries recorded with any level of detail show that energetic efforts were made to save life, usually through Fijian remedies, as in Cua's case. Another illustration was that of the infant girl Marama, whose parents tried each of the village healers - Daniela, Tevita and Verenaisi - in the vain quest for a cure. In one rare instance when colonial expertise was sought for an infant at SomoSomo in 1893, the Native Medical Practitioner was away vaccinating. Since the father was 'the best of the Cak:Nat:Technical old students', these parents were probably of that type described as 'the enlightened and intelligent native' more likely to use colonial medicine - but neither their enlightenment nor colonial medicine could save their child.

As every case of sucu mate was supposed to be subject to inquiry, this in effect brought not only stillbirths but abortions before a magistrate. Sucu mate, in the narrow sense of 'born dead' denoted for the British administration the 'stillborn', but Fijians used the term much more loosely - sometimes as a synonym for infant mortality and also for a foetus lost early in pregnancy. Some reports do illuminate the practice of abortion. Rejieli Navutisa, in an inquiry at Vaileka in RakiRaki, confessed to abortion for these reasons:

[I]t was my desire to abort the child in my belly for the child I was suckling was not strong and I was pregnant again. We have had two children die because of save and this is the third child and my milk may dry up. I thought I should abort the child in my belly so that the child I was suckling could live...

Abortion was more often confessed within the context of marital conflict. Salome Nuvei, for instance, was angry with her husband and took a drug to cause abortion; but the magistrate found the more likely cause of foetal loss to have been the kick her husband gave her, after which she fell over the tanoa, hurt her back and a few days later miscarried. One woman so hated her husband she allegedly declared that if she bore

23 Abridged from Smith, The People's Health, p. 158.
24 See for instance a number of the cases in CSO 2023/1893.
25 Case No. 6, CSO 1651/1893. Stipendiary Magistrate Taveuni's minute, 7 Jul. 1893, CSO 2340/1893.
26 Case No. 2, CSO 2225/1897.
27 CSO 2566/1895.
him a living child she would eat it. Her five miscarriages were supposed to have been deliberately induced.28

Some divorce cases likewise suggest that abortion was a means by which women took revenge upon their husbands. The aggrieved Sau of Levuka complained: 'my wife got with child and soon after the hope of a child disappeared and I was told that she had produced an abortion ... my wife again gave evidence of being with child and shortly again the hope of a child disappeared and I believe she destroyed the child and I was so grieved I left the woman...'.29 The Decrease Report spoke of 'a freemasonry among women which conceals the practice [of abortion] not only from the police but from their husbands and fathers'.30

But men sometimes played a part in abortion too - by ordering or even performing it. In one infant death inquiry from 1896, the husband had demanded his wife to abort for 'he was not inclined to refrain from intercourse ... - altho' she had declared herself pregnant and Fijian fashion refused his wish'.31 There are earlier examples of this kind. Tanoa was said to have urged Adi SavuSavu, out of concern for her health, 'to pierce the child lest it should cause her death' when she was pregnant with Cakobau.32 Wilkes in fact maintained that abortion usually proceeded from the instructions of the child's father.33

The practice and representation of infanticide in the pre-Cession era was similar. It too was often depicted as a mode of female revenge over which men had no control. Waterhouse remarked that 'This institution is entirely in the hands of the women. The men generally express great regret for the existence of the custom'.34 According to Wilkes, midwives in Fiji could be employed 'to strangle the child and bring it forth dead'.35 Brewster described the fear of hills men that midwives would deliberately kill or injure a child during confinement, in order to punish the father. 'To guard against anything like this, as far as possible, a man is placed outside the house where the confinement is going on. He squats under the eaves and listens to all that is going on inside, and he is expected to take a full and accurate account of all that he hears to his anxious principals at the Mbure'.36 But men sometimes killed their children too. In 1875 a man recently come down from the interior was tried for strangling his newborn infant. In defence he stated that his wife had been sick with dysentery so he killed the child to help her and that infanticide was customary where he came from. The Fijian magistrate confirmed that 'according to native usage the offence was not a crime before the introduction of

28 Minute 10 Jun. 1893 in relation to Case No. 4, CSO 2020/1893.
29 Case No. 4, CSO 776/1876.
30 DR, p. 121.
31 Chalmer's minute, CSO 1745/1896.
32 Deve Toganivalu, 'Ratu Cakobau,' Transactions of the Fijian Society for the years 1912 and 1913, [pages unnumbered in copy consulted].
33 Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, p. 9.
34 Waterhouse, The King and People of Fiji, p. 327.
35 Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, p. 93.
Christianity'. A chief who told Lorimer Fison that fifteen of his infants had been killed and buried in one corner of his house explained 'Esenga so ni tamata na ngone sa ngqai suthu vou. Sa mbera mai na yalona.' Which may be rendered - 'A new born child is scarcely a human being. Its spirit has not yet come to it.'

Still-births were certainly viewed with suspicion by colonial authorities, and midwives were closely examined. Some officers believed that many children born dead had been killed deliberately - perhaps by massage. Though this might be consistent with practices mentioned above and bears comparison with those known from other Pacific cultures, I cannot recall any of the inquiries or cases I have read where a midwife was accused of this. Mothers however occasionally did confess infanticide. Sofaia in 1896 admitted that she gave birth to a child and buried it in one of the cane fields at Penang. In another inquiry, conducted in Macuata which was renowned for abortion and infanticide, the testimony of one Makelesi perhaps pointed to her killing her child: 'It was true that my child was sucu mate. I was of unsound mind and then gave birth to the child in the bush.' Reports in which mothers said they gave birth alone (though this was normal in some parts, at least, of western Viti Levu) in the bush, plantations or in the river and that the child was sucu mate hint at infanticide. Women convicted of this crime in the Supreme Court typically gave birth in these circumstances. Recurrent features in such convictions were the child's illegitimacy, the mother's feeble-wits, and a lack of support from the community. The comments of witnesses other than the accused sometimes suggest the community's passive complicity.

The practice of infanticide was likely to have undergone greater change in the nineteenth century than the practice of abortion. Some of the pressures in chiefly polygynous establishments which may have earlier occasioned infanticide from time to time had subsided. War no longer produced periods of dire want when infants and the infirm were killed. Infanticide was also an easier target than abortion for missionary attack. Indeed, in many cases which were brought before the law concerning such customs as killing babies or the sick, the local mission teacher was the driving force.

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37 Mr Justice Garrick to John Bates Thurston, 28 Jul. 1875, CAIG 544/75.
38 Fison quoted by Thomas Williams in the notes attached to William's personal copy of Thomas Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, held by MI, Sydney, (B457) p. 181.
39 For example CSO 1124/1893; Case No. 2, CSO 2202/1894.
40 CSO 4076/1902; Monckton's minute, CSO 3315/1899.
41 For the controversy surrounding the higher rates of still-births associated with intracranial haemorrhage among Samoans in NZ, attributed by some to traditional massage techniques, see Patricia Laing, 'Colonisation and Images of Cultural Difference in Health: Some Ideas from the South Pacific', International Review of Sociology, No. 3 (1993), p. 211.
42 Case No. 3 CSO 2225/1897.
43 Case No. 2, CSO 1640/1893.
44 Nemani Dreu, Roko Tui Ba, lamented 'It is found next to impossible to prevent some mothers from going into the bush or into their gardens and plantations at these times when there is no attendance or help near at hand.' Council of Chiefs, 11 Dec. 1879.
45 Regina vs Soroinabakola, Supreme Court Fiji, Case No. 23, 1879; Regina vs TiYasawa, Supreme Court Fiji, Case No. 24, 1883; Rex vs Vikaeli, Supreme Court Fiji, Case No. 10, 1906.
46 For example, Supreme Court, Suva, Case No. 24, 1883.
The high rates of morbidity due to introduced diseases would also have implications: they increased the likelihood that the mother would miscarry anyway; or that the child, once born, would die of sickness. Under these conditions, and with Church opposition to 'active infanticide', 'passive infanticide', achieved through a modicum of neglect, may have been preferred.

Yet the overwhelming impression from infant death inquiries is one of guiltless mothers. Excluding casualties due to 'normal' problems such as breach presentations or causes hard to specify, in most of the abortions, stillbirths and infant deaths described, the irresistible factor was newly introduced disease which caused mothers to miscarry, children to cease moving in their mother's womb, and babies to perish. Seventy three reports forwarded to the Decrease Commission found 'neglect' in only two cases and this sample demonstrated, as the Commissioners were forced to conclude, the destructiveness of 'exotic infectious diseases and their sequelae'. A later analysis of inquiries from the years 1895 to 1898 did not even mention the word 'neglect'. The causes of death were found to be the usual infections, prematurity and the drying up of the mother's milk.

**Male Culpability**

Partly because there was so little evidence which damned mothers, the infant death inquiries increasingly tested other hypotheses. As the paternal role of Fijian men seems to have been seen by the administration as secondary to their role as husbands, the presumption of 'husbandly guilt' grew stronger and to some extent reduced the emphasis placed on maternal culpability. Magistrates asked more insistently whether husbands had neglected their duties to care for and supervise their pregnant or suckling wives.

Husbands were expected to curtail, in the interests of female reproductive performance, the amount of work their wives did out of doors. So when Avisa Saketa, Turaga ni Lewa iTaukei in Macuata, questioned Sanaila Maibera concerning his wife's stillbirth at Macuataiwai in January 1896, Sanaila defensively replied:

My name is Sanaila Maibera I looked after my wife well. I forbade her to go fishing or get firewood or to go out in the heat of the day and told her to stay in the house and that's how I cared for her well. I don't know why my child died unless there was a sickness in my wife's stomach or perhaps some other sickness. It was like that with our earlier child: she was pregnant, the blood came and the child was lost. It was in the fifth month that child was born, it did not reach its proper time. Did she carry heavy loads? - She did not carry heavy loads. Didn't you give her some poisonous medicines? - No. It was as I said.

Signed Sanaila His mark.

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48 For a discussion of 'semi-intentional' infanticide in Hawaii, see Crosby, 'Hawaiian Depopulation', pp.185-188. Refer also to discussion in ch. 2.
49 *DR*, pp. 182-183.
50 Report by Dr Joynt, 3 Jan. 1899, contained in CSO 987/1899.
51 CSO 1610/1896.
Some wives sprang to their husband's defence. Merera, answering the NSM Viria concerning her stillbirth, declared, 'My husband looks after me well - he doesn't beat me with a stick, or knock me down, or punch me with his fists. We get on together...'. Others were less supportive. Ratu Savenaca Seniloli reported on Ilisapeci's stillbirth in 1897 in the village of Nabaci, Cakaudrove as follows: '...I asked whether she had any bed coverings. She said, 'From the time since we married that man has never given me a single cover when I was sick'. I then asked whether she often went fishing and she said 'I go fishing when I'm pregnant and stay in wet clothes, and then I get pains in my stomach'. Seniloli concluded that Ilisapeci's stillbirth was because 'her husband did not take care of her and stop her from fishing frequently in the salt water nor give her good bed coverings in the times when she was sick'. The magistrate inquiring into Walili's stillbirth worked to pre-set questions and demonstrated this emphasis on the culpability of men:

1. What food did you eat when you were pregnant? - yams
2. What food did you eat when you were breastfeeding? -yams
3. Did you stay at home when you were pregnant? -no
4. Where did you go? - I'd go to the bush
5. What did you go there to do? -To get firewood.
6. What else did you do? - I'd go fishing
7. Did you go out in the heat of the day? - Yes I did
8. Did you go out in the rain? - Yes

There are two things I think caused the death of this child. One concerns the husband, because he did not care for his wife. He knew very well his wife was pregnant and he let her do what she liked and didn't care about her carrying firewood and fishing in the heat of the day and when it rained. The second concerns the chief of the village and the police officer in that they did not admonish or explain to him the law as is their duty.

The reshaping of Fijian women by edict thus required the remoulding of Fijian men. New mothers needed new husbands. The administration's effort to turn Fijian men into peasant farmers was given new relevance in the discourse on decrease. Their role as fathers was based on their role as providers which was based on their role as producers. In connection with na lutu sobu itaukei, Provincial Councils discussed the need to punish men who failed to meet their cultivation quota and the longstanding regulation respecting the minimum a man should plant was amended in 1898 to impose stiffer penalties on those who fell short. This planting regulation was among those with a bearing on the decrease which were widely neglected.

52 CSO 1462/1897.
53 Case No. 1, 1371/1897.
54 CSO 2540/1897.
55 See for instance, Minutes and Resolutions of Bua Provincial Council, Nabouwalu, 1892. Native Regulation No. 1 of 1898, to amend Regulation No. 3 of 1885, respecting planting. Punishment for a man convicted of failing to plant the minimum was a fine up to 20/- or imprisonment with hard labour for up to two months.
Figure 13: Women fetching water from a new well, Bua.

Figure 14: Native Stipendiary Magistrate and family.
Another regulation habitually ignored was that passed in 1885 to prevent women from carrying heavy loads, or dreke levu. The village Ovisa, or constable, was supposed to report any woman seen 'carrying an undue weight' and the village chief was then to reprimand her in the presence of the elders. If she committed a second offence she was to be brought before the District Court and on conviction sentenced, in the usual fashion, 'to plait mats, or make masi or nets, or to make any other kind of property suited to her ordinary occupation, to an amount not exceeding 1 months labour'.

Inquiries into infant deaths sometimes stimulated prosecutions under the dreke levu regulation. Three punishments for dreke levu in Colo East were reported in 1894 as ensuing from an inquiry which attributed a stillbirth to dreke levu. Fijian women had other views: some claimed that heavy loads were good for pregnant women and aided childbirth. Occasionally a mother at an infant death inquiry blamed the loss of her child on her having had to stay indoors plaiting mats as punishment for some offence against the native regulations, paradoxically just the sort of indoor vocation commissioners believed would be healthy for women all the time. The recent spread of mat-making into areas, like Kadavu, where formerly the women made no mats was actually blamed for causing higher rates of stillbirths and complications in pregnancy. On occasions when the dreke levu regulation was enforced, women were observed to subvert it - by dropping their load at the edge of the village and returning under cover of darkness to take it to their homes.

It was not in the interest of Fijian men to implement the dreke levu regulation unless they too believed it risked the survival of their children. Though native officials reiterated the tenets of their white superiors about the damaging effects on women of heavy work, whether they believed what they were obliged to say is another matter. Few were likely to think that dreke levu did women much harm. Also, if women were prohibited from carrying heavy loads, logically men would have to do such work instead and there is no evidence to suggest that they were keen to. One tactic tried by the administration to replace Fijian women as beasts of burden while simultaneously preserving the dignity of men was to encourage Fijians to raise cattle for portage as well as milk. Brewster applied himself with zeal to this project, the results of which were mixed. Another was to make men liable for punishment if their wives did heavy work. On the urgings of the European administration, Fijian officials at the District and Provincial Council levels, which were empowered to pass regulations of their own on

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56 Native Regulation No. 7, of 1885, respecting burdens carried by women.
57 Monckton's minute, 1 Feb. 1894 CSO 591/1894.
59 Carew's minute, CSO 3118/1896.
60 Buli Nakasaleka's views quoted in minute 26 Aug. 1902, CSO 4076/1902.
61 W.A.Scott, Asst Commissioner Colo West to Colonial Secretary, 16 Aug. 1898 CSO 2480/1898.
62 CSO 36/1898.
any, were probably punished at this stage. A similar set of problems beset the regulations forbidding women to fish. In 1899 Tailevu Provincial Council resolved 'That night fishing by women be prohibited; that husbands of women breaking this law be prosecuted, and be held equally liable with them'. The following year it was noted that 30 women had been prosecuted since the passing of that resolution - but significantly, no mention was made of their spouses.63

If husbands were rarely penalized for their wives' contravention of these regulations, the proposition that husbands were responsible did nevertheless deliver men some tangible rewards. The Decrease Report had considered instituting incentives for women to have more children. Granting badges to prolific mothers and ceremonial salutations of respect were among the rewards suggested. One respondent had enthused, 'Let the mother in Fiji, while she retains her medal, receive the honours accorded formerly to the mothers of Israel'.64 The eventual reward was bestowed however on the other sex. Under the luvea levu, or 'many children' regulation of 1897, a man with five or more living children by one duly married wife was rewarded with tax remissions and enjoyed the honour of his name being published in the Fiji language newspaper Na Mata. When the luvea levu measure was proposed to the all-male Council of Chiefs, it was understandably 'extremely popular'. Stewart was also satisfied that 'the loss to revenue would be infinitesimal' since so few married couples qualified.65 Any idea that the mothers who had borne and raised these children should enjoy remissions from communal duties too, was vetoed by Thurston, who argued that 'the women with large families claiming exception will be so ridiculed by those having few or no children that their lives will be rendered miserable.'66 Thus the husbands, not their wives, were rewarded for good reproductive results.

The colonial doctrine of husbandly authority was projected at the expense of other kin with power in these matters according to Fijian customs. The authority of a Fijian husband over his wife was qualified by her attachments to her own kin and his to his own, which in effect subjected the exercise of his power within marriage to other hierarchical relations.67 The same can be said for the exercise of authority over his own children. Often this was not great. In parts of Vanua Levu and Taveuni where matriliny prevailed, the superior claim of the mother's kin on the child, which once grown usually returned to them, no doubt limited paternal power. Yet in patrilineal parts of Fiji the relatively minor role of biological father was frequently noted too. Brewster remarked that among the peoples of interior Viti Levu,

63 Resolution 2, Tailevu Provincial Council, 1899; Tailevu Provincial Council, 1900.
64 DR, pp. 183-184.
65 Allardyce's minute, and Stewart's minute in CSO 2245/1896 contained in CSO 354/1896.
66 Thurston to Secretary of State, 14 Oct. 1896, CO 83/64.
67 This was a lesson some European partners of Fijian women had to learn. See Samson, 'Rescuing Fijian Women?' p. 8. For an analysis of power-relations between husband and wife today, see Toren, 'Transforming Love', pp. 18-39.
even there in most of them a faint trace of former influence of the maternal family may be perceived in the powers wielded by the mother's brother who, to all intents and purposes, exclusive of the father, directs and orders the future of the child. There are also instances in which the paternal family assumes sole control, but there, too, the child's future is more in the hands of the uncle than of its parent, and in this case it is the father's brother.

Among the Boubuco the father's brother had authority over the child; among the Noemalu, though the child inherited its name and rights from his father, the maternal uncle took charge. More generally Bishop Nicolas lamented, 'It often happens that the fatherly authority belongs to a distant or remote members (sic) of the family'. These regulations enhanced the power and prerogatives of every Fijian man within marriage and parenthood, which may well have been attractive to many men. Occasionally, too, they sought to exploit this discourse of husbandly responsibility - for instance in appealing for relief from communal duties and government work, on the grounds that husbands had to provide for and tend to their pregnant or suckling wives.

Chiefly Interventions

The making of new husbands also demanded the making of new chiefs. Native officials, from the Ovisa and Turaga ni Koro up, were commanded to instil into men an understanding of their duties to their wives and children. But curiously, a certain limitation of chiefly prerogatives was implied. In defining a new sphere of 'husbandly responsibility' the colonial regime was also placing another buffer on chiefly power. Instead of being unmediated in its effect upon the woman, it had to be mediated, in some contexts, by the husband. A new political space in the social world of men was outlined. Indeed the ideal of family advanced by the colonial administration and the mission was based on an ideology which split the public and private domains, and where 'every man's home was his castle'.

Simultaneously, native officials were called upon to intervene more directly in child-bearing and rearing. While many tasks associated with these functions were regarded as women's work and women enjoyed a degree a cultural and political autonomy in their performance, this women's sphere was subject overall to chiefly authority and its boundaries were clearly permeable to male intervention - as our discussion of abortion and infanticide has indicated. When the Roko Tui Ba discussed na lutu sobu itaukei at the Council of Chiefs in 1879 and deplored childbirth practices in Ba adding these are 'matters which we men are supposed to leave in the hands of women, who tell us it is not our work', his remark suggests that such female claims were not

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68 Brewster, The Hill Tribes of Fiji, p. 168.
69 Bp Nicolas, 'Notes on Fijian Customs', n.d., RCAF 5.4.34 a & b.
70 A later example of this kind of appeal is found in the resolutions of Ra Provincial Council, 1913, reproduced in CSO 5508/1913.
71 For the public/private distinction, see footnote 58, ch. 2.
When the colonial regime, in the 1890s, called upon native officials to intervene in the female domain, precedents were not lacking.

Chiefs were expected to root out contraception and abortion. Abortion had been perfunctorily outlawed in Regulation No. 2 of 1877. Ten years later the law was elaborated. Regulation No. 2 of 1887 defined 'causing abortion' as 'making use of any means, whether by instruments or by the administration of drugs or by any other means, with the object or for the purpose of causing abortion or barrenness.' Liable for prosecution were the women upon whose bodies these measures were taken, and those persons who aided, abetted or counselled contraception or abortion. A person's guilt was not lessened if the method of abortion or contraception was ineffective. As a sign of the government's desire to treat this offence more severely, in 1897 abortion was removed from the jurisdiction of the Provincial to the Supreme Court and in 1898 the term of imprisonment for persons convicted was lengthened from a maximum of two to a maximum of three years. 

The prosecution of abortion was extremely difficult. Usually the deed only came to light when, as in some of the infant death inquiries, a woman confessed; when an attempt went wrong and proved fatal; or when the accused was so disliked by his or her fellows that a collective effort was made to bring down the force of the law. One of the severest sentences for abortion - 10 years penal servitude - was awarded to a male abortionist who claimed he had been framed.

Some Fijian officials nevertheless made strenuous attempts to identify and counter abortion. Displaying a legalistic and scientific approach, one Native Stipendiary Magistrate zealously sent a decomposed, two month old foetus, wrapped in *masi*, to a Medical Officer, in the hope that a post-mortem would show that an abortion had been caused, and how. In this instance the doctor's examination was too late and the mother was through other processes found to have been innocent. Other officials were more attuned to the spirit than the letter of the law. As Macnaught recounts, the Buli Sanima brought several couples before the Native Magistrate of Kadavu to answer charges of abortion on the evidence only that they were married and childless. 'The cases were discharged but all the wives subsequently gave birth to healthy children'. There were other similar interventions. The Buli Nakaselasela 'simply ordered thirteen childless women to have children and nine of them did so within a year, the remaining four within two years'. 'Concerning the Decrease of the population', the Provincial Council Bua resolved that 'all females who have been married from 3 to 6 years without issue be given

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72 Roko Tui Ba, Council of Chiefs, 11 Dec. 1879.
73 Circular, 9 Jul. 1897, copy contained in CSO 1843/1903; Native Regulation No. 6 of 1898, to amend Reg. No. 2 of 1887.
74 CSO 1221/1890.
75 Rex vs Seruveli Vosavosa, Supreme Court Suva, Case No. 30, 1902.
76 CSO 1038/1894.
to drink procreative medicine... Some women who have been treated in this way have had children'.

Contraception also proved difficult to prosecute. The Buli Tavuki, for instance, attempted to mobilise his district administration against contraceptive medicines by requiring Turaga ni Koro to speak to the village women every month on the matter and to identify the herb they used. He reported however, 'so far they have failed and consequently no case has been taken to court'. The administration also sought to outlaw the contraceptive manipulation of the womb, a practice encompassed under the heading vakasilima, or 'to bathe.' This term referred to various methods of massage and internal manipulation performed by midwives on women, babies and men, often in water through orifices of the body. Yet after much discussion at the Provincial level, and the interrogation of numerous midwives, a regulation on vakasilima was considered impracticable. Women moreover were unwilling to speak.

The care of pregnant women was now ultimately seen as a chiefly responsibility. Not only were chiefs to ensure that husbands did their duty, but that pregnant women without husbands were properly attended, and adequate standards of sanitation, accommodation, disease reporting and care of the sick were generally maintained. Fijian officials, like NSM Serua, reported to their superiors on pelvic epidemics affecting the female population in their districts - explaining that it was not reported earlier because the women had shrouded the epidemic in silence. In infant death inquiries, Turaga ni Koro were questioned about the care taken of unwed mothers. The village chief of Naivirea, in the district of Savusavu, averred that Kisinimere, an unmarried woman whose child was stillborn, had been told not to fish or to go out in the heat of the day; but admitted that the house where she lived was bad, and leaked everywhere. As official preoccupations with housing and sanitation intensified at the turn of the century, these were increasingly reflected in infant death inquiries. In one file from 1900 reporting on nine inquiries involving the deaths of 11 infants, the Native Stipendiary Magistrate declared the cause to be bad housing in each and every instance. Typical of his comments were:

My opinion is this child died because it was taken ill with a cough and lay in a small house of two fathoms only, with only one small door, and in which also the food was prepared. One exclaimed in horror upon entering the place. I did not want to enter therein as my breath was taken away by the foul stench. This was the cause of the child's death.
Occasionally a case provoked officials in the capital to white hot anger. When a girl in a village near Suva delivered an illegitimate child alone, after a lengthy and painful labour, in an outhouse without walls, and then followed the infant to death a few days later, unattended, in a filthy sulu, having had no water or food since her labour began, Allardyce fumed, 'The whole of the circumstances are typically Fijian. There is the accursed semi religious narrow minded aspect as usual to the front, plus the omnipresent indisposition of the native to succour those more especially of the weaker sex, who are ill, weak or in distress...'. While Corney deplored the 'Fijian animal' and exclaimed '...will anything short of miscegenation convert such a race?' The Turaga ni Koro was dismissed.86

Administrative fiat

No matter how much Fijian chiefs were exhorted to arrest the decrease and implement the pertinent native regulations, European officials had no faith in the ability of Fijian appointees to perform. In 1899 Thurston's successor Governor O'Brien introduced a system of European Provincial Inspectors, based on recommendations in theDecrease Report, entrusted to ensure that native regulations were enforced and that optimum conditions for reproduction prevailed.87 Their powers were despotic, and many directly affected women. Mass weddings of young Fijians were performed at Inspectors' orders; estranged wives were brought forward and summarily reconciled with their husbands; mothers and children were lined up, examined and told what to do.

One abortion case shows the impact of this system on a young woman called Milika and her midwife Ana. Dr Finucane, the Provincial Inspector for Tailevu and Ra came to inspect Milika's village. The Roko Tui Ra, Joni Madraiwiwi accompanied him and recalled, 'All the pregnant women in the village were collected together - Milika was one of them - I saw her myself - she had a big stomach and her breasts showed signs of pregnancy, as one observes in women...'. Finucane interrogated her, but Milika later claimed she had denied she was pregnant, but had instead something wrong internally ('not truly in the family way, but in the family way with matter'), though she confessed that she had indeed had intercourse with Simione. Finucane then ordered the two to marry, which they did forthwith. On his second inspection, however, Milika was no longer pregnant. She claimed that the midwife Ana and two others had taken her to the river, vakasilima'd her, causing white matter to come away and her periods to recommence. The Supreme Court considered this an unlikely tale, and sentenced Ana to two years imprisonment with hard labour. Milika's own fate was unclear, though she was equally guilty according to law.88

The Persistence of the Presumption

86 Allardyce's minute, 18 May 1893 and Corney's minute, 23 May 1893, CSO 1727/1893.
87 DR, pp. 203-206.
88 Supreme Court Fiji, Regina vs Ana, Case No. 64, 1899.
The Provincial Inspectorate was short lived - yet the infant death inquiries continued beyond the second world war.89 This is remarkable from many points of view. Most Fijian officials had no enthusiasm for Regulation 5 of 1892. They found the work hard, 'thankless and unpopular.'90 Nor did the inquiries provide the administration with the desired scientific data. Corney remarked in 1898,

> For some time I made a systematic endeavour to classify the circumstances and causes ascribed for these abortions & deaths; and to deduce from them some general theory which might be of practical utility. The nature of the evidence has proved such, however, as to render this, in my belief, impossible. 91

Other government doctors agreed that the reports did not advance medical knowledge. Articles in Na Mata complained that while magistrates were keen to ascertain the mother's guilt, they were less keen to identify the actual cause of death.92 However, proposals that Native Stipendiary Magistrates should follow a detailed set of specially designed questions, or that inquiries were better left to Native Medical Practitioners, were rejected.93 To satisfy the need for medical information Corney suggested that, as an alternative, he be supplied with Fijian women's placentae - 'preferably while fresh' - to enable a comprehensive investigation into the causes of stillbirths through their examination.94 He had long hoped to prove that yaws congenitally impaired the Fijian female reproductive system.95 O'Brien dismissed this as typical of the useless 'over ambitious schemes' so characteristic this Colony.96

Another disappointment was that very few prosecutions for neglect, abortion or anything else resulted. When an attempt was made to enumerate the court actions arising from infant death inquiries in 1897 and part of 1898, it was clear that prosecutions were rare. In nine of the twelve provinces no court action whatsoever was mentioned against any parties in connection with infant death inquires during the specified period. One European magistrate simply stated 'I have never yet found a single case in which 'every care' etc etc has not been taken'.97 In a few provinces a subsequent prosecution was dismissed for want of evidence - a chronic difficulty. Only a handful of convictions were recorded, all in Ra: in 1897 a man was prosecuted for neglecting his wife under the regulation concerning the care of the sick, and in 1898 a Turaga ni Koro and two leading men were prosecuted under the same; and a further five convictions were secured under

89 Regulation 14, 1948, sections 5 and 9.
90 W.L.Allardyce's minute, 19 Sep. 1898, CSO 2480/1898.
91 Corney 28 Jun. 1898 in CSO 2484/1898.
93 Resolution 4, Council of Chiefs, Suva, 1911.
94 Corney 1 Mar. 1899 in CSO 987/1899.
95 DR, pp. 126-127.
97 SM Labasa to Colonial Secretary, 30 Jul. 1898, CSO 319/1898 in CSO 2480/1898.
the companion Regulation No. 6 of 1892 concerning care of children. In addition, in Lomaiviti, two houses reportedly in bad condition were pulled down.

Nevertheless the infant death inquiries persisted on the claim that they retained some residual value as a deterrent against abortion, infanticide and neglect. The reason why this claim continued to carry force well into the twentieth century was, as we shall see, that the underlying premise that Fijian women lacked maternal instinct, despite the lack of confirmation from reports, and despite the blame placed on Fijian chiefs and husbands, remained a bedrock of colonial belief.

One can only speculate on the emotional effect of this regulation on women. The inquiries insulted the value Fijian parents placed on children and can only have aggravated the grief which some reports inadvertently capture - the cry that was heard after Cua's death; the way Marekarita and Mario gently held their small child until they buried him; Carew's description of one father who would 'give ten years of his life to leave a child alive behind him'. If twentieth century examples are suggestive, infertility, infant mortality and childlessness could cause women suffering and shame. Seniloli described her interviews with childless village women as 'characterised by emotion and pain'. One informant explained, 'It is embarrassing to have no children. We are often described as wasting cassava or taking up space in the house...'. Ravuvu has written that childless women can command no respect. The longing and reproach endured by Lady Maraia, wife of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, exemplifies a plight variations of which a woman of any rank, at times before and since, could feel: she had suffered the loss of three small sons, two stillborn, and persistently hoped to bear a child that might live. The repeated loss of children to the women of earlier generations, whose child-bearing years were passed under the tyranny of high morbidity and mortality from new diseases, was likely a searing experience. Fijian theories attributing sickness and death to wrong-doing must have sometimes echoed with colonial condemnations when a mother was brought before a magistrate instructed to presume her guilt for a death beyond her control. In retrospect these inquisitions seem futile, cruel and unjust.

Yet there were probably some mitigating factors. No doubt Fijian women became adept dodgers of these laws and fiats, and O'Brien himself suspected that the requirement to hold inquiries was generally disregarded. Moreover, Turaga ni Lewa iTaukei probably exercised their own discretion in the performance of this unpalatable duty. In many instances they may have spared parents from more than the very minimum of distress which edict demanded. The reports they did file, and which now rest in the National Archives, testify however to a stubborn racist and sexist assumption of the European colonial regime; and, in the voices of ordinary Fijian women and men, to the little appreciated experience of past infant mortality.

98 Joske to Colonial Secretary, 13 Aug. 1898, CSO 2715/1898 in CSO 2480/1898.
99 Case No. 2, CSO 1651/1893; CSO 1056/1896; Carew's minute, 30 Mar 1893, CSO 1122/1893.
100 Seniloli, 'The Socio-Economic and Cultural Differences of Ethnic Fertility in Fiji', p. 168.
101 Ravuvu, 'Sex Attitudes and Family size in Fiji', p. 32.
103 O'Brien's minute, 5 Jul. 1898, CSO 2480/1898.
Chapter Seven

New Mothers by Education

In the bearing and rearing of children there is perhaps no more ignorant, misguided and mismanaged creature than the Fijian mother. Report on Vital Statistics for the Year 1899, CSO 1210/1900.

Education is to be the thin edge of the wedge [check wording with original]. But for this purpose their education must begin in their own dwellings and the married women and mothers afford the most promising 'point d'appui'.

Basil Glanville Corney, CSO 2506/1894.

Alongside coercive measures to change Fijian mothers, the colonial government advocated a 'gentler' approach. This chapter considers the attempts made to educate na tina ni gone itaukei through officials and the printed word; and through the government-sponsored Hygiene Mission by European women. These attempts failed and an anatomy of their failure displays a complex interplay of tensions across and within gender and race. The Hygiene Mission in particular disproved the belief, strong in some quarters at the time and still not without appeal, that white women by virtue of their sex invariably 'saw things differently from their men' and enjoyed a natural sympathy with indigenous women.1

Under Sir George O'Brien's governorship (1897-1901) unprecedented efforts were made 'to save the race'. A Roman Catholic bachelor accompanied by his sister, O'Brien applied himself to every practical angle of the decrease as if his was the dual task of rescuing the Taukei from themselves and from an administration prone to verbosity. European colonial officials in the field now found their administrative duties included teaching Fijian women about motherhood and housekeeping. Brewster recalled his efforts to instruct the women of inland Viti Levu in the proper use of babies' feeding bottles, concerning the make and design of which the Chief Medical Officer and former Decrease Commissioner Corney had decided views.2 This endeavour was a logical

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2 Newspaper cut-out of 'The Allenbury's Feeder' in CSO 942/1899.
extension of the efforts by Brewster, Marriott and the Roko Tui Ra, Joni Madraiwiwi to encourage the raising of cattle, which O'Brien hoped could simultaneously replace Fijian women as beasts of burden and provide Fijian infants with cows' milk. The experiment was a struggle and Brewster confessed 'we were miserable failures over the feeding bottles. The women always declared they would never use them, and they didn't.'

The Provincial Inspectorate, introduced in 1899, also had a responsibility to educate women about their maternal and domestic vocations though - as Frank Spence, the Provincial Inspector of Bua and Cakaudrove remarked - 'Women laugh at the idea of men telling them how to look after their children and the cleanliness of their houses'. In his work, Mr Spence considered himself fortunate in having Laura Spence as his helpmeet, who took to the task of dealing with mothers and their children. The diaries of this husband and wife team record their strenuous efforts to save the Fijian people from extinction and read like testimony to Kipling's 'white man's burden' - in this case jointly carried by his wife. They battled against hurricanes and flooded rivers; their dislike of Fijian food and sitting without chairs; a number of unpleasant ailments - sores, festering fingers, the itch, swollen legs, a swollen testicle, dysentery, fevers and lice; and most of all, Fijian resistance. The following entry by Laura Spence from her diary for August 1900 was typical, and gives some indication of what they regarded as achievements:

During the month I have visited 43 towns and 299 houses and burnt 665 mats, the officer Buli of Kubulau says he has burnt 420 mats - 274 houses turned out & new sasa or fern brought in - I have superintended 60 cases of ringworm (women & children) my husband 34 cases (boys) altogether 94 cases - I am sorry that we will not be able to do the same in the next District (Wailevu) as we have used all the ointment. Mats burnt up to date 2,610. Houses turned out up to date 1,030.

Other wives were also ready to assist the government - but none could rival Laura. O'Brien gave her her personal praise; other officials scribbled marginalia in awe of her stamina; and in the eyes of the Colonial Secretary, she commended herself to the role, if one were needed, of overseeing the Hygiene Mission. Her predicament, however, illustrates the gendered limitations of the colonial service. Mrs Spence's work was strictly speaking unofficial (although she was prevented from accepting a watch presented

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3 O'Brien to Secretary of State, 31 Dec. 1897, CO 83/67: CSO 36/1898. Instead of being used for milk and portage, cows became valued as items to be offered and consumed at special occasions, like marriages and funerals. Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 199.
5 'Diary for May', Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove & Bua, CSO 2225/1900.
6 For some biographical details concerning Mr and Mrs Spence, see the *Cyclopedia of Fiji*, Suva: Fiji Museum, 1984 [1907], pp. 205-206.
7 Mrs Spence's diary for August, CSO 3534/1900.
8 Sometimes her zeal provoked mild rebuke: one report described how Mr and Mrs Spence waded through a number of streams, causing Mrs Spence's shoes to give out. Officials in Suva wrote disapprovingly, 'This is overdoing it altogether' and 'too much altogether for one day'. Marginalia dated 22 Jun. 1901; 26 Jun. 1901 in 'Diary for May', Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove & Bua, CSO 2644/1901.
9 Allardycye's minute, 19 Sep. 1900, CSO 3434/1900.
by the Roko Tui Cakaudrove, on the grounds that receiving gifts of value while in government employ was forbidden), in that it was unpaid and rendered as a wife.\textsuperscript{10} Though many an official proclaimed the need for European and trained women to work among the Fijian female population, there was obvious opposition to the employment of women in the service. The Government instead looked to the Missions, which being concerned with matters religious and therefore private were more fitting employers of women.\textsuperscript{11}

The Decrease Report had recommended a Ladies Sanitary or Hygienic Mission. The precedents lay in England's long history of religious and philanthropic ladies visiting the homes of the rural and urban sick and poor.\textsuperscript{12} But the Commissioners had the Zenana Mission in India specifically in mind. Lady Dufferin, wife of a Viceroy had in 1886 founded a scheme to promote the training of women doctors, nurses and midwives, the establishment of women's hospitals and, what is pertinent here, the visiting of Indian women secluded in their homes. The Zenana Mission was deliberately non-sectarian. The Decrease Commissioners envisaged a hygiene mission conducted along similar lines: by women properly trained in nursing and obstetrics; endowed with patience, health, tact, and sympathy but 'who in place of the motives founded in religious fervour must, for their incentives to exertion in the teeth of opposition, depend on more abstract philanthropy'. They suggested that Lady Dufferin's organisation or one similar be approached for assistance in establishing a Hygiene Mission in Fiji.\textsuperscript{13}

In the event, O'Brien appealed to the local Methodist and Roman Catholic Missions in December 1898 with a letter inviting their views on a memo which declared that a Hygienic Mission would meet 'the crux of the whole question of whether the race is saved or not'.\textsuperscript{14} Their responses contrasted. The Methodists, encompassing 90\% of the Fijian population, were unenthusiastic. Lindsay demurred that his organisation could not view the prospects of a Hygiene Mission 'in so sanguine a light', and suggested instead that the survival of the Fijians would depend on their being freed of 'the many burdens the people at present bear' - another oblique criticism of the native policy. Bishop Vidal's answer was, underlined in the original, 'I agree with the Author of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} O'Brien's minute, 20 Oct. 1900, CSO 4370/1900.
\item \textsuperscript{11} The masculine ethic and barriers to the employment of women in colonial administration have been discussed in Helen Callaway, \textit{Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria}, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press ESP, pp. 12-15 and ch. 6, and Strobel, \textit{European Women and the Second British Empire}, esp. ch. 3. For the various kinds of work in which white women in Fiji engaged, see Knapman, \textit{White Women in Fiji}, ch. 4. For the ambivalent position of religion in the public/private dichotomy, see Lenore Davidoff, 'Regarding Some 'Old Husbands' Tales': Public and Private in Feminist History', \textit{Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class}, pp. 240, 255 ff.
\item \textsuperscript{14} These were the only bodies with any real capacity to assist, though even the distrusted, fledgling Seventh Day Adventists were invited to supply trained nurses to work in Fijian villages. O'Brien's minute, 12 Apr. 1898 and letter from Asst Colonial Secretary, 19 Apr. 1898 in CSO 1147/1898 contained in CSO 2256/1902.
\end{itemize}
said memorandum that the Salvation of the Fijian race lies, for a large part, with its women'. Vidal immediately placed the entire resources of the Marist Missionary sisters in Fiji and Rotuma - 14 European and 24 Fijian sisters - at the government's disposal, and offered to call in more sisters if needed.15

The Hygiene Mission evolved largely as a Roman Catholic enterprise. The initial plan was for the work to be conducted by two European sisters and three native sisters in each of the provinces of Lomaiviti, Tailevu and Cakaudrove; in Bua one European sister and three Fijian sisters would be dedicated to the work; and in Serua a European and a Fijian sister. Vidal claimed that 'All these European sisters have some medicinal and hygienic notions' but needed professional advice on the nursing of children. So Dr Finucane, the Provincial Inspector of Tailevu and Ra, prepared instructions which were translated into French for the sisters' benefit. Along with rather questionable advice on baby-care it contained a great deal of exhortation: 'The Fijian question as you must look at it, is the raising of the status and condition of the Fijian women - your sex - from their present degraded state and bringing them to realise their duties and responsibilities'. So rousingly had Finucane urged 'emancipation' and 'women's rights' in his earlier draft that O'Brien toned the language down.16

The Roman Catholic sisters commenced their work in March 1899, a few months after the Provincial Inspectors. The initial reports were encouraging. On her inaugural hygienic trip, Sister Stanislas journeyed inland from the Catholic station Lomary in Serua, to visit those villages of Wailevu far removed from government and mission influence:

I visited 4 of those villages: Wainimataqa, Wanadiro, Nuku and Beqa I Colo. From the station to the first of these villages there is a good half a day's walk through hills & vales; sometimes you have to climb almost perpendicularly, sometimes when you go down, you have to cling to all the branches & roots of trees you can lay your hands on, in order not to roll down the precipice. What paths! The natives have most justly called it 'na sala ni me' the goats' path. I do not speak of the rivers which you have to cross ten times nor of the difficulties you meet with. I was accompanied by a native sister, who rendered me many services.17

The other sisters did not make such arduous excursions off the beaten track, but in a sense the forays of Sister Stanislas symbolise the expansionist ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church. The minority denomination, which had been violently distrusted and accused by Thurston - described in the Colonial Office as suffering attacks of 'Bishop on

17 Sister Stanislas to Vidal, 3 Apr. 1899, CSO 1777/1899.
the brain' - welcomed the opportunity for the official favour of O'Brien.18 But though Vidal responded readily to the Governor's overtures, it was clear that he and his sisters would have preferred to serve the aims of the Hygiene Mission through expanding Roman Catholic infrastructure. Vidal liked to emphasize that girls who went to Catholic schools made better and more prolific mothers; and that abortion was purely a Wesleyan trait. He favoured a double approach against na lutu sobu itaukei, namely more Catholic schools and hospitals, established with government approval and assistance.19 Variations of this agenda - such as regulations requiring the compulsory attendance at Catholic schools of Catholic girls, the founding of Catholic Hygiene Mission homes, and so forth- continued to be advocated by the Catholic Church in the name of the Hygiene Mission.20

This subversive advocacy strained even O'Brien's patience, who complained 'it seems impossible to get ....into the heads of the Roman Catholic mission' the lines upon which the Hygiene Mission should work.21 The government had also advertised the initiative as a non-sectarian endeavour. An article in the Fijian language paper Na Mata entitled 'The Lady with the Lamp' likened the Roman Catholic Hygiene Sisters to 'Folorenisi Naitinikeli' and her sisters at Scutari, and expressed the hope that thanks to their work Na Mata would soon be able to report that 'the people of the land have indeed swelled in number, and that the yavu long left empty are inhabited once more'.22 A later issue featured letters signed by correspondents named 'Fiji neither Wesleyan nor Catholic' and 'He of the empty yavu' exhorting religious toleration and recognition that the aims of the Hygiene Mission ('the health of the people and our well-being') transcended sectarian rivalry.23

Still, within three weeks of its commencement, the Hygiene Mission had assumed characteristics of religious war. Though the sisters had been told to confine their work to Roman Catholic or predominantly Roman Catholic villages they almost immediately broke this rule. The first skirmishes took place in the Rewa delta, where the Wesleyan Chairman complained that Sister Mary had entered towns where there was not a single Catholic, visited all the houses, forced herself into the homes of Wesleyan teachers, and even terrorised a Buli and his wife, threatening to take away their daughter - and all in His Excellency's name.24 The Methodist Newspaper, Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu, countered Na Mata with a declaration that the Hygiene Mission was a Roman Catholic mission thinly disguised. After this article, the Bishop complained, Roman Catholic sisters faced the opposition of Wesleyan teachers wherever they went.25

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19 Vidal to O'Brien, 4 Jan. 1899, CSO 4919/1898.
20 Rougier to O'Brien, 30 Jun. 1899, CSO 2920/1899; Rougier to O'Brien, 1 Sep. 1899, O'Brien's minute 5 Sep. 1899, CSO 3920/1899.
21 O'Brien's minute, 6 Jul. 1899, CSO 2920/1899.
22 Na Mata, Mar. 1899, pp. 44-47.
23 Na Mata, May 1899, pp. 74-75.
24 Lindsay to Governor, 22 Mar. 1899, CSO 1259/1899.
25 Vidal to Asst Colonial Secretary, 17 Apr. 1899, CSO 1591/1899.
In Taveuni too the Hygiene Mission's dignified beginnings deteriorated. Sister Mary Agnes, on her first visit to SomoSomo enjoyed the Roko's patronage, and toured the houses in the company of Di Ranadi the Roko's wife and Di Maci the wife of Ratu Rabici, with the Native Medical Practitioner also in tow. She claimed she had instructed both Wesleyan and Catholic households only because pressured to do so; and that the Roko had said he realised the work was not religious in character. Vidal even declared that Roman Catholic Hygiene sisters had been requested by the Roko Tui Lomaiviti to work among the Wesleyans on the island of Gau. But these reports conflicted with subsequent complaints: Ratu Rabici had plainly stated that the Sister should apply herself just to the insides of houses; and only to Roman Catholic women, invalids, and children. He added, 'My idea is that this sister will work to get us all to join her church. (Roman C.).'  

The Methodist mission, the government hoped, would be galvanised into their own hygiene work by such fears. Lindsay had only offered to keep the objectives of the Hygiene Mission before the Wesleyan population through periodical sermons, meetings and the mission newspaper. He had also agreed to O'Brien's suggestion to use the wives of native teachers in the Hygiene Mission, but with the pessimistic comment, 'True these women are not all we could wish for in this work...'.  

This commitment was probably hollow. Little in the way of systematic attention appears to have been given to training or organising wives of Fijian ministers until the 1920s. During the nineteenth century, Fijian wives often accompanied their husbands to the Methodist institutions where the men were trained for pastoral work, and may have learned a little about European housekeeping and health-care. Mrs Heighway, wife of the missionary William Aitken Heighway, recalled teaching the wives of trainees and native ministers sewing and allied skills at Lakeba from 1887 to 1897. Others perhaps gained knowledge of European domesticity by working for planters and missionaries as servants. Due to the small number of European missionaries and the fact that many parts of Fiji - including the interior of Viti Levu - were without them, the vast majority of Fijian ministers' wives had little personal knowledge of life inside the house of a European missionary and were beyond the reach of white missionaries' wives. Except for isolated initiatives, there was no proper effort by the Methodist mission to mobilise these women.  

Mrs Heighway's Methodist 'Hygiene Mission' on the island of Kadavu was exceptional. Her husband had been so stung by the example of the nuns and so moved by 'jealousy for our proud Protestantism' that he defrayed from his private savings £150

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26 Ratu Rabici to Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove & Bua, 8 Jun. 1899, CSO 2715/1899.  
27 Lindsay to Colonial Secretary, 13 Mar. 1899, CSO 1186/1899.  
29 See the description of Mrs Binner's household in Smythe, Ten Months in the Fiji Islands, p. 222.
for a small oil launch to enable Mrs Heighway to visit villages along Kadavu's coast. She enlisted the help of the wives and widows of native ministers, women aged from twenty five to fifty five. After lectures in health, cleanliness and baby-care these 'brown sisters' sallied forth, a white bandage featuring a red Maltese cross strapped to their arms. Her work was publicised in Australia and celebrated in the writings of an American evangelist who hailed her as a Christian hero, but 'His Excellency is of the opinion,' wrote Allardyce to her husband, 'that the Hygiene Mission to be a success should not be dependent upon individual effort but be supported by the Wesleyan mission as a body.'

A fundamental shortcoming of the Wesleyan Mission in Fiji was the restricted role it gave to women. Their task was construed as primarily that of wives. Though many, like Mrs Heighway, answered their own calling to serve God in marrying missionaries, not all of them managed to combine their domestic duties with extensive responsibilities beyond the home. This limited role for women was not altogether consistent with some of the trends of the Wesleyan Society itself. Since 1859 its Ladies Committee for Ameliorating the Condition of Women in Heathen Countries had been sending single women to the mission field, to aid the 'grand work' in 'a small and subordinate compartment' for which women could claim to be uniquely fitted. Indeed the Ladies Committee sent a lone Miss Tookey to Bau in 1859 where she ran a school and attempted to further female education. Her difficulties and departure made perhaps an inauspicious beginning to the work of unmarried Methodist women in Fiji, for subsequently the mission resisted the trend to offer them more opportunities. In England, increased female education, the surplus of women, and ladies of independent means volunteering their services at no cost were all factors. However, in 1855 the Fijian mission came under Australian control. In the Australian colonies there was no surplus of women and this consideration combined with basic prejudice perhaps shaped the mission's attitude.

David Wilkinson - planter, colonial servant, lay-preacher and wild speller - in 1894 accused the Wesleyans of 'having 'thrown the wett blanket upon' the introduction of women missionaries even from their own denomination. Thinking of women missionaries in China, he declared:

I could not but feel what a vast field for usefullness for dowing good to her fellow men Fiji offered to the labours of such a woman who from her love of the Lord Jesus Christ and for Humanity could devote her life to such work here... Yet it is said when such volunteeres to come from the Australian coloneys, instead of the cry

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30 Asst. Colonial Secretary to Mr Heighway, 18 May 1899, CSO 2001/1899. However, the Heighways acknowledged the considerable support from individuals in Australia for their launch and Hygiene Work. Heighway Family, 'Not as Men Build...', pp. 110-117.
31 Knapman, White Women in Fiji, pp. 56-63. The desire of missionary wives to serve the mission, and the conflict between this and their domestic duties, is a theme sensitively explored in Grimshaw, Paths of Duty.
33 LC, Occasional Papers No. 2 (Jun. 1859), No. 18, (Jan. 1864).
'come' 'come and help us' they were met by discouragement and I have been told such remarks as 'they are eccentric young women,' 'many of them have peculiar fads' 'and whos to do their washing?' my reply has been - let them come - no matter what their 'fad' or 'peculiarity' Let them come - they are wanted in the Lord's vineyard ... 35

The Roman Catholic hygienic invasion spurred the Methodists reluctantly to fight fire with fire. In July 1899 the new Chairman Mr Small announced the arrival of 'sister' Amy Dodson, who was posted to Bau where she taught classes and 'sister' Constance Moorehead, who was sent to the new girls school Matavelo at Ba. 'Sister' Mary Ballantine started a school first in Naqere and then Bua before moving to Ba, where another arrival joined her, 'sister' Carrie Butt. All tried to combine teaching with hygiene work.36

The official history of Fiji's Roman Catholic mission gave a very biased account of this sudden appearance of Methodist sisters. It can be loosely paraphrased thus: the work of the Roman Catholic sisters impressed and astounded Catholics and Wesleyans alike and increased the prestige of the true church; this the Wesleyan ministers could not endure, so they spoke to the governor, who replied that the fault lay with them because they had no sisters like the Catholics - 'only get sisters, and the government will use them'. But a few weeks later, when the names of Wesleyan Sisita who would undertake the Hygiene Mission were published, the Europeans treated this as a joke, for they knew these women would not be able to do the job like real, Roman Catholic sisters.37

Roman Catholic sisters were not, however, beyond ridicule and were certainly prone to conflict. Frank Spence often found his commands at odds with those of the nuns and noted they made little attempt to cooperate with him.38 Fijian officials in the native administration, whose authority had been undermined by the Provincial Inspectorate, found the Hygiene Mission a further insult. Ratu Rabici demanded to know whether disobedience to the sister's commands were punishable, complaining 'If additional orders are issued by & they have to be obeyed, there will be such a confusion of orders that it will not be practicable for the people to carry them all out'. The Roko Buli Serua, when the sisters were away, took the opportunity for revenge by inspecting the Catholic chapel, declaring the mats filthy, and ordering the floor to be washed and raked.39

35 David Wilkinson, Memorandum, 1894, MOM 338.
36 See for instance the report on Hygiene Work conducted by Mrs Small, her two daughters and Miss Dodson, CSO 3093/1899 and Mary Ballantine's report on her work in Bua in CSO 5122/1901. 37 Na Eklesia mai Viti: A kenai Tukutuku, 1936 RCAF 4/5/7, p. 318. The Methodist hygiene sisters had in fact been preceded in 1897 by Hannah Dudley; she however was engaged in a separate area of the mission's activity, concerned the local Indian population (see ch. 9).
38 See, for instance, CSO 2715/1899, CSO 1147/1900.
The fact that the sisters assumed a position of authority over Fijian men in general, from which they chastised them - as when Sister Stanislas reproached fathers and men for the condition of their houses, or when husbands were lectured over the treatment of their wives - was clearly resented. In Ba, this resentment combined sectarian and political resistance with sexual antagonism. Father Dupont witnessed young men of Nailaga harassing the European Roman Catholic sister on her way to a hygiene visit: they 'started after her in rows of two or three following close upon each other like a thick body of men, and began 'meke'ing' on the top of their voices - .... Some called after the Sister using abusive and insulting language that I would not repeat here...'. The Fijian sisters, or ivukevuke suffered similar treatment, and worse: the Provincial Inspector related 'the same beasts entered the native Sisters' house - trespassing to do so - and lifted their sulus and broke wind in front of the sisters. A greater insult is not possible amongst Fijians.

Even before the Hygiene Mission there were complaints concerning the very existence of ivukevuke. A formal order for Fijian women, the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth was not established till 1891, but a few Fijian women were leading a nun-like existence before then. Bishop Vidal found 'a little group of Fijian lay helpers living like si[si]sters without the habit' when he arrived in 1888. The women who heard the call for a vocation - and many of their pious, but conventionally worded letters to the Bishop on this matter survive - came into conflict with their families and the normal expectation that Fijian girls should marry. The first to express a desire for a vocation had been twelve year old Emerentiana, a pupil at Wairiki, who '[o]ne day ..told a sister that she did not want to marry but ...would like to stay with [t]he Sisters and help them to teach'. Selina, one of the first novices 'had to withstand beatings from her non-[Catholic relatives, and eventually to run away to avoid a forced marriage'. The opposition to even this small loss of women was plainly stated by Council of Chiefs. In 1890 it resolved:

we are much averse to our young women being trained to become sisters (Alewa tabu) or nuns. The male population of Fiji is largely in excess of the female, besides which the seclusion of women is unknown to us and is an unnatural condition to which our people are not suited. We therefore beg to recommend that Your Excellency will see your way to at once prohibit it.

There was of course a precedent for women in Fiji to be priestesses, and the seclusion of women for years at a time while breastfeeding was customary. But there appears to

40 Sister Stanislas to Vidal, 3 Apr. 1899, CSO 1777/1899; Rougier to O'Brien, 1 Sep. 1899, CSO 3920/1899.
41 Father Dupont to Provincial Inspector, 11 Jan. 1901; and excerpt from Provincial Inspector's Diary for January 1901, CSO 1071/1901.
42 PMB 465.
44 Council of Chiefs, 1890, Resolution 3.
45 Priestesses were usually described as having low status and little significance. See for instance Williams, Fiji and the Fijians, p. 233. This view warrants a reconsideration that cannot be undertaken here.
have been no precedent for a totally celibate existence for women. In the context of *na lutu sobu itaukei*, the message was clearly that *ivukevuke* could better save the race by marrying and having children.

Let us now turn to the relations among the various groups of women in the Hygiene Mission. There is ample evidence showing what the European women workers thought of the mothers they were commissioned to befriend and instruct. Their views were in fact very similar to those of the white male administrators. Sister Mary Joseph, of Cawaci on Ovalau said that Fijian women lacked affection for their children, 'They scarcely seem to possess true maternal love ...'. Mrs Small, reporting on her tour of the towns of the Waimaro district, where many children had died of whooping cough, wrote that she 'dwelt more strongly than ever... on the culpability of mothers neglecting their children'. Mrs Heighway made remarks like 'Emma's child died today. I warned her about weaning, but it was of no avail. It is not much wonder that the population is decreasing'. Mrs Spence wrote, ' -it is dreadful to see how the poor little creatures are neglected. Some of the women are so densely stupid, I am afraid it will be a long time before any sense is drummed into them...' and later in the same diary remarked, 'I feel sure the decrease is caused mainly by the gross neglect and ignorance of mothers'. The support of white women for the thesis that Fijian women were ignorant, negligent and deficient in maternal feeling, coming as it did from the race and sex which officials acknowledged as experts in these matters, was a ringing endorsement of their own diagnosis.

Fijian women often responded with ridicule, evasion and opposition. Sister Mary Stanislas, recounting her house inspections in the village of Nuku noted, 'These good people feel greatly inclined to laugh when they see me lift up their mats, shake the grass, thrust my hand to the very bottom and in every possible corner to see in what state is the bedding'. Sister Mary Agnes used the evocative Fijian word for 'cunning' - compounded from *qase* the term for old person - when admitting, ' I think they [the women] sometimes try to deceive me...but I learn more and more that with them we must be *qasegase* [sic]'. Mrs Spence observed that Fijian women were 'full of tricks'. Mrs Heighway recorded the resentment and ingratitude she encountered. On one occasion when a mother brought her 'a nice fish as a token of gratitude' she wryly commented, 'This does not often occur'.

A constant cause of conflict and deceit was old mats, which the hygienists wanted destroyed, and which Fijian women wanted to keep for everyday use, saving good mats

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46 Sister Mary Joseph to Father Rougier, 2 Aug. 1899, in CSO 3920/1899.
47 Mrs Small's report for the first 6 months of 1900, in CSO 3093/1900.
48 Heighway Family, 'Not as Men Build', p. 103.
49 Mrs Spence's diary for August 1900, CSO 3534/1900.
50 CSO 1777/1899.
51 Sr Mary Agnes to Vidal, 12 Apr. 1899, CSO 2024/1899.
52 Diary for August 1900, CSO 3534/1900.
53 Heighway Family, 'Not as Men Build', p. 105.
for special occasions. Mrs Heighway would send her boys to search around the outside of the village, while she subjected the women to a lecture. At one village her boys got together a 'a heap of horrid dirty things' which the women had tried to hide. She summoned them to claim their goods, and told those who came forward what could be tolerated and what could not. The women were ordered to wash the items they could keep and bring them back for reexamination. 'The rest were committed to the flames'. Mr Spence reported the clean-up of Korotasesere supervised by Mrs Spence: 'old and rotten mats were hidden away in yam huts in the plantations & unearthed by us' and at Malaki they ordered the 'dirty stinking mats' on which children were lying to be burnt. But the women asked to throw the mats into the sea instead, citing the belief that otherwise the children 'would get itch & pine away & die'. Generally it was the authoritative, older women with whom the hygiene workers came into open conflict, and these were reviled as the embodiment of Fijian conservatism. Rougier declared 'I could quote many very interesting rapports [sic] showing ...the battle they [the hygiene sisters] have fought against the old fijian women [sic] ...'. But they proved stubborn opponents. According to Spence, one might as well 'try to shame a donkey as an old Fijian woman'.

How did villagers respond to the Fijian women engaged on the side of the Hygiene Mission? Ivukevuke were hardly mentioned in the sisters' reports but it appears they worked mainly as their personal assistants with little scope for initiative. Their ability to impress Fijian mothers can only have been limited. They were likely to have been handicapped by ambivalence with respect to ivukevuke. Moreover, their and the European nuns' inexperience of marriage and child bearing was probably a significant disadvantage in teaching Fijian multiparae mothercraft, who no doubt considered themselves better qualified to speak. On the other hand, in Vanua Levu Mr Spence once observed there were several 'intelligent' Fijian women who had lived - presumably as servants - with Wesleyan minister's wives, and who 'say they are afraid to speak to their people for fear of ridicule and now try to help Mrs Spence by urging their people to do what is required...'. This suggests a sprinkling of women whose previous experience made the practices advocated by the Hygiene Mission both intelligible and acceptable.

The most promising avenue for the Hygiene Mission would indeed have been a coordinated effort through women such as these, or through the wives of talatala and lower ranking church functionaries: they enjoyed a certain status and authority, and shared with ordinary Fijian women a common culture and experience of motherhood. These attributes Mrs Heighway had been able to exploit in her 'brown sisters'.

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54 Heighway Family, 'Not as Men Build', p. 100.
55 Diary for May, Provincial Inspector Bua & Cakaudrove, CSO 2225/1900. This detail suggests special beliefs relating to the properties of mats and their association with reproduction which I have not been able to identify further - though the general cultural values associated with such goods have already been mentioned in chs 1, 3 & 5.
56 Rougier to Governor, 27 Jul. 1900, CSO 2852/1900.
57 Diary for March, Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove and Bua, CSO 1436/1899.
58 Diary for May, Provincial Inspector Bua and Macuata, CSO 2225/1900.
have ceased. The Hygiene Mission as a whole totally failed to conscript Fijian women in the service of its aims.

The heyday of the Hygiene Mission and the whole range of O'Brien's reforms passed with his departure in 1901. His successor Allardyce, as Administrator, favoured the 'make haste slowly' approach, and by 1903 the Hygiene Mission was no more. Sister Mary Stanislas evidently regretted its cessation, seeing hygiene work as a good way of making contact with the people. But many of her fellow sisters were probably relieved. Some were physically delicate, and apprehensive about the work from the start. And aside from other inconveniences, village accommodation during hygiene tours was always a problem. The sisters were accustomed to orderly regimes of prayer and early retirement in the evenings, and found their village hosts too active and noisy at night. The difficulty of having no place of their own in which to rest, and to cultivate their spiritual strength, was a recurrent complaint. So the sisters returned to the relative comfort and routine of their schools and convents.

After the Hygiene Mission the Methodist Church in Fiji continued to engage unmarried women in order to compete with Roman Catholic nuns. Despite the long service and achievements of individuals like Mary Ballantyne, most Methodist sisters did not last. They suffered sickness, encountered obstacles, or married. Miss Annie Maude Griffin, who first came to Fiji in 1912, identified the greatest difficulties single women faced in the Fiji Methodist mission as loneliness and a lack of status. She recalled:

I never had the great loneliness that many other sisters had; and often broke down altogether under it or survived because of their independant [sic] spirits. This was not always eased but rather aggravated by the fact there was a missionary & his wife & family there - for the status of a single woman & a mission sister was sometimes regarded as one sister told me - as something lower than a general servant - & this in spite of the fact that in many cases if not most - the sisters were better educated & at home socially higher than the missionary's wife.

The Provincial Inspectorate also dissolved and inspectors were transferred to other positions. Frank Spence continued to take a zealous interest in sanitation and ten years later as Commissioner Namosi kept the old stamping ground of Sister Stanislas in impeccable order. He died, just short of retirement, during the great flu epidemic in 1919 doing his best to save Fijian lives, and left his widow alone and with no money. For many years she eked a livelihood by running a hostel for the government's Suva Girls Grammar School but then she was forced to retire and to plead for financial help. She claimed forty years connection with the government but especially highlighted the four and a half years she rendered extraordinary service beside her husband in the

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59 Personal communication, Sister Gennaro.
60 Diary for March 1899, Provincial Inspector Bua and Macuata, CSO 1436/1899.
61 CSO 3241/1900 and remarks relating to Sister Mary Elizabeth and Loreto in Rougier to O'Brien, 1 Sep. 1899, CSO 3920/1899.
63 CSO 6712/1913.
four and a half years she rendered extraordinary service beside her husband in the Provincial Inspectorate, forwarding her diary of that period for the Governor's perusal.\textsuperscript{64} This was returned to her with bland comments, and does not appear to have influenced the government's decision in allocating a tiny sum which it viewed as a charitable gesture.\textsuperscript{65}

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The government's efforts to educate Fijian mothers extended beyond the Hygiene Mission into the medium of print. The official Fijian language newspaper \textit{Na Mata}, which was issued to all Fijian appointees, was seen by the administration as an important tool in the endeavour to save the race. Every conceivable aspect of \textit{na lutu sobu itaukei} and the government's attempts to reverse demographic decline were given space on its pages: population statistics, predictions of the imminent demise of the Taukei (\textit{e na sega ni dede ko ni sa na kawaboko}' - 'it will not be long before you are extinct\textsuperscript{66}'), the Provincial Inspectorate, the Hygiene Mission, the laying of new pipes, the establishment of new hospitals, relevant native regulations, Brewster's experiments with cattle in the highlands, and so forth.

Some articles carried a special message for women. When Ana, the midwife of Ra mentioned in the previous chapter, was convicted for abortion, \textit{Na Mata} covered the case, saying 'It is good that you [the reader] know about this and speak about it amongst yourselves so that every woman understands that abortion is a most evil act, evil in the eyes of the Government and also evil in the eyes of the Church'.\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Na Mata} also published the Decrease Commission's condemnation of such practices as fishing by pregnant, suckling or menstruating women, and illustrated these points with parables based on real events. One concerned Sinate, who had been a healthy, married woman five months pregnant, fishing with other women in knee-deep water. They suddenly saw she had fallen in a faint but when they reached her she was dead. 'May this be a lesson to women and mothers not to go fishing at such times'.\textsuperscript{68} Another article entitled 'A Child reared in the European manner', described how a Fijian couple had adopted foreign ways: a hospital birth with forceps delivery; baby washed in warm water and soap; umbilical cord cut, tied and bandaged \textit{vakavavalagi}; infant fed cow's milk to complement mother's milk; given a foreign name and dressed in loose, thin, light clothing, frequently washed; vaccinated by the European doctor; later fed biscuits to complement cow's milk; well cared for and did not catch \textit{coko}; and house spacious, floors wooden and mats and mosquito screens regularly washed and aired. As a result, at only one year of age, the child was a bonny 27 pounds. Any doubters were invited to see the proof for themselves by visiting Vunisinu, in the district of Burebasaga, and asking Timoci Covu and his wife

\begin{enumerate}
\item CSO 5272/1928.
\item CSO 1023/1930.
\item \textit{Na Mata}, Jan. 1899.
\item \textit{Na Mata}, Jan. 1900, p. 4; see also the discussion of this case in ch. 6.
\item \textit{Na Mata}, Jan. 1897, p. 2.
\end{enumerate}
to show them their prize boy Jalesi Adasoni (Charles Anderson). Sometimes, however, women were directly addressed: O'Brien in one appeal exhorted na tina ni gone itaukei not to take their babies to their gardens, nor leave them at home alone, for 'This custom is a custom of the time of darkness, but today customs like this are the reason why the people of the land are decreasing'.

Articles in *Na Mata* clearly established a set of dichotomies: with old, dark and decrease on the one hand, opposing new, light and increase on the other. Fijian practices relating to the treatment of pregnancy, childbirth, babies and the sick were declared destructive, obsolete and benighted. The good results of modern ways were advertised: regulations concerning cleanliness, and the care of women and small children were reported to have led to small increases in some localities, or to reductions in the number of still-births.

Brochures by Dr Corney and May C. Anderson, Matron of the Suva Colonial Hospital concerning the appropriate treatment of the umbilical cord and other midwifery skills were printed and intended for general distribution among the female population. A few copies were earmarked for 'native wise women of known repute (such as Adi Alisi, Maraia, Mereani of Viwa, and a few other arch-midwives.)'. These brochures were said to be in great request, and Mr Spence reported 'Several intelligent women have asked for a copy'. Some of the Hygiene Mission workers also used them.

But were Fijian women influenced by this big educational effort in print, some of which was pointed at them? For *Na Mata* and other official publications to communicate, they had first to be distributed and secondly to be read. A number of comments dating from the turn of the century put the existence of sufficient literacy and access in doubt. Though most of the younger generation had been to village schools where they were taught the Bible, pupils seem to have learned passages by heart rather than the ability to read them. Considerably later, in 1912, Annie Maude Griffin commented that 'even the older ones after several years seemed to have advanced very little in reading Fijian'.

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70 *Na Mata*, Mar. 1898, p. 154

71 Numerous examples, for instance, *Na Mata*, Dec. 1900, p. 181 reporting slight increases in Rewa; or *Na Mata*, Aug. 1897, reporting a drop in the number of still-births in the district of Nasinu following measures to prevent women from doing heavy work.


73 Corney's minute, 8 Sep. 1899, CSO 987/1899. For a discussion of midwives, see the ch. 9.

74 Diary for July, 1900, CSO 2963/1900.

75 Mrs Small's report for the first six months of 1900 in CSO 3093/1900.


77 Annie Maude Griffin, (Partly) *Autobiography of A.M.Griffin*, MAF M/94/(b)
Frank Spence observed that in many parts of Cakaudrove Na Mata was actually 'read' upside down.\textsuperscript{78}

\textit{Na Mata} was not in fact within the reach of Fijian women, despite official declarations like: 'The Fijian mother is dreadfully ignorant. Na Mata is within her reach, the women workers are not'.\textsuperscript{79} The publication was only sent to officials, who were male, and they were supposed to gather the people together, read aloud interesting pieces and discuss them.\textsuperscript{80} But sometimes the official did not even bother to read \textit{Na Mata}. There were complaints like 'Buli Tokaimalo seems never to have read his Na Mata'.\textsuperscript{81} Or if he did, he did not pass the news on: 'but we never see the Mata, the Turaga ni Koro alone receives & reads it by himself, he never tells us what is in it'.\textsuperscript{82} When he did, this was likely to be at gatherings of men only.

Ironically, \textit{Na Mata} itself describes one occasion when information was disseminated to women and received. The Native Stipendiary Magistrate of Bua, writing under the pseudonym of 'ko Gaunavou' or 'Mr New Age', wrote how, when his hearings were over, he assembled the women and gave them the benefit of Corney's instructions for the umbilical cord: 'but when I read it to them, great was the amazement of the women, who think this will be no use to us the Taukei'.\textsuperscript{83} It seems likely that \textit{Na Mata} affected a few men like Mr New Age, and left the women in the dark.

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The attempts to remake Fijian mothers through edict and education had a number of marked effects, not all intended. Though the authorities made a clear distinction between the two approaches, in practice they were difficult to distinguish. Women were persecuted through both, whether for alleged neglect, abortion, contraception or for dirty mats and mosquito screens. Both evoked responses of resentment and evasion. In the longer term, this was unfortunate, for it drove many aspects of women's culture further underground - particularly those relating to contraception, abortion, midwifery and healing. The government's first attempts to reach out and change the life of Fijian women created a climate of distrust that most certainly handicapped its later efforts particularly in medical services.

The correlated attempts to make new husbands held responsible for the reproductive performance of their women, and new chiefs responsible for the reproductive performance of their people, led to some redefinition of male power and authority. But the Hygiene Mission and the Provincial Inspectorate in many respects curtailed and demoted chiefly power as never since Cession. This was keenly appreciated

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\textsuperscript{78} Diary for July, 1899, Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove and Bua, CSO 3541/1899.

\textsuperscript{79} Allardyce's minute, 20 Nov. 1900, CSO 4370/1900.

\textsuperscript{80} Allardyce's minute, 30 Jul. 1900, CSO 2852/1900.

\textsuperscript{81} Rougier to O'Brien, 27 Jul. 1900, CSO 2852/1900.

\textsuperscript{82} Sister Marie to Rougier, 21 Jul. 1900, CSO 2852/1900.

\textsuperscript{83} Na Mata, May 1900, p. 70.
in Tailevu where the Roko struggled bitterly with the Provincial Inspector for precedence and set an example for other Roko to follow. One might also wonder whether the objections raised decades later by Fijian members of the Legislative Council against the demand by white women in Fiji for the vote was coloured by memories of the Hygiene Mission; or at any rate expressed an antipathy on the part of Fijian leaders to be subject to any white woman but the Queen. Moreover, parts of Fiji were now brought into contact with European officialdom as never before. One village patrolled by Spence had last seen a white officer's face in 1887. The zealous program of sanitary reform excited widespread political disaffection. According to Brewster, O'Brien's efforts to save the race were the main reason for the support Fijians gave, in 1900, for the Colony's annexation to New Zealand - which, as O'Brien tried to argue, would have been a much worse fate!

The 'abolition of polygamy' and the virtual obsolescence of the men's house had already led to changes in accommodation and patterns of residence. The legislative and administrative initiatives at the turn of the century now added significantly to these transformations. Under the Provincial Inspectorate, a Fiji-wide campaign was undertaken, not just to renew old housing stock, but to create more housing, and new forms and standards. The new accommodation was intended both to be healthier and a more fitting setting for the work of women as mothers and wives. The report on Fijian vital statistics for the year 1900 proclaimed, 'never in any previous year have so many houses been built, and never I believe have the natives been so well housed all through.' Efforts were made to realise the native regulation at last: every couple was to have their own house. Further, every house was to be 'homey'.

The Spences often described the new houses they had ordered for married couples. In Vuwai, 'to give each married person a house 59 houses will have to be built'; in Valeni, 'Ten more houses required to give each married couple a house'; in Na Tua, 'Each married couple has a comfortable house and are very well off in mats...'. Spence was so pleased with the tasteful decoration of the houses of Korovou that he told the men 'I thought the women's work left nothing to be desired and they would have to build houses of a much higher standard to be in keeping with the interior ...' Since the housing campaign stimulated shopping, it also spurred men to earn money. In 1900, during the second year of the Provincial Inspectorate, Spence celebrated the changes over the past year,

84 Report for August, Provincial Inspector Bua and Cakaudrove, CSO 3534/1900.
85 CSO 1895/1928.
86 Diary for July 1899, Provincial Inspector Cakaudrove and Bua, CSO 3541/1899.
88 CSO 2122/1901.
89 Diary for September, Provincial Inspector Bua and Cakaudrove, CSO 3933/1900; Diary for May, Provincial Inspector Bua and Cakaudrove, CSO 2644/1901.
90 Diary for December, Provincial Inspector Bua and Cakaudrove, CSO 544/1901.
A great many people right throughout Bua & Cakaudrove are now quite well off in Mats, Lamps, Lanterns & Clothes and many of the houses look smart. The raised sleeping places with the different coloured fringes of wool on the mats look quite pretty. The amount of wool purchased during the year from traders has been five times as much as before. Ah Tai (trader) tells me he has sold 25 dozen screens during the past year and a half. There is a wonderful lot of new mats in every town.

Recognizably bourgeois styles of domesticity were encouraged. A prize, for instance, was awarded to Naidole, the wife of the carpenter Josefa for their house at Yaroi:

..the interior was not only clean but cosy looking, the walls were lined with black & white tappa, a table with a tappa table-cloth, flowers on the table, also pen & ink, a shelf with a row of clean cups & saucers & besides (sic) the raised vata an iron bedstead, with clean screens & lace valance, pillows, with nice clean pillow cases.91

External kitchens were also promoted. The returns to the circular issued in 1901 asking for the numbers of houses and kitchens built up to 31st August in that year showed that in many places more kitchens than houses had been built.92 Among other effects, these kitchens probably hastened the passing of certain vestiges of the men's house by assuming some of their functions. Boys, once they reached puberty, had to avoid close contact with their sisters and therefore slept away from the family home. Some hygiene mission reports mentioned the poor state of 'boys' houses', which one Assistant Colonial Secretary described as 'death traps'.93 So a secondary purpose these kitchens came to serve was as a place closer to home where the boys could sleep.94 But aside from providing an extra sleeping area, the kitchen further equated food preparation with women's work. Outside kitchens certainly made it easier to keep the inside of the main house free from grime and smoke sediment, and may have had some health benefits, since smoky sleeping areas are still linked with respiratory disorders.95

The turn of the century marked the introduction of confused, inappropriate and frequently incorrect advice regarding baby-care, particularly infant feeding.96 There were three main areas of government concern: the Fijian custom of keeping an infant away from its mother's breast for up to four days after birth; the length of time the child was kept at the breast; and the types of foods given to infants and their manner of preparation. Sister Stanislas' comments were typical of the European reaction to premasticated food:

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91 Diary for September, Provincial Inspector Bua and Cakaudrove, CSO 3933/1900.
92 CSO 4309/1901.
93 Sutherland's minute, 12 Aug. 1902, CSO 3486/1902; see also Heighway Family, 'Not as Men Build', p. 99.
At Wanadiro I saw the way young mothers feed their babies; it is almost incredible, yet I saw it with my own eyes, I saw a young mother give her child a kind of pap prepared with a bit of taro. Having asked her how and when she had prepared it, she answered she had masticated it the previous day, & she was feeding her baby with that fermented stuff 24 hours after she herself chewed it. I asked myself how that dirty pap could be profitable to a child, especially when the mother who chews the said pap had her mouth infected with the smoke of tobacco [sic]. What pity!97

Premasticated food was deplored as a source of infection. For diseases transmitted by droplet infection, like tuberculosis, it probably was.

Dr Finucane's advice, which was dispensed to the Roman Catholic Hygiene sisters and discussed at Provincial Council meetings throughout Fiji, was that a mother should give her infant nothing but her own milk for the first year 'every third hour and not whenever the infant cries'; and that at the end of one year, the infant should be weaned.98 Though clocks and watches were not standard items in the koro, his advice, if followed, was certain to have caused infant malnutrition - since breast-milk is an insufficient food in itself past an infant's first six months, and a diet without it past the age of one year, in the absence of an adequate substitute, would be deficient too. Many of the other foodstuffs he advocated - such as boiled eggs, milk either cow's or tinned, rice and cornflour were unsuitable for various reasons: being culturally unacceptable (like boiled eggs); costly or difficult to obtain; insufficiently nutritious; or potentially dangerous. However, to add to the confusion, hygiene workers gave conflicting variants of his instructions. Cow's milk was a particularly vexed matter. Some officials actively promoted its use in the face of Fijian resistance, while other workers, like Mrs Spence, believed it would cause more harm than good - since milk went bad so quickly in Fiji's climate and required such careful and hygienic handling.99 The whole issue of cow's milk for infants, as one Native Medical Practitioner declared, was to the people 'most obscure'. 100

In the project to change Fijian women by way of education, the administration apprehended some role for female agency - but this was white and missionary. The Roman Catholic Church with its long tradition of female religious vocation had the least ideological difficulty with this demand. But its hygiene sisters provoked opposition. The Methodist Mission was handicapped by its tendency to cast women primarily as wives and never fully supported the plan anyway, so the valiant work done by some Methodist women was unsystematic. The unhappiest agent of hygiene appears to have been Mrs Spence. Her womanhood, race and social status were deemed qualifications for the job of 'educating' Fijian mothers - but this was done with scant cooperation from Fijian women and in the vicarious capacity as an official's wife. She served the government

98 Copy of Finucane's printed instructions, 4 Feb. 1899 in CSO 4919/1898.
99 Laura Spence to Native Commissioner, 6 Jan. 1901, CSO 544/1901.
100 CSO 3343/1899.
with unrivalled and unsolicited zeal, but never enjoyed formal recognition or adequate recompense - as shown by the forlorn and penurious end to her career. As yet there was no room in the imperial administration for women like her.

If the agency of white women was limited, any agency for Fijian women was dismissed. At an early stage in the Decrease Commission, the province of Bua had instituted women's meetings and the Decrease Report itself recommended the election of village matrons, monthly meetings of wives to discuss child health and the training of Fijian women as nurses and midwives.\footnote{DR, pp. 226, 139, 171, 189.} This last found no place in O'Brien's program while he vetoed matrons' meetings saying they would only afford 'natives further opportunity for gratifying their inordinate passion for talk'.\footnote{O'Brien to Secretary of State, 31 Dec. 1897, CO 83/67.} Fijian women were construed as passive objects of action by officials, husbands, chiefs and white female hygienists.

The new Fijian mother did not materialise from the efforts to create her by edict and education. Nor was O'Brien's age of sanitation and hygiene splendidly reflected in vital statistics. The usual epidemics, at times aggravated by floods and droughts, were held responsible for retarding improvements in mortality rates while the Fijian population continued to decline. In 1898, the Taukei numbered 98,954; in 1899: 98,478; in 1900: 97,709; and in 1901, the year of O'Brien's departure, the census returned 94,397.\footnote{The census figure includes 3,378 absentees. Annual reports on vital statistics in CSO 3007/1899; 1262/1900; 2122/1901; 3678/1902.} For all appearances, his efforts to 'save the race' and change its mothers had proven futile.
Chapter Eight

New Mothers by Training

A third strategy for changing Fijian mothers was tried through special training. Two developments will be addressed here: the establishment of special schools by the Methodist Mission to train Fijian girls as mothers and home-makers; and the training of Native Obstetric Nurses to attend childbirth, care for the sick, and instruct na tina ni gone itaukei. These trained women were expected to transform Fijian motherhood from within and to succeed where previous government initiatives had failed. Though success seemed elusive, the strategy did produce a 'new' Fijian woman.

Special girls' education and the nursing profession were developments closely linked. Matavelo, the school for girls opened by the Methodist Mission in 1899 and the model for later schools, was projected as the Wesleyan response to the Decrease Report on the argument that the best way to check the decrease would be through schools such as this. The training of Fijian women as nurses had been proposed by the Decrease Report as part of its recommendations for improved medical services and the Hygiene Mission, but was initially omitted from these measures and followed only from their failure. With the conflict between indigenous and colonial medicine intensifying around the turn of the century, both Matavelo and the fledgling Fijian nursing profession were intended to fight what, for the colonial imagination, was the archetypal 'old Fijian woman': the traditional midwife. Hence an important aim of Matavelo was to teach the Fijian girl 'to combat sensibly sickness, that she may not need to resort to the superstitious "wise woman" of the village...', while the Native Obstetric Nurses were in due course expected to 'replace all the old time midwives with their superstitious and unsanitary habits'. Finally, Matavelo proved to be a major supplier of candidates for nursing, while the nursing profession itself increased the demand for improved girls' schooling.

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Prior to 1899 the Methodist Mission in Fiji ran no schools exclusively for girls. Boys and girls were taught together in village schools and those boys marked for a career in the church proceeded to theological training. The Roman Catholic Mission, on the other hand, opened its first girls' boarding school in 1882, offered sexually segregated boarding facilities at each station, was capable of providing an academically more rigorous education than the Methodists and also trained Fijian girls for a religious vocation. Yet an important component of their educational philosophy for girls, as Sister 1

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1 Resolutions of the Board of Missions in Sydney concerning the Sanitary and Hygienic Mission in Fiji, enclosed in CSO 1186/1899.
2 DR, pp. 171, 189.
Therese declared, was to 'render them good mothers of the family'. The neglect of girls by the Methodists was noted by Reverend Dr George Brown on his visit to Fiji in 1898 when he suggested that his brethren emulate Wesleyan experiments in New Guinea. There girls' academic and religious training was combined with practical subjects thought fitting for their sex. Seeing in specially designed girls' education an answer to na lutu sobu itaukei, Reverend William Slade approached O'Brien for support to establish a school in Ba where girls would be taught 'sewing, the care of the sick, the care of children, the English language, and sanitation'. O'Brien refused direct financial assistance and reiterated his hope that the Methodists would join the Hygiene Mission. Yet with backing from the Ba provincial administration Matavelo, under the supervision of Miss Constance Moorehead, opened its doors to 75 students in August 1899.

Hygiene was both a practical and theoretical preoccupation at Matavelo. According to its first report, 'Lessons are given on Personal & Domestic cleanliness ... No scholar is permitted to take her place in class, wearing dirty clothes & the Mistresses are assiduous in discouraging the indiscriminate expectoration & the distressing bronchial & nasal scrapings that are the infallible signs of the presence of natives'. Girls were taken in turn into the mistresses' residence for instruction in housework. Later, training in laundry and mat-making was turned to profit. Part of the money which the girls earned by selling their mats or taking in laundry went to school funds - and their laundry work was highly praised.

Theoretical training received a boost from the Colonial Office. In 1903 a circular distributed throughout the empire described the program of sanitary education conducted in schools in Lagos under its Governor, Sir William MacGregor, who had been Fiji's first Chief Medical Officer. Heads of colonial governments were asked whether such work was, or might be, undertaken within their own administrations. While the government in Fiji replied that such programs were beyond present capacities, correspondence with London reinforced official interest in sanitary education and schools in Fiji were requested to include elementary hygiene in their curriculum.

Girls at Matavelo were certainly taught about germs, the diseases they cause, how germs can be destroyed, how flies and mosquitoes carry disease, the evils of keeping windows and doors closed at night, food types and their uses, the effects of yaws, the government's measures against leprosy and high rates of Fijian infant mortality. An examination paper at Matavelo in 1910 shows how lessons were linked to na lutu sobu itaukei. When 45 girls, aged between 13 and 17 were asked why so many Fijian babies

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4 Sister Therese to Rougier, Aug. 1899, CSO 3920/1899.
6 Minute, 12 Sep. 1898, CSO 3498/1898.
7 CSO 1910/1900.
8 Report of inspection of Matavelo by J. V. Thompson, CSO 6480/1909.
9 Secretary of State's circular contained in CSO 5156/1903. Later correspondence in CSO 4280/1905; CSO 10876/1909.
died, one pupil Tania wrote: 'Because their mothers do not take care of them, and there is altogether too much dirt and filth'. Salaseini wrote: 'Because they are not taken care of but allowed to be with children afflicted with yaws. They thus contract the disease and it weakens their blood and they die'. Litiana stated: 'The cause of so many Fijian infants dying is that when they are still very young there is given to them strong food such as dalo and yam. This injures their intestines which are still weak'. Mere said: 'Because sickly mothers suckle their children and the children contract their mothers' disease'. When asked what should be done, Titilia answered, 'If a child is ill let it be taken at once to a doctor'. Many replies mentioned cow's milk. Mere declared 'They should drink wholesome milk and [be] prevented from contracting yaws and other diseases'. Elena answered, 'They should not eat, they should only drink good milk'. And Litiana exclaimed, 'Let the chiefs stir themselves to buy cows so that the little children may be able to get good milk when necessary'.

In its first year of operation Slade wrote with great feeling about Matavelo. 'Would to God we had the means to establish such schools in every centre of native population! What a change might then be effected in the next generation of Fijian women!' Fijian chiefs were more ambivalent. In 1910 Ba Provincial Council complained that Matavelo girls thought local lads beneath them and married half-castes, Europeans and others instead. When a similar school was suggested for Viwa strong objection was raised in the Tailevu Provincial Council.

The Chiefs pointed out that if their men were educated they wd influence the women but that if the women were educated only they wd despise their men! They also stated that the Ba Girls School was not a success in as much as the girls were of no use to their people after leaving school. They drifted all directions & even left the colony & went to Rotumah & other places as Teachers wives & so the benefit of their education was lost to their people who had paid for it.

These attitudes were not confined to Methodists. Guinard described how the men of Wainikoroiluva in Namosi resolved not to send any more of their daughters to the Catholic school because education made them arrogant, girls were useless and could never become catechists or government employees.

In the early years Matavelo suffered fluctuating Fijian support. When Roko like Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi or Ratu Jope Naculaivu sent their daughters there, the school enjoyed prestige, but at other times influential patronage was lacking. This was partly reflected in the physical condition and number of the students. To feed just 45 scholars, 450 lbs of root crops were needed daily, or approximately 6 tons a month. For adequate supplies, strong local support was therefore essential. In 1914 - a year in which

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10 CSO 1205/1911; CSO 1910/1900.
11 Slade quoted in Burton & Dean, A Hundred Years in Fiji, pp. 99-100.
13 Tailevu Provincial Council, 1908.
15 Minute 12 Jun. 1899, CSO 3498/1898.
none of the Ba chiefs had their daughters at the school - the inspector found that student numbers had dwindled from more than a hundred the previous year to forty two girls visibly listless and unhealthy from eating little but rice.16

The calibre of students also fluctuated. When the school was in disfavour, district chiefs or Buli sent girls to Matavelo who were judged by the school's inspectors as too old and unintelligent, while village schools were unwilling to part with bright pupils who reflected well on their teachers at the annual examinations. Although Matavelo had good teachers, the Chairman once stressed 'we cannot supply these dull and backward children with brains...'.17

Staffing was a problem too. The high turnover of women teachers was to some extent offset by the long service of Mary Ballantine. A former women's prison officer from Auckland, she ran Matavelo from 1903 till her death in 1918, absent only due to illness in 1914 and 1915. Dedicated and able to speak Fijian, she relied on the help of, at most, one other European mission sister who often could not speak Fijian, and suitable senior students if available. Once girls were recruited from Matavelo for nursing, competent Fijian monitors became yet harder to secure.18

Matavelo was thus in many ways hampered in its early endeavours to educate the future mothers of the Taukei. Its ability even to inculcate acceptable standards of hygiene was from time to time thrown into doubt by the sanitary conditions of the school. The District Medical Officer in 1908 found Matavelo overcrowded, its latrine accommodation inadequate and the grounds littered with excrement.19 A damning report of its educational standards and methods was penned by the anthropologist and then schoolmaster A. M. Hocart who inspected the school in 1910. His only positive remark was that the pupils could sing and dance. Otherwise their instruction was based on the wrong principles; they could not deal with anything that was not 'the same as in the book'; their knowledge of English was scant; and he hinted they did too much laundry. (In defence of the girls' poor answers to Hocart's questions, Lelean stressed that 'Mr Hocart speaks indistinctly in a low tone and with compressed and immobile lips' so that even the mission staff found him impossible to decipher!)20

Matavelo survived largely on support from within the mission and administration for the school's aim to train girls 'for what is the happy lot of nearly every Fijian woman - motherhood'.21 While schools which aim 'to turn out merely efficient reproductive machines' are open to criticism, Matavelo was nevertheless in many senses successful

17 Lelean to Small, 5 Nov. 1913, CSO 9262/1913.
18 Lelean to Small, 22 Nov. 1910, CSO 7990/1910.
19 CSO 1392/1909.
21 Burton & Dean, A Hundred Years in Fiji, p. 100.
and worthwhile. Women who had been to Matavelo were said to be easily identifiable by the way they kept their homes, and many old girls satisfied the ambitions of the school by becoming influential figures. Most importantly, Matavelo legitimated within the Methodist mainstream the allocation of resources to girls' education. Other girls' schools followed on the Matavelo model in Kadavu, Rewa and Nadroga, and Mary Ballantine herself is commemorated in the girls' school in Suva bearing her name.

Matavelo also, on occasion, fostered academic ability. Lolohea Waqairawai is one legendary example. She was singled out for special mention in Thompson's report in 1909. He observed that Lolohea 'knows so much more than the other girls it is a pity not to train her as a teacher'. Her brother, Ulaiasi Radiki taught under Thompson at the prestigious Queen Victoria School for boys and wrote articles for Na Mata, while she and her three sisters were known to be 'all clever'. Such was the talented family of the Reverend Malakai Ratu and his wife Litiana - early examplars of a mission-trained intelligentsia.

Lolohea did become a teacher. At government expense she went to Sydney - and despite being a lone Fijian in a strange place who had suffered the recent loss of both her father and her brother - she graduated top of the year in 1911 from Manly Superior Public Girls and proceeded to a school for students selected on the basis of academic achievement. Examples of her work from this period survive: such as geometry exercises (one of Lolohea's best subjects) and essays on Pericles and Sir Francis Drake. Towards the end of 1913 she had the 'splendid experience' of teaching in a kindergarten, saw potential for this work in Fiji and was granted an extension of her stay in Sydney to qualify as a kindergarten teacher from Sydney Teachers' Training College. Returning in 1915 she commenced her long career in education and community service. Lolohea came to embody a 'new' type of Fijian leader: a non-chiefly woman dedicated particularly to the needs of women and children, whose humility and Christianity were deeply respected.

If Lolohea cut a 'new' profile for Fijian women, so did the Native Obstetric Nurses. The first six graduated in 1909 from Suva Colonial Hospital after a short course of training. They were Elena Lewamalai and Makareta Marama from the Roman Catholic girls school in Rewa; Vetinia Buadromo from the mission school at Lau; Lice Karawa

26 CSO 6480/1909; CSO 2262/1913.
27 Files relating to Lolohea's education in Sydney include CSO 6480/1909; CSO 2262/1913; CSO 9220/1913; CSO 404/1916.
Figure 16: Pupils from Matavelo, c. 1930, with their handiwork.
from Bau; and Dania Nakauta and Arieta Vakabua both recruited from Matavelo. 29 Interestingly, by the time these nursing pioneers entered the field, Fijian men had been practising as Native Medical Practitioners for 21 years and the recommendations of the Decrease Report for the training of Fijian women as nurses and midwives had been in print for twelve. 30 Why, one might wonder, the delay?

Fijian maternal and child health was of course initially not on the colonial agenda. Following the measles epidemic of 1875 the government's small medical staff and budget, insofar as it catered for the Taukei, concentrated on vaccination and quarantine. When the health of children and mothers became an official concern in the 1890s, a number of factors militated against training Fijian women in obstetrics and medical care. One was the shortage of 'training material' in the form of women giving birth in hospital. European women in Fiji delivered at home, since hospitals were regarded as dangerous haunts of post partum infection and were anyway too few and out of reach. Women summoned a doctor if available, but usually relied on each other or their husband and in remote areas the use of a Fijian midwife was not unknown. 31 Only once did the 19th century colonial medical service in Fiji enjoy the services of a qualified midwife - for a few months until she died. 32

Another factor was ignorance. Few Medical Officers were likely to have had sound formal training in obstetrics and Native Medical Practitioners knew even less. 33 The first graduates were keenly aware of the gaps in their medical education concerning infant care, still-birth, maternal deaths and, as the words of NMP Tailevu were translated, 'the relations of the apparatus connected with generation in the female, the physiology of menstruation, and the diseases contingent on women'. 34 NMPs had printed instructions not to meddle with midwifery cases, and many were probably happy with this restriction. 35 One NMP was said to prefer death to attending a woman in labour. 36

Perhaps the greatest obstacle was the prejudice against Fijian women which the discourse on depopulation had inflamed. Although Corney had co-authored the report recommending the training of native nurses, elsewhere he claimed 'it is admitted on all sides by people who are acquainted with the Fijian race that no less suitable material could be found out of which to mould even the crudest sick-attendant'. 37 As Chief Medical

29 CSO 2864/1909.
34 Report of the First Annual Meeting of Native Practitioners (Vuniwai i Taukei), CSO 3322/1899.
35 CSO 987/1899.
36 CSO 5614/1909.
37 Corney's minute, 1 Sep. 1996, CSO 2875/1896.
Officer, his pronouncements carried weight. May C. Anderson, Matron of Suva Colonial Hospital, also doubted that 'any natives' had the requisite moral character for nursing. Three factors eventually subverted this prejudice: Corney's departure; criticism within and without the medical department of its failure to make any difference to maternal and infant health; and the perceived need to undermine Fijian midwives.

Colonial medical services had been expanded under Governor O'Brien through a new scheme of Provincial Hospitals and Provincial Medical Officers (PMOs) based on recommendations in the Decrease Report. The first provincial hospital was opened at Wainibokasi on the Rewa delta in 1899 and was followed by others in Ra, Kadavu, Taveuni, Bua and Nadroga. White settlers clamouring for medical services had sometimes to be reminded that these hospitals were exclusively 'for the benefit of the natives and as part of the rather ambitious scheme of Sir G. O'Brien for checking the decrease...'. O'Brien himself hoped that 'midwifery and the care of the infant, which are the very beginning of the alphabet of the decrease' would receive full attention in the new facilities.

Unfortunately, the new hospitals were unable to make headway in maternal and infant health, and their ability to attract patients - women and children especially - proved disappointing. Provincial Medical Officers complained that Fijians would not come to hospital; or only as a last resort when they were almost dead; and if there was no instant cure, they desperately tried to escape home to die. Brough's statistics from the Provincial Hospital Kadavu were typical indicators of the gender imbalance: for the month of March 1903 there had been 65 male in-patients and 46 female; 416 male out-patients and 168 female. Reports also show that parents were reluctant to bring in their children - sometimes even when they lived next door.

A number of possible explanations could be given. Within the village and local network there was already an indigenous 'medical infrastructure' more accessible and familiar to all villagers, but especially women and children. Women, unlike men, had daily demands upon their labour, particularly in cooking and child care, so it was more difficult for them to leave the village. Hospital personnel were male: even if they claimed skills in midwifery and infant care, Fijian women preferred to consult other women. Aside from gender, considerations of status probably figured. The abasement and

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38 Anderson's minute, 21 Aug. 1911, CSO 6389/1911.
39 DR, p. 193.
40 CSO 5125/1908.
43 See, for example, Brough's report in CSO 4592/1903 and PMO Macuata's remark, 'I have great trouble to get them to bring in sick children.' CSO 3819/1903; or the NMP Namosi's difficulties in minute 9 Nov. 1904, in CSO 4468/1904. For the discussion of Fijian attitudes of Fijians to colonial hospitals, cf Frantz Fanon, A Dying Colonialism, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, ch. 4.
44 See for example comments relating to Wainibokasi Hospital at Tallevu Provincial Council, 1909.
reticence required from people when approaching those of rank may not have made for satisfactory communication between patient and doctor. NMPs were generally of chiefly birth and also commanded the respect due to government officials. They were sometimes observed to be proud and curt. European medical officers were also treated with a respect that possibly inhibited communication. Dr Connor worked briefly in Ra in 1903 during an outbreak of measles and described travelling in pomp from village to village: 'all the people came out and sat in front of me and those with measles crawled up on all fours and one by one were examined - even the women come on all fours.' Finally, there was the psychological comfort to a sick person of remaining in the community to which he or she belonged, a factor Sukuna stressed when explaining resistance to the early provincial hospitals. The importance of dying in one's own surroundings was signalled in former times by the custom of burying the dead in the yavu or house foundation. Parents appear to have been particularly anxious for their children to stay in the bosom of their kin in sickness and in death.

There were also more general factors. The word 'hospital' was coined in Fijian as 'vale ni mate,' vale meaning house, and mate, depending on its context, sickness or death. Though the administration wanted the phrase to convey the sense of a 'house for the sick,' a literal translation was 'house of death.' When the implications of this term were appreciated, Na Mata exhorted its readers to abandon it and refer to hospitals by the European word or as 'vale ni veivakabulai,' or the 'house where people are made better.' Eventually vale ni bula, with the word bula meaning life or health, did replace the original term. But 'house of death' chimed nicely with other Fijian perceptions of colonial medicine. In 1889 the NMPs in Ba, Loma iColo, Namosi and Kadavu all encountered the widespread belief '...that portions of the bodies of deceased persons enter largely into the composition of our medicines; and that post-mortem examinations are held - at the Colonial Hospital among other places - for the purpose of providing the necessary material'. This story was traced to Fijian prisoners working at the hospital in Suva who had witnessed post-mortems and the preservation of body parts in bottles. It produced a strong prejudice against European methods of treatment and the NMPs claimed the story had hampered their work.

Many Fijians did experience hospitals as 'houses of death'. Some inquiries into cases concerning children who had died after their parents had removed them from a vale ni mate against doctor's orders still read with a nightmarish quality. Amelia, for instance, described how she and her husband had brought their daughter Lusiana to the provincial hospital in Ra where they were given instructions they found strange and felt roughly treated by the NMP, PMO and native warder. Lusiana was forbidden to suckle from her

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45 See for example CSO 4023/1894 contained in CSO 1791/1994; CSO 1464/1899.
46 Dr Connor to Mrs Connor, 18 Apr. 1903, The Connor Papers, Fiji Museum, D-56.
48 See ch. 3.
49 For instance, Na Mata, Oct, 1900, p. 147; Nov. 1900, p. 167.
50 Report of the First Annual Meeting of Native Practitioners (Vuniwai i Taukei) CSO 3322/1889.
mother, which in any case she was too weak to do; the staff dosed her with castor oil; and the medicine carelessly forced down came up again through Lusiana's nostrils. The second night Amelia and her infant were confined alone in a ward. 'I saw the deceased was becoming worse and as the door was locked I called out loudly. Two women came up and told me that we were in the morgue. I was afraid and I opened the door and fled with deceased...'.

The *vale ni mate* symbolised the gulf between Fijian and colonial understandings of disease, which over time had moved further apart. Early missionary medicine had been closer to traditional Fijian healing in attributing a prominent role to spiritual agency while some common missionary treatments - such as poultices, blood letting and enemas, had indigenous analogues. But colonial medicine of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries had departed from its missionary predecessor. Therapies like blood-letting had been abandoned; greater emphasis was placed on sanitation; and its outlook was secular. Keesing made the contrast between the earlier 'spiritual' and the later 'clinical' approach.

A striking illustration of the contrast can be drawn from the Rewa delta in 1903. This area was medically advanced, with a Provincial Hospital, smaller facilities attached to sugar plantations and powerful Native Medical Practitioners who were scions of illustrious local lineages. When measles struck that year, printed instructions were issued in Fijian and medical personnel were supplemented to avoid a possible repetition of 1875. But the people of Rewa responded in different terms: - on one night, 'each one closed up his house, not a soul was upon the road' and '[m]en and women, the aged and children, struck with all their might upon boxes, empty tins, upon iron, upon wood, upon zinc. All this to stop the spirits who were carrying the illness'.

Fijian theories of disease causation were never invalidated by the European theories expressed in terms of miasma, poor sanitation, inappropriate behaviour, germs or parasites which often had the handicap of seeming unsupported by the facts. Sometimes the towns which Europeans considered the most unsanitary boasted the lowest mortality rates and vice versa; a woman who did heavy physical work through her first four pregnancies was observed to have died while giving birth to a still-born child

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51 CSO 4926/1908.
52 See for instance Bull's Sanima's comments in CSO 6467/1911. For the belief that the smell of a corpse could cause sickness, see Laura Thompson, *Fijian Frontier*, p. 130.
during the fifth when she was kept at home in the colonially approved manner; an epidemic in the interior district of Boubuco which the commissioner attributed to intestinal worms was more convincingly explained by the local population in terms of witchcraft.\(^{56}\) Innumerable examples of this sort could be given.

Colonial medicine in Fiji during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - before sulfad drugs and antibiotics, and practised in rough circumstances - had very limited efficacy. As the Fijian philosopher on the decrease exclaimed, 'How wretched they are, and weak, whose medicines are constantly being imported and brought here in bottles!'\(^{57}\) In contrast to the variety of Fijian therapies, colonial medicine was impoverished in its range. The strengths of the European medicine in this period - arguably surgery, improved sanitation and an ethic of careful nursing - were difficult to demonstrate in Fijian conditions.

Finally, colonial medicine was associated with coercion and penalty. Since Cession numerous offences had been established against health and public hygiene - with regulations on sanitation, the care of the sick, contagious diseases, compulsory smallpox vaccination, and so forth.\(^{58}\) Around the turn of the century such regulations were prosecuted more vigorously and supplemented by new ones. Those concerning the neglect of children have already been discussed. In addition to the provisions which allowed for the compulsory segregation of lepers found within designated areas, new regulations against yaws and ringworm also provided for removal and coerced treatment. The areas in which the leprosy, ringworm and yaws provisions operated were progressively expanded, prompting fear, evasion and distrust of the colonial authorities.\(^{59}\)

Strictly speaking, only certain elements of Fijian medicine were illegal and not till after World War 2 was there a blanket prohibition.\(^{60}\) Abortion and contraception had indeed been criminalised. The surgical procedure of *cokalosi*, for draining blood from the

\(^{56}\) CSO 2117/1899, like many others, reports an increase in an unsanitary town, a decrease in a sanitary town. In the Tavilevu Provincial Council, 1899: 'Buli Nakelo was asked how it was that there were 5 still births in his District: He could not account for it, he had prohibited women in the family way from doing any work & from fishing at any time. He related how one woman who had always worked bore 4 children; she then became enceinte & was made to keep quiet & not allowed to work. Her child was still born & that woman died giving birth!' Brewster wrote in some detail on an epidemic attributed to witchcraft in CSO 20012/1894; CSO 1755/1895.

\(^{57}\) Hocart, 'A Native Fijian on the Decline of his Race', p. 97 and footnote 2, p. 97.

\(^{58}\) Native Regulation No. 3 of 1882 in regard to the care of the sick; Native Regulation No. 4 of 1882 in regard to certain contagious diseases, and later versions; Native Regulation No. 6 of 1892 concerning the care of infants; Native Regulation No. 5 of 1882 for the better preservation of wells and drinking water; Native Regulation No. 6 of 1882 in regard to latrines; and others. For example, CSO 14/1892.

\(^{59}\) Native Regulation No. 1 of 1903 relating to yaws and Native Regulation No. 2 of 1903 respecting *mate ni solo*. For a discussion of lepers and their fear of segregation, see Stella, *Makogai: Image of Hope*.

\(^{60}\) Native Regulation No. 10, 1888, section 10 stated: 'It shall be unlawful for any person not registered as a Government Medical Officer or Nurse to administer drugs or herbs to a sick person or to perform any operation whatsoever on any person.' The penalty on first conviction was £25 or in default up to three months imprisonment.
lower abdomen through a man's urethra, was officially discountenanced.\(^{61}\) *Luveniwai* and *kalourere* were also criminalised. These forms of spirit possession had long been used to secure invulnerability in battle and which were intrinsic to certain expressions of dissent during the colonial period.\(^{62}\) Yet practices akin to *luveniwai* and *kalourere* were also purely therapeutic and there appear to have been cases where practitioners who intended only to heal were prosecuted as political agitators.\(^{63}\) The use of Fijian medicines could also be construed as neglect of the sick, on the argument that European medicine should have been sought.\(^{64}\) Sometimes moreover the law against unqualified persons practising as NMPs was interpreted as if only qualified NMPs were permitted to tend the sick, so Fijian healers quite innocent of impersonating NMPs were charged.\(^{65}\)

Occasionally a traditional healer was persecuted without reference to any law. Take the case of the midwife Maraia. Though married to a Taukei, often mentioned alongside Fijian midwives and described as practising *'nona matai vaka viti'* ('her skills in the Fijian fashion') her ancestry was in fact mixed: Maraia was said to be part half-caste, and part Tahitian or Samoan. In addition to her personal fame, she was probably known to the small world of European officialdom in Suva through her husband Peni, formerly a member of the Armed Native Constabulary, a one-time waiter at Government House and a servant whom Thurston had cherished. The couple arrived in Rotuma in November 1905 possibly with ambitions to do business. The Commissioner, who was also the island's sole European Medical Officer, was just about to leave and told Maraia only to attend confinements. But as soon as he left she expanded into 'general practice' and came into competition with the local NMP. On his appeal, the chiefs resolved to prohibit Maraia from practising in their midst and attention was drawn to the wealth she had accumulated within a short time, which included 'countless' pigs, 15 prize mats and £30. Though civil servants in Suva agreed there was no legal basis for prosecution, they condoned the chiefs' action and Corney hoped it would 'prove sufficient to stop the quack'.\(^{66}\) This derogatory treatment contrasted with the respect Corney had displayed seven years earlier when he referred to Maraia as one of the 'wise women of known repute'.\(^{67}\)

Maraia's career raises questions about the nature and scope of traditional midwifery in Fiji. The unrivalled ethnographic source on women in Fijian medicine remains the Decrease Report and as the Commissioners found, the 'traditional midwife'

\(^{61}\) *DR*, p. 168.
\(^{62}\) Native Regulation No. 5 of 1887 in regard to Luveniwai, Kalourere and other Similar Practices.
\(^{64}\) For example see CSO 4183/1908.
\(^{65}\) For example see CSO 1074/1925 contains a later example.
\(^{66}\) For Maraia's case, see CSO 1914/1907. *Fijian Village*, pp. 232- 236.
\(^{67}\) For Maraia's case, see CSO 1308/1906; Corney’s minute 8 Sep. 1899, CSO 987/1899.
might take a number of forms. She could be referred to as an 'old lady', 'a grandmother', or *bui ni gone*, a term suggesting a common competence in 'women's matters' which experienced, older women could be expected to command. She could be a *yalewa vuku*, or wise woman, a term more accurately denoting women of a distinctive caste, the wives of canoe wrights and carpenters (the *matai sau*). She could be a *vu ni kalou* 'root of the god', a phrase also used to designate a priest. While the social origins of midwives could vary, 'midwifery' was a means by which women could gain wealth and status.

Their actual skills and clientele could assume diverse configurations. A midwife might provide treatments for a range of conditions for women, men or children and thus function as a kind of general practitioner. Or she might concentrate more narrowly on gynaecological specialties- like contraception, abortion, ways of ensuring the birth of a son, childbirth and so on. In this field there was considerable regional variation. Ba for instance was said to lack women with skills in tending childbirth. Mothers there gave birth alone, often in the open air or yam house. Midwives from inland Viti Levu had distinctive methods, such as for extracting the placenta, and were reputedly clever. The midwives of Bua and Macuata were renowned for their expertise in abortion and contraception, which colonial officials thought the relatively low birth rates and high rates for still-birth in those parts confirmed.

Techniques subsumed under the rubric *vakasilima* were the province of midwives. Literally meaning 'to wash' the word denoted a range of manipulations through the orifices of the body usually, if the vagina or rectum were involved, performed in water. Women were mostly the recipients of these treatments. Yet the proposal to outlaw *vakasilima* met with strenuous objection from Fijian chiefs who claimed they had personally been cured by midwives in this way. Masculine complaints treatable by *vakasilima* included indeterminate wasting, *coboiqele* 'a sort of earth fever' which afflicted great planters, and back pains.

'Traditional midwifery' is therefore difficult to standardize. The Commissioners took the view that Fijian medicine - encompassing 'herbalism and diet tabus, massage, bathing, blood letting, poulticing, and *vakasilima*' was 'chiefly practised by women'. Few other accounts give women, overall, such an important role. A reliance on male informants, or a focus on that branch of healing involving spiritual diagnosis and

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68 DR, 'Unskilled Midwifery', pp. 129-135; and 'Native Medical Treatment and Nursing', pp. 163-171 and 'Abortion, Foeticide, and the Prevention of Conception', pp. 120-124. The commissioners interviewed 'three hereditary midwives of the class alleged to be professional procurers of abortion' and a few well-known Bauan midwives of chiefly rank - Adi Luisana, Adi Ama are two named - from whom one may suppose much of the information contained in this document was derived. DR. pp. 121; 123; 122; 130 ff.

69 Cf. Buel Quain, *Fijian Village*, p. 243. Official and unofficial records relating to the colonial period in Fiji are dotted with references to affluent midwives.

70 DR, p. 124.

71 Vakatawa Lomaiviti, in translation of replies to circular re 'Vakasilima' from Rokos in CSO 37/1898.
manipulation which men are said to dominate, have often resulted in the sum of Fijian healing being equated with selected parts, or in women practitioners being relegated to a marginal or minority role.72 Not surprisingly, in the contemporary context the work of Fijian women researchers has done the most to correct the latter.73 The masculine bias in many studies, coupled with the perception that the cultural and social roles associated with spiritual power are exclusively performed by men, has also perhaps prevented a consideration of possible spiritual dimensions to midwifery.

Maraia's case also illustrates a dramatic change in official attitudes. Prior to the 1890s little thought was given to midwives. Though early missionaries sometimes recorded rivalry with women healers, they usually depicted Fijian medicine in a masculine aspect and missionary and later colonial medicine intruded little on the midwives' domain.74 As a result midwives went about their work undisturbed.75 But the Decrease Report marked a shift. Some correspondents pronounced Fijian midwives 'an unmitigated evil'.76 They allegedly promoted the decrease either by preventing births through abortion or contraception, or by causing the loss of maternal and infant life through malpractice. Later they were also blamed in part for the failure of government efforts to 'save the race'. The unsatisfactoriness of infant death inquiries, for instance, was sometimes attributed to bui ni gone ('...Fijian midwives and women are hopelessly dense & stupid & their evidence & observations hardly ever to be relied upon...'). Europeans in the Hygiene Mission and the Provincial Inspectorate claimed old women obstructed their work, as the previous chapter showed. Bui ni gone were also said to be a reason why Fijians did not use the new Provincial Hospitals. As one doctor commented, 'Many excuses were urged but the chief reason is that there are a great many old women who dispense native medicine & the majority prefer their attentions'.78 But while na lutu sobu itaukei provided the immediate context for this antagonism to midwives, one must remember that analogous conflicts between an expanding medical profession and folk practitioners, between doctors and midwives were underway in

76 Worrall, DR, App. 4, p. 32; and DR, pp. 129-135.
77 Minute 14 Aug. 1899, CSO 987/1899.
78 Excerpt from PMO Wainibokasi's report May 1903, quoted in CSO 1554/1910.
Britain and these broader trends no doubt influenced the attitudes of Fiji's colonial authorities.\textsuperscript{79}

Bemoaning the incompetence of Fijian midwives only reflected, in the eyes of some administrators, a core inadequacy of the medical department. When Dr Finucane, Provincial Inspector of Tailevu claimed that the typical midwife would not aid the efforts of the new-born to breathe, treated the umbilical cord wrongly, promoted infection through dirt, would not wash the baby and weakened it by withholding mother's milk during the first four days of life, the Native Commissioner saw a clear indictment of the money spent on training NMPs who could do little to stem infant mortality, and an urgent need to train Fijian women instead.\textsuperscript{80} He reiterated this call on later occasions, the last in response to the following report by Doctor Farrington from Ra for December 1907.

On December 30th I went to a midwifery case at the town of Naleba. Arm and shoulder well outside the vulva - the arm being largely denuded of skin and very dirty. I cleaned up as well as I could, gave chloroform, and turned. I am told the woman died 36 hours later. As the journey to Naleba is a difficult one and the weather was exceedingly bad the fatal result of the case was a considerable disappointment to me though I am getting used to bad results in such cases. Midwifery cases in native towns are reported so late and have been so mauled by the native midwives before one sees them as to be almost hopeless. Of the last six cases of midwifery amongst Fijians that I have attended all the children have been born dead and 4 out of the 6 mothers have died! Five certainly - and may be all 6 - of the children were dead before I appeared on the scene and the deaths amongst the mothers were not due to want of experience on my part but simply because one is given no chance - the native women never reporting the cases until death is within measurable distance and they think it time to shift the responsibility to someone else.

The response to this account prompted Corney's replacement, the new Chief Medical Officer Dr Lynch to institute the training of Fijian women as Native Obstetric Nurses.\textsuperscript{81}

From the start there were hopes that the new nurses would lower Fijian infant mortality (which for 1909 was reported to be 17.42\%), undermine Fijian midwives and reform the village culture of pregnancy, childbirth and child-care. The Chief Medical Officer even envisaged a future medical service built on an army of cheap, effective NONs.\textsuperscript{82}

Yet the nursing profession was initially no different from the earlier government initiatives in causing disappointment. One chronic area of difficulty was the actual

\textsuperscript{79} Smith, *The People's Health*, pp. 41-47; 333-345; 362-382; Loudon, *Death in Childbirth*, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{80} Finucane's minute 14 Aug. 1899; Sutherland's minute 23 Aug. 1899, CSO 987/1899.

\textsuperscript{81} Minute 23 Jan. 1908, CSO 2864/1909. See also his appeal in minute 25 Jun. 1901, CSO 3097/1901.

training. A shortage of women giving birth in hospital remained a fundamental weakness. Student nurses were supposed to spend six months at Suva Colonial Hospital before their qualifying examination, but they often stayed longer for want of midwifery cases. Although Fijian chiefs near Suva had been instructed to send in pregnant women and the Roko Tui Rewa and former Native Medical Practitioner Ratu Jone Mataitini was commended for his energy in this, few were so successful. The Roko Tui Serua confessed that the pregnant women he dispatched ran away and hid. Even when the six month period was extended, many NONs graduated with at best a limited experience of obstetrics.

European nurses also complained that their Fijian pupils were simply too ill-educated to be trained. Academic standards at girls schools were certainly not high, but the trainee NONs were among the best educated and most intelligent girls the Colony could offer and evidently did not lack willingness or drive. Often the greater shortcomings lay with their nursing instructors. Despite her initial misgivings about non-European nurses, Matron May Anderson, who presided over the scheme from its inception till her retirement in 1919, at least spoke fluent Fijian and felt comfortable in the country where she had been born and raised. Her successors from England or New Zealand often had less cultural sympathy, no Fijian and deplored local conditions and some doctors lamented that sisters of this sort were the main impediment to training. As Harper exclaimed, 'If we only had a sister who understood or tried to understand our Fijians and could speak the language...' There was also a tendency to use Fijian nurses merely for the hard and dirty work. Winifred Harper, who was a probationer about the time the NON scheme was introduced, remembered how her father was assured that the European girls mainly supervised while Fijians - both medical students and trainee nurses - did the messy jobs. Dr Lambert of the Rockefeller Foundation recalled how trainee NONs in the 1920s 'scrubbed and emptied slops for dainty British nurses'. Originally, the intention was for qualified NONs to return periodically to the hospital to improve their medical knowledge - but this provision evaporated.

In the field real difficulties began. The salaries of the NONs were £6 per annum - a mere fraction of the wages paid to a bottom-rung NMP or European probationer nurse - but which were theoretically supplemented by food rations and small gratuities from patients. However the hospitality varied. Lau was for some time reluctant to send any local girls for training and gave the NONs who were sent there from other provinces very

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84 Roko Tui Serua, 24 Apr. 1912, Council of Chiefs.
85 Matron West to Colonial Secretary, 26 Apr. 1921 in CSO 2715/1921.
87 CSO 2715/1921.
88 Harper's minute, SNA 1027/1928.
89 S. Winifred Harper, Remembering Fiji, Penang, , NAF.
90 Lambert, A Doctor in Paradise, p. 287.
little help. Postings to Namosi and Serua were notoriously difficult, and NONs in the latter reported that none of their patients had given them the smallest token of appreciation. As NONs at first did not answer to the local Medical Officers but to Matron in Suva, often relationships between nurse and doctor or NMP were not professionally supportive. In addition, material supplies were generally poor. The distances and terrain nurses were expected to travel - without the assistance enjoyed by Medical Officers or NMPs - were truly daunting. When the NON Nadi submitted her resignation she simply stated. 'I wish to inform you I resign this moment I cannot manage the distance between the villages I cannot manage the travelling.'

But the greatest difficulty was competing for custom with the traditional midwives. Here most of the early NONs dismally failed. Fine Liku, NON Macuata toured the entire province in her first year but the District Medical Officer noted '... they do not readily prefer her services to those of their own old women, and she has only been able to attend three confinements'. The DMO Kadavu reported that NON Elena 'complains much of the ignorance and obstinacy of the women ... Many women prefer the services of the old village 'hags' ...'. The DMO Ra remarked that the NONs had 'a very difficult and thankless task.'

Under these circumstances most of the pioneering NONs did not last. Arieta Vakabua, from the first batch of graduates, served three years three months without a break and when she finally did obtain leave returned late and submitted her resignation on the grounds of health. The CMO was reluctant to lose her, but Arieta was clearly a case of 'burn-out': '...she is simply tired of work'. Separation from kin could be hard. Litia Raiwalui left her post, eventually sending word that she wished to stay at home with her parents. When Adi Litiana Nai resigned in 1914 she had spent eight long years apart from her family - first at school, then at Suva Hospital, and finally at provincial postings - and had suffered repeated ill health. The difficulties of the job no doubt played a part in the sickness experienced by many NONs. In 1913 at the discouraging Macuata posting: 'One [NON] developed an iliac abscess and was sent at her request to Suva, and the other developed attacks of violent hysteria and was also sent away'.

Isolation and separation from kin had other dangers. Many of the early NONs fell pregnant: 'they are generally young girls and at the mercy of the natives', one official

92 Acting DMO Lau's report in CSO 23/1915.
93 DMO Navua's reports in LCP 77/1918; 86/1917; 99/1919.
94 '...[A]u sa tukuna saka yani vel kemuni oqo niu sa bese vaka dua ena gauna oqo au sa sega ni rawata na kena veiyawaki na veikoro au sa sega ni rawata na lako.' Letter from NON Nadi Akanisi Dicagi, 6 Feb. 1914, CSO 1699/1914.
95 DMO Labasa's report in LCP 28/1912.
96 DMO Kadavu's report in LCP 32/1913; cf. DMO Navua's report in LCP 54/1916.
97 DMO Ra's report, contained in LCP 32/1913.
98 CSO 7435/1912, 2367/1913.
99 CSO 14/3604.
100 Adi Litiana Nai, letter 4 May 1914 contained in CSO 4619/1914.
101 DMO Labasa's report in LCP 44/1914.
explained. In fact the fathers were frequently other medical students or NMPs. In 1913, the NON Davuilevu was dismissed when she was discovered pregnant and a young medical student confessed and was expelled. In November that year the DMO Levuka reported that NON Makarita was unable to do her duties, being fully occupied with her own new born baby, allegedly fathered by an NMP. This, the DMO added, was not the first such regrettable incident. In 1916 the NON Lau said she was pregnant to a clerk in the Native Office in Suva, but the real father was believed to be a medical student - she was 'trying to foster it onto Keni, a chief, "to avoid disgrace"'. Pregnancy out of wedlock was not an easy matter for these women. Most tried to hide the fact. One NON took refuge in the house of an Indian. The premature birth and death of twins to the NON Bua in 1919 - fathered by the son of an NMP - suggest distressing circumstances and possible foul play. The administration was at a loss to deal with the constant dismissal of nurses for falling pregnant outside wedlock. One DMO proposed that only old and ugly women should be trained!

Marriage was another common cause for resignation, and the rate at which nurses exited the service for one reason or another made it difficult to maintain and increase the Fijian 'nurse-force'. In the first six years of the scheme 56 nurses had been trained and 39 nurses had left. The brave vision of an expanded medical service staffed by NONs faded away and in 1914 the Annual Medical Report deemed the experiment a failure.

Yet this verdict must be qualified in many ways. There were some notable successes among the pioneering NONs. These were doubtless women of outstanding personal qualities who enjoyed other assets, such as chiefly or church connections that could be turned to advantage among the people with whom they worked, or the assistance of influential figures in the provincial administration and medical service. One of the first NONs in Tailevu was herself from the province and her work was greeted enthusiastically - 'before she went among them many children died but none of 'hers' have died yet' the people were reported to say. Adi Litia Waqainaweni from Nakelo also did 'very good work' and probably benefited, not merely from recognition of rank, but also from the support of the District Medical Officer Dr Harper who always encouraged the nurses and from Roko Tui Rewa, Ratu Jone Mataitini, an autocratic champion of colonial medicine.

102 Governor's Commissioner Lomaiviti's note in excerpt of Resolution 10 of Lomaiviti Provincial Council 1912 in CSO 7031/1912.
103 CSO 9177/1913.
104 CSO 9386/21913.
105 CSO 3725/1916.
106 CSO 6976/1915.
107 SNA 62/1920; CSO 7444/1919.
108 CSO 3725/1919.
109 LCP 54/1916.
110 LCP 64/1913; LCP 44/1914.
111 CSO 1554/1910.
Indeed, from the turn of the century a 'progressive' Fijian official appears, who was concerned about na luttu sobu itaukei and ready to demonstrate his modernity in the area of maternal and infant health. Others of Jone Mataitini's bent, if not quite his particular chiefly style, were Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi, who has already been mentioned in many capacities, and Ratu Tevita Toganivalu - Bauan blue blood, civil servant, man of letters, and together with Mataitini later a member of the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{113} In 1909 he was installed Roko Tui Bua and at his inaugural address spoke at length on Bua's decrease, infant mortality and the treatment of women as matters that weighed heavily on his heart.\textsuperscript{114} He responded energetically to the Native Obstetric Nursing Scheme, petitioned successfully for a NON, proposed building a home for mothers (which however was disallowed), and earnestly hoped that the midwives and pregnant women of the province would learn the European approach to childbirth.\textsuperscript{115}

If the first wave of NONs did not succeed as planned, some of their successes were unplanned. Within the hospitals, for instance, both trainee and qualified NONs provided urgently needed labour. Throughout this period European probationers were increasingly difficult to recruit and the shortage of white nurses was acute. The retreat from the original concept of the Native Obstetric Nursing, which required nurses to move about from village to village, to more hospital-based work was a boon to these facilities. Moreover, the career of a nurse should not be assessed only by the first few years after graduating, but in terms of her lifetime's formal and informal service. Many former NONs continued to nurse unofficially and, given the wariness and mistrust that the administration's endeavours 'to save the race' had created, may even have worked more effectively once an active association with the government had lapsed. The wife of the Buli Yawe in Kadavu continued to work in retirement, as did the former NON Toakara, who, along with other ex-NONs sometimes figure in the annual reports of District Medical Officers with remarks like 'her work is voluntary and quite good'.\textsuperscript{116} Nurse Field encountered one former NON in the village of Cuvu in Nadroga in 1929, who had done her training in 1913: 'This woman has confined several women, while I've been away inland. I like her work'.\textsuperscript{117} Some doctors actually stressed that Fijian nurses were of more benefit outside the service than within, arguing their 'influence is greater as a married woman than as a nurse'- a view echoed by the anthropologist Keesing.\textsuperscript{118} Later in life many former NONs returned to formal employ. When nurse P.L. Kalokalolevu wrote to the government in 1929 wishing to retire and asking for a gratuity after eighteen and a half years service she was told she did not qualify: for in fact she had started work in 1910, retired in 1912 to marry, and had then been reemployed in 1920. Her period of formal employment was therefore too short. From her point of view, and from that of


\textsuperscript{114} Na Mara, March 1909, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{115} CSO 6104/1909.


\textsuperscript{117} Nadroga - Childwelfare Report - November 1919, MAF M/59.

other NONs, the distinction between the duties they performed in a voluntary and salaried capacity was not always clear: it was still *na cakacaka ni matanitu* - 'government work', and one could certainly argue that the administration got more from the nurses than the little it paid them.\(^{119}\)

Notwithstanding the hardships of nursing, applicants abounded. Native Obstetric Nursing was the first and throughout this period the only profession open to Fijian women outside sisterhood in the Catholic Church. Like the NMP service, candidates came from backgrounds of social standing. Some already mentioned were of chiefly birth while the first Fijian woman to receive European nursing qualifications was Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi's daughter Adi Kuini Madraiwiwi. She had received some of her schooling at Matavelo and graduated in 1921 from the probationer course as Suva Colonial War Memorial Hospital before proceeding to Australia for further training in obstetrics.\(^{120}\) Her brothers included Ratu Dr Doviverata, the first Fijian to gain European qualifications as a doctor, and the statesman Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. Nursing thus came to share some of the glamour conferred by chiefly pedigree, education, colonial service and medicine. The exceptional status of Native Obstetric Nurses was early underscored by the inclusion of NONs at the meeting of the Tailevu Provincial Council in 1911 - the first women ever admitted to this forum.\(^{121}\)

Unlike the NMP service, the Fijian nursing profession was from the start intimately associated with Christianity and this too conferred prestige. A number of the early NONs, like their successors, were linked to the church as graduates of mission schools, or as the sisters, daughters or future wives of church figures. The second name of Vetinia Buadromo, from the very first nursing cohort, became widely known when Mosese Buadromo assumed presidency of the progressive Methodist young men's organisation, Viti Cauravou. Another of the early nurses, Litiana Naileqe, was daughter of the Reverend Vatiliai of Nadi, while Taina Tovu Nakauba, who resigned in 1912 to marry a Wesleyan minister, and the NON Davuilevu, Loata, who married a Fijian missionary to the Solomons, were examples of the frequent and desirable partnership of a minister and nurse.\(^{122}\) In many respects, nursing was a Christian vocation and offered women a form of ministry for which there was no counterpart in the Methodist Church.

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\(^{119}\) CO 10732/1914; see also DMO Rotuma's report in LCP 1923/1921.

\(^{120}\) In addition to two nurses already mentioned - Adi Litia Waqainaweni and Adi Litiana Nai, who was the sister of the Tui Namoli of Lautoka - early NONs of chiefly birth included Adi Melanie Kula of Natokalau, Bua; Adi Letila Namisi of Tamenia, Naitasiri; and Adi Mere Qolouvake, of Qamea, Cakaudrove. Files relating to Adi Kuini Madraiwiwi's career include CO 1547/1921; CO 2335/1922.

\(^{121}\) Tailevu Provincial Council, 7-8 Nov. 1911.

\(^{122}\) CO 6906/1912; DMO Rewa's report, contained in LCP 51/1922. Some of this biographical information is drawn from a typescript, entitled 'Fiji Nurses' Association: Fiji History of Nursing', kindly lent to me by Jane Erasito, then President of the Fiji Nurses Association. This document appears to have been constructed from oral traditions and some of the sketchy information in May C. Anderson's article. In checking with the CO records there are some errors in the document's dates; and it was apparently assumed that some of the early nurses best known in oral tradition must have trained in the first batch.
Christian ideals no doubt sustained many NONs in adversity, and helped reconcile them to the low pay, difficult conditions and a lack of sufficient recognition from the Medical Department. These ideals also harmonised with the Fijian values which Alisi Talatoka Volavola depicts as central to the Fijian concept of nursing. While 'Native Obstetric Nurse' is a highly specific and technical designation, it translated into Fijian in far more general terms: *Na Mata* proclaimed them 'O ira na yalewa i taukei daueiagaravi' or 'the women of the Taukei who care for others'. Another term was *na dauveimaroro* literally 'those who look after/keep/cherish others', though Volavola also renders it as 'the Guardian, the Protector, the Watcher'. Caring and sharing, she argues were essential components of a woman's role, all the more honoured and socially significant in a subsistence culture. The militaristic flavour of the Nightingale ideal, so important to British imperial nursing, appears to have been lost in the development of a Fijian nursing ethos.

Did schools like Matavelo and the Native Obstetric Nursing Scheme undermine traditional midwives and transform Fijian maternity? Clearly not. The early NONs especially met with resistance, due in part perhaps to the confidence placed by women in *bui ni gone*, the opposition of older traditional practitioners, a certain distrust among Fijian women of the government, and the fact that NONs were trained to deal with childbirth and the infant, but not with ante-natal care at which stage pregnant women often formed a settled relationship with their midwives that was all the more difficult for an intruder to interrupt. Finally, the pioneer NONs were mostly young and childless, two characteristics that weakened their professional authority.

The attitude of NONs towards their 'wise women' competitors is also worth contemplation. The nurses themselves were in all likelihood delivered by traditional midwives; depended on traditional midwifery for many gynaecological needs that colonial medicine simply did not supply; and despite the time spent in school and training, were unlikely to condemn Fijian medicine as harshly as colonial commentators - or even Native Medical Practitioners. Moreover, the circumstances under which nurses worked probably often forced them to recommend Fijian remedies and use materials to hand. In fact over their life-times they seem to have blended traditional and new and blurred the boundaries between colonial and Fijian healing, government and village, official and unofficial employment, by repeatedly crossing from one to the other. When formally engaged in the Medical Department, Fijian nurses gave a masculine domain a feminine dimension. Their employment in hospitals helped to feminise these institutions and make them more acceptable to Fijian women. As ex-NONs, raising their own children, living

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126 Personal communication from Alisi Vudiniabola (Talatoka Volavola) on the basis of her own oral research. Most nurses today seem familiar with traditional medicines; and many speak with respect for the skill of traditional midwives.
with their people, and helping others, in their own persons they 'domesticated' western medicine in the village setting. Those who returned later to formal service, with the credentials of age, child-bearing and experience respected in traditional women healers, introduced further recognised elements of the Fijian culture of midwifery and caring into colonial practice.

The new nursing profession did not destroy the traditional systems of care. In some respects it subverted the government's own agenda by accommodating aspects of both. The numerical weakness of the nurses is another consideration. The number of graduates produced from 1909 to 1927 - a date which marks another era in Fijian nursing with the introduction of the Child Welfare Scheme - has not been calculated, but is unlikely to have totalled much more than two hundred. For a Fijian population scattered throughout a thousand villages and serviced by countless traditional healers, trained nurses were still scarce. When the Child Welfare Scheme commenced in 1927, the Governor could well proclaim that 'the 'wise women' of the village still hold full sway...'.

The transformation of Fijian mothers was, for the colonial administration, ultimately to be inferred from better infant mortality figures. Those available for 1909 to 1927 suggest no dramatic improvement in infant survival during the Native Obstetric Nursing Scheme. At its beginning, roughly one fifth of Fijian infants were recorded dead before reaching their first birthday and by the late twenties the proportion was only fractionally less. While the infant death rate was evidently much higher in the 1890s, it had already trended downwards before the NONs began.

Yet within a few years of the scheme's inception, these issues ceased to matter anymore. Its original rationale - to save Fijian infants by replacing midwives and educating na tina ni gone itaukei - lapsed as official attitudes to the 'decrease' changed and the Colony's 'other mother' - to which the next chapter turns - absorbed attention. But a distinctive quality of the training initiatives discussed in this chapter should be stressed in conclusion: in contrast to the other measures so far taken 'to save the race', these sought to make and use Fijian female agency. If they initially failed to lower infant mortality rates or convert Fijian mothers en masse to western medicine and midwifery, they certainly created, in the graduates of special girls schools and in the nursing pioneers, 'new' Fijian women called upon to fill newly defined roles in Fiji's colonial society. Their sometimes conflicted position, the often ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards them, and their cultural creativity and impacts can be glimpsed in the discussion ahead - but the 'new' Fijian woman in Fiji's modern history still warrants a richer treatment.

127 Hutson to Secretary of State, 6 Jul. 1928, LCP 82/1928.
Figure 17: Indian Family
Chapter Nine

The Rise of the Indian Mother

While official eyes fixed on Fijian mothers, the Colony's Indian mother was virtually unseen. Indian women in Fiji only became objects of scrutiny and debate from around 1910 to the mid 1920s when the system of indenture was attacked and dissolved, and campaigners invoked the Indian woman's plight. In moving from indentured labourer to free settler we can trace her transformation, in the perceptions of the colonial administration, from 'prostitute' to 'world's best mother'. Both characterizations excused the government from acting on behalf of Indian maternity - whereas the stereotype of Fijian women as 'bad mothers' had earlier underwritten strenuous and varied interventions.

The fall of the Fijian mother preceded the Indian mother's rise. Government attitudes to na lutu sobu itaukei shifted during the century's first decade from one of resistance to resignation. Fijian mothers were therefore no longer targets of government action. The Native Obstetric Nursing Scheme was the last measure traceable to the Decrease Report and the original impulse to 'save the race'. After Governor O'Brien's departure in 1901 zeal for this cause subsided. A rapid turnover in governors and administrators was followed in 1904 by Sir Everard Im Thurn, who was the most adamant of all the governors that the days remaining to Fijians were few.\(^1\)

Im Thurn told the Council of Chiefs in 1905 that the utter decease of their race was as little as forty years away: 'The Fijian people are perishing because they are not allowed any liberty to think and act for themselves'.\(^2\) In the old argument over the causes of Fijian depopulation, Im Thurn aligned himself with the theory that the Native Policy was stifling individualism and thus killing the Taukei. His successor May likewise prescribed emancipation from communalism as the cure for the Fijians' alleged 'want of maternal instinct and the callous indifference to the lives of the children they bring into the world'.\(^3\) Though relaxing the Native Policy was overtly depicted as a remedy for na lutu sobu itaukei there was covert conviction that extinction was inevitable regardless. Rescue attempts - through improved water supplies, hospitals, village inspections, and increased medical staff - were said to have failed. Im Thurn's attempts to alienate land from Fijian ownership was influenced by this belief.\(^4\)

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1 After O'Brien's departure in 1901, W. L. Allardyce was Administrator till 1902 when he was succeeded by Sir Henry M. Jackson; Charles Major was then Administrator for some months in 1904, before Im Thurn's arrival.
2 Governor's address, Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs, 1905.
4 For treatments of Im Thurn, see Macnaught, The Fijian Colonial Experience, pp. 28-37; Chapelle, 'Land and Race in Fiji.'
'Extinctionism' was more entrenched now than ever within the administration. The elaborate language of 'decrease' couched almost any utterance about the Fijians, and was boosted by a book which was a secondary and delayed product of the 1890s commission of inquiry. *The Fijians: A Study in the Decay of Custom*, by the former Decrease Commissioner, Basil Thomson was published in 1908 - 15 years after the research for the report had been substantially completed - to a wider reading public which included appointees to the service in Fiji. Over the next twenty to thirty years 'the decay of custom' was a commonplace in official files.5 The early meetings of the local Fijian Society, to which some government officers contributed papers on topics like 'Disease and Decay in Fiji' or the doubtful question of 'The Future of the Fijian' suggest how these preoccupations informed even their intellectual pass-times.6

This 'extinctionism' was ironic, for the Fijian population was in fact beginning to stabilise. Norma McArthur pinpoints the turn-around to 1905, when recorded Fijian births exceeded deaths for the first time since the 1880s. Over succeeding years till 1912, the number of Fijian births and deaths were roughly equal, and thereafter for every year except 1918 the Fijian population grew.7 These early figures were too small and too opposed to prevailing convictions to be read optimistically.

Many Methodist missionaries also took a pessimistic view. In *The Fiji of Today*, published in 1910, the Reverend John Weir Burton stated with his own italics, '...The Fijian is dying. No juggling with the figures can deceive us in this particular...'.8 Burton, like others, was struck by the growth of the Indian population through natural increase and immigration - 'Cargoes of the frankest 'heathenism' come every year...'. Throughout Fiji he feared that 'the sign of the Cross will be displaced by the Hindu Trident and the Mohammedan Crescent'. Burton was among the first to pronounce publicly a prediction some officials had admitted in the 1890s: that the Fiji islands were destined to become 'to all intents and purposes, an Indian colony'.9

The campaign against indenture enlisted some of the small band of Methodist missionaries who worked among Fiji's Indians - Burton, Richard Piper and Hannah Dudley especially.10 In part an evangelical tactic, in part motivated by genuine compassion, their advocacy harmonised with the thrust of Indian nationalism. 'The Indenture Question' was acutely significant to those seeking to wrest for India dignity and self-rule from Britain. In Fiji itself Totaram Sanadhya a former indentured labourer and

5 Thomson, *The Fijians*.
6 Dr Phillip Harper, 'Disease and Decay in Fiji,' *Transactions of the Fijian Society for the years 1912 and 1913* (offprint consulted unpaginated); Ross, 'The Future of the Fijian'.
the lawyer Manilal Maganlal had links with Gandhi and endeavoured to bring the system to an end. Since Fiji was by now the largest importer of indentured Indian labour in the Empire, the Colony became a focus of international protest. Finally English, Australian and New Zealand 'feminists' - a term used here to designate a variety of women activists who shared a sense of female solidarity - joined the fight against indenture in Fiji. The united efforts of these people combined to make the sufferings of Fiji's Indian women a vivid moral issue.

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The earliest Girmitiya women - so named after the Girmit or 'agreement' they had signed in the depots of Calcutta and Madras - arrived in 1879 with the first shipment of Indian labour. These men and women answered the need of Fiji's sugar plantations for a workforce that could not be supplied from Fijian or Pacific sources even if restrictions on the employment of Fijians had not been legislated. Initially the Indian population remained small. According to census figures there were only 588 Indians in Fiji in 1881. In 1891 there were 7,468. As the sugar industry expanded around the turn of the century levels of immigration increased. By 1911 Indians numbered 40,286 - nearly half the Taukei population [table 10]. They were mostly male, and mostly 'free Indians' who had served their indenture and settled in the river deltas and sugar growing areas of Viti and Vanua Levu.

Under indenture in Fiji, an Indian immigrant was contracted to perform five years' labour for the employer to whom he or she had been allocated. Failure to work to rule was treated as a criminal offence. On completing indenture, the labourer was free to settle or go home. After a further five years in the Colony, the government paid the return passage. Devised after the abolition of slavery to satisfy the labour requirements of the sugar colonies, the indenture system remained to its critics a brutal and humiliating form of slavery. To supporters, indenture was an economic boon not just to planters but to the labourers themselves. Indians - for whom indenture was the engine of their nineteenth century diaspora - were able, it was argued, to exchange dire poverty at home for prospects of prosperity overseas. This was an idyllic, economic picture for both the white and coloured man.

But indenture was structurally hostile to indentured women. They were unwelcome from the outset, for sugar planters considered them inferior workers. Yet sections of British opinion insisted that the inclusion of women would improve life for indentured men and in 1868 the Colonial Office ruled that a minimum of 40 women were to accompany every 100 indentured men. As Lal has demonstrated, immigration to Fiji

11 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, ch. 1.
12 These figures are summarised in McArthur, Island Populations, p. 27.
Map 3: Colonial Fiji (showing pre-1945 provincial boundaries)
almost invariably satisfied this standard. Nevertheless the ratio of men to women placed disproportionate sexual demands upon an outnumbered female population which was also vulnerable to abuse by the men who managed the labour-force - sirdars and European overseers. Many of the evils of indenture can be attributed to these imbalances of sex and power. Furthermore, unlike paternalistic slave-owners in the latter days of American slavery, the employers of indentured labour had no economic investment in the reproductive capacity of their female workers. Planters looked solely to immigration to replenish their labour, so the involvement of women workers in child-bearing was considered a cost. Hence indenture was fundamentally inimical to maternity. Finally, indentured women were assumed to be of low caste and loose character. Lal's research has undermined this assertion. In the case of Fiji, most indentured labourers were drawn from a range of castes representative of their origin societies - mostly in north central India; and while only a minority of women came to Fiji as part of a family unit, there is no firm evidence one way or the other as to their general moral character - though, as Lal reflected, their undertaking suggests enterprise and endurance. In addition to hard working conditions, poor accommodation and occasional food shortages in Fiji, Girmitiya women thus suffered an ugly prejudice and circumstances that were sexually and reproductively unkind. Their difficulties are perhaps reflected in their death rates. Among all indentured Indian populations in the Empire, the death rates of the women exceeded the men, but this was most pronounced in Fiji.

A pivotal issue in the depiction of Girmitiya women and central to the conflict over indenture during the 1910s was their alleged 'prostitution'. 'Indentured Indian woman' and 'prostitute' were words used almost synonymously by government and planters. The loaded question in the European controversy was whether the system made Girmitiya women into prostitutes, or whether they came to the system as prostitutes ready-made. Defenders of indenture favoured the latter proposition. The Sanderson Committee, instituted by the British Government in 1909 to analyse and evaluate Indian emigration affirmed the benefits of indenture and stated baldly that the majority of indentured women were recruited from the ranks of professional prostitutes. Many Fiji-based supporters of indenture declared that the Fijian experience 'fully corroborates that finding'.

Negating this picture, opponents of indenture told stories with electrifying effect. Burton wrote of European overseers sexually abusing Girmitiya women with the comment, 'Some Englishmen seem to imagine that because a women is brown she has

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16 Lal, Girmitiyas, p. 114. 
18 Bavin, 'The Indian in Fiji', p. 182.
therefore, no rights of person'.

To moral reformers of the Victorian and Edwardian world, concerned to 'banish the beast' of untamed male sexuality, the parable of the unscrupulous seducer was tragic because it debased not only the victim but the perpetrator. These concerns animated the campaigns to abolish Contagious Diseases legislation, to save 'fallen women', to prevent 'the white slave trade', and to promote the ideal of masculine chastity - all projects which strongly influenced the character of much feminist, Christian and humanitarian activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Transposed to Fiji, with the parts played by white male overseer and indentured dark-skinned woman, for a European readership the parable had the dimensions of an imperial tragedy, corrupting the Anglo-Saxon virility and moral authority on which Empire relied. Burton's story-line was duplicated and varied by other critics of indenture. Gandhi's associate, the Reverend Charles Freer Andrews, disturbed his mission audiences by picturing European superintendents - some of respectable families and even the young sons of clergymen - placed in charge of 30 or 40 Indian women 'three miles away, among the tall growing cane' who, once initiated 'will go on and on after Indian women'.

The best known Indian parable of sexual exploitation in Fiji was the tale of Kunti, which was published in the Indian press in 1913 and widely read and retold. Kunti was described as a married woman of the Chamar caste working near Nausori. To escape rape by a European overseer she jumped into the river only to be saved from drowning by a passing Indian boy. Unlike the tragic emplotment found in the European narratives described, Kunti's told of virtue triumphant. It emphatically countered the dogma that indentured women - even those of lowly caste like Kunti - were vicious or craven. It also contradicted the view, expounded by champions of the Fiji administration and the Colony's planters (and here I draw from a speech delivered by Medical Officer and Provincial Inspector Tailevu, Dr Finucane to the Royal Colonial Institute) that the former used 'tact, moderation and good sense' in their treatment of the Indians while the latter were 'without exception, high-minded, honourable men who recognise the necessity of government control in a race unable to regulate their own conduct and interests'.

Kunti's tale disclosed vice behind these pretensions to imperial virtue and claimed moral superiority for the ruled. So huge was the consequent outcry in India that the Indian government demanded explanations from Fiji's administration. As Kelly has explained, Kunti was a potent symbol of Indian national identity under Britain: virtuous but maligned, embattled but undefeated. Though the popular story was found, on

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20 Bland, Banishing the Beast; Hymn, Empire and Sexuality, esp. pp. 142ff.
21 'Private and Confidential ....Statement by the Rev. C. F. Andrews, MA, before members of the Methodist Mission Board, Sydney, January 16th, 1918', MOM 520.
22 One contemporary retelling of this story is found in Totaram Sanadhya, My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands, by John D. Kelly & Uttra Kumari Singh, Suva: Fiji Museum, 1991, pp. 43-44.
23 M. Finucane, 'The Islands and the People of Fiji,' paper to be read before the Royal Colonial Institute on 27 Nov. 1900; copy contained in CO 83/71.
investigation, to be a rather free adaptation of 'what really happened', it did dramatise moral inconsistencies and oppressions intrinsic to indenture that were real enough.24

While the inter racial aspect of 'forced prostitution' under indenture excited perhaps the greatest indignation among Indian activists and imperial moralists, the intra-Indian aspect was more heavily stressed with time and here attention concentrated on the numerical imbalance between Indian women and men. Totaram Sanadhya noted some 'misconduct' on the part of women but placed the real blame on the 'the coolie system' which outnumbered them.25 Hannah Dudley described the sex imbalance as part of 'this system of legalized prostitution'.26 Andrews said indentured women 'simply go out to a condition of prostitution' - the overseers even allocated married women to be shared.27 Indian men were quoted saying 'It was quite impossible for a woman to preserve her chastity in the coolie lines'.28 To the administration's regret, one of its official publications supported this analysis, through the matter-of-fact statement by the Medical Officer, Dr Harper, that 'each indentured Indian woman has to serve three indentured Indian men, as well as various outsiders...'.29

Whether or not any Girmitiya women had been prostitutes before, on arrival in Fiji they were all subject to legislation - the Colony's Contagious Diseases Ordinances - which treated them as such.30 Like similar legislation in India and other parts of the Empire, it was modelled on the Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain which were progressively introduced from 1864 to limit venereal infection among servicemen at army and navy centres in south England and Ireland.31 Under these provisions, prostitutes could be forced to undergo a medical examination and if signs of venereal infection were found, they could be detained in the hospital 'lock-up' until cured.

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25 Totaram Sanadhya, My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands, p. 68.
27 'Private and Confidential ...Statement by the Rev. C. F. Andrews.' MOM 520.
29 LCP 54/1917.
30 The relevant ordinances are No. 9 of 1880; No. 17 of 1881; No. 11 of 1882; No. 5 of 1885; No 10 of 1893.
Opposition in Britain to Contagious Diseases legislation was passionate. Activists under leaders like Josephine Butler argued that these laws denied women their civil liberties, subjected them to virtual rape (the speculum was likened to a penis), were derived from the sexual double standard, punished women when in fact men were to blame for venereal infection and prostitution, and finally, failed to check the transmission of disease. After the British Acts were abolished in 1886, campaigners turned their attention to India and the Empire at large. Fiji in 1893 was but one corner of the realm where Contagious Diseases legislation became a casualty of this 'popular clamour'.

Fiji's Ordinance shared with the British legislation an assumption that prostitutes were to blame for spreading infection and therefore needed to be 'kept clean' by state coercion. In 1888 Dr Pound expressed this position when he complained of 6 to 8 women on Rarawai plantation 'who spend their time either earning money by prostitution, in the gaol for not working or in the hospital for venereal disease' and stressed that the women needed to be controlled 'as they spread the disease more than men'. But Pound's differentiation between a few 'prostitutes' and other indentured women was not generally perceived. 'Prostitute' in any case was a term often used loosely for any woman whose sexual behaviour fell outside respectable marriage. Since officials observed that polyandrous relations in which a woman lived 'with a club of 3 or 4 men' and other 'sexual irregularities' were common among Fiji's Indians while Indian customary marriage was not recognised in the Colony's law, a large number of Girmitiya women could be described as 'prostitutes' according to this loose definition. Further, this categorization was consistent with the general colonial assessment of the Coolie character. The Decrease Commissioner James Stewart, for instance, could see no objection to the compulsory medical examination of Indians, for 'all Indians are practically devoid of moral principles. This lack of what we regard as principle shews itself inter alia in sexual matters.'

The distinctive feature of the Fiji legislation was however its racialized target - Indian women - and its racialized rationale - native preservation. When the introduction of such laws to Fiji was being discussed, the Secretary of State warned of the 'violent, almost fanatical feeling on this subject [which] exists in the minds of certain people in this country, not without influence with...the constituencies & Parliament'. Persuasive justification was therefore needed and the Fiji administration supplied it, arguing that the preservation of the native must be the government's priority and that the spread of venereal disease threatened Fijian survival. Doctors like Pound confirmed that were infection to be spread from Indians to Taukei, 'then Fijians will disappear quicker than ever'. The Colony was projected as a special case where these laws 'have not been introduced or maintained at all for the benefit of our Army and Navy, or indeed of the

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32 Corney's phrase, minute, 14 Jul. 1898, CSO 4801/1897.
34 W. L. Allardyce, minute CSO 4801/1897; Kelly, Politics of Virtue, pp. 99 ff.
35 James Stewart, minute 9 Dec. 1895, in CSO 4256/1895 contained in CSO 4801/1897.
European population, but entirely for the benefit of the natives...'. Even after the Ordinance's abolition, the Fiji administration petitioned repeatedly for its reintroduction. Medical Officers claimed that the power to examine Coolie women without consent was sorely needed, all the more because plans to combat yaws, a disease which had hitherto provided Fijians with some immunity to syphilis, would now let this deadlier venereal infection 'add its quota to the causes leading to the decrease of the Fijian race'.

That measures of this kind had to be imposed on Indians in order to save Fijians implied an opposition between the Indian 'prostitute' and the Fijian mother. Ultimately the latter's reproductive capacities were to be protected from venereal disease contracted from the former. Yet the danger Indian women were imagined to pose to Fijian mothers was contradicted by other beliefs. For instance, the two races were said to sexually repel one another. Moreover any claims that the prophylactic value of coko would soon be eradicated through government efforts were overly sanguine if not disingenuous. But the preservationist justification, though faulty, carried force: any measure proposed for the benefit of the Taukei was aimed at what was nominally the ultimate moral value in the Fijian colonial administration.

The characterization of the Indian woman as 'prostitute' also proved a useful pretext. Girmitiya women became the scapegoats - not just for venereal disease - but for other lamentable features of indentured life, such as sickness, unsanitary conditions, and the high rates of murder and suicide which were attributed to 'motives of jealousy owing to the immorality of women'. Women were thus the causes, not the victims of indenture's evils. The arguments of the Reverend Cyril Bavin - a Methodist missionary to Fiji's Indians whose opinions were not shared by his colleagues - demonstrate the extent to which the logic could be carried. He denied that the sex ratio was a problem, maintaining such was the nature of Girmitiya women that if more were imported to redress the sex imbalance, the rates of murder and violence would actually increase, not decrease.

The prostitute stereotype also had implications for the depiction of indentured motherhood. While the prostitute and the mother tended to be seen as mutually exclusive types ('It is the exception', noted Corney, 'for loose women to conceive'), indentured women did bear and rear children, and the rates of infant mortality were high - in the

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40 See for instance the comments in Stannard 'Disease and Infertility', pp. 325-350. However, notwithstanding venereal infection, Shlomowitiz has found that the indentured birth-rate in Fiji was roughly comparable to rates in India. Ralph Shlomowitz, 'Fertility and Fiji's Indian Migrants, 1879-1919', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 24:2 (1987) [offprint consulted unpaginated].
41 Corney's minute, 7 Jul. 1898, CSO 4801/1897.
43 Bavin, 'The Indian in Fiji', p. 182.
44 Corney's minute, 14 Jul. 1898, CSO 4801/1897.
1880s and 1890s, roughly on a par with the Fijian [table 7]. Most official explanations curtly pointed to parental incompetence. The Annual Report on Indian Immigration for 1897 for instance stated: 'In many cases the apathy, want of cleanliness, or ignorance of the mother has resulted in gross neglect, while there are no doubt cases in which the child's death has been wilfully induced.' This language is not dissimilar from that used to describe the Fijian mother, and one can guess that both descriptions derived from the same 'mother-blaming' pattern. But slovenly carelessness and uninterest in child-care was also consistent with the image of the whore.

Perhaps the most telling denial of Indian maternity was the Contagious Diseases Ordinance itself. Justified ultimately by reference to Fijian mothers, a case for the need to contain venereal disease could have been made more convincingly by reference to indentured mothers. Medical Officers occasionally blamed elevated rates of still-births among Girmitiya women on the fact that the Indian population was 'highly syphilised'; and there were said to be numbers of syphilitic children on the plantations. Dr Finucane referred obliquely to venereal disease when he claimed the death-rate among the offspring of Indian labourers 'must be regarded as satisfactory in view of the diseases to which this race is so liable...'. Hence it could have been argued that Indian mothers and their children would be spared much suffering if venereal infection were prevented: but this would admit a compassion that could only unravel indenture's moral scheme, and would also demand a kinder mode of prevention.

The denial of the maternal in Girmitiya women clashed with the vision projected by critics of indenture. A campaigner like Andrews idealised the Indian woman as mother and combined elements of a contemporary feminist and Christian exaltation of the maternal with values and attributes he described as distinctively Indian. 'If I were asked to look back on the years that I have spent in India,' he wrote, 'and point out what impressed me most of all, I should be inclined to say the gentleness and devotion of Indian women'; in India, he claimed, 'the romance of womanhood' centres on the wife and mother whose daily round of religious observances and cares sustained Indian social, moral and spiritual life. For those who believed in the essentially maternal virtue of all women, or particularly Indian women, indenture was a crime against motherhood. For those who saw motherhood as the ultimate force for social good, this crime consigned the Indian population in Fiji to chaotic degeneracy.

The anti-indenture literature also described the hardship suffered by Indian mothers. Andrews and Pearson contrasted recollections of simple Indian women working in the fields of their motherland, their little children playing at their feet, with the harsh conditions of indenture witnessed in Fiji where mothers were forced to part from

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45 LCP 23/1898.
46 CSO 5123/1914; minute 14 Jul. 1898 in CSO 4801/1897.
47 M. Finucane, 'The Islands and the People of Fiji,' paper to be read before the Royal Colonial Institute on 27 Nov. 1900; copy contained in CO 83/71.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Infant Death Rate Per Annum (per 1,000)</th>
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<td>1890</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>293</td>
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their children during long days of labour.49 Burton described one mother who slipped away at midday to see her sick child and was caught by the overseer bringing it back with her to the fields: he swore, whipped her, and declared to a shocked onlooker that Coolies had to be treated this way.50 Totaram Sanadhya told the story of Narayani, a Girmijiya woman whose infant had died, so two or three days after the birth she was ordered back to work. When Narayani refused, because the order was against regulations, the overseer struck her senseless. He was then found 'not guilty' by the courts and '[t]his poor woman was beaten so much that her mind went bad, and until now she has stayed crazy'.51 The reports on indenture in Fiji by Andrews and Pearson in 1916, Andrews in 1917 and Florence Garnham in 1918 all stressed that the lines were no place for family life or the rearing of children.52

One case from 1898, well before opposition to indenture reached crescendo, suggests a great deal about plantation maternity.53 Gangya and her husband were labourers on the Bati ni Kama estate at Labasa, Vanua Levu, under James Berry. This was a region where working conditions in the late 1890s may have been especially harsh.54 According to Gangya, she had been six months pregnant, at which stage women were entitled by law to stay in the lines. The sahib James Berry and the sirdar Mahadev had however refused her leave. On the day in question she was working at her task - 80 chains of cane planting, the task allocated to all the women. About midday she began to feel 'unwell', but the sirdar told her to finish her work. An hour later she asked the sirdar and Mr Berry for leave to go to hospital as her time had come - but instead her husband was ordered to put Gangya on the cane truck and take her back to the lines. Fellow workers testified that Gangya's pregnancy was plain for all to see, she had become 'unwell' late in the morning and had passed blood. Before reaching the lines, Gangya asked her husband to stop the truck and there she gave birth to a male child who lived but an hour and was buried, on orders, that evening. Gangya was not allowed a nurse, nor sent to hospital, nor was her husband granted leave to care for her. He was back at work the next day. Both had been warned not to speak of these events, though they eventually found courage to inform the police. Gangya's husband testified that this had been their third child: the first two were also born at Bati ni Kama, but had only survived for two days and one day respectively.

The testimonies of Mr Berry and the sirdar conflicted on key points with that of Gangya, but could not be credited. Mr Berry, for instance, while repeatedly stressing that Gangya earned good money, claimed his understanding was that she had aborted a two to three month old foetus. A medical examination of the child's exhumed remains

51 Totaram Sanadhya, My Twenty-One Years..., pp. 44-45.
53 CSO 1940/1898.
54 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, pp. 112-113.
indicated, however, an infant of at least seven but probably nine months in the womb. The inquiry could attach no blame to Gangya: she was a respectable, married woman and an outstanding worker, whose only fault may have been that she did not begin to ask for leave until her pregnancy was more advanced than she admitted or realised.

Governor O'Brien's reaction to Gangya's ordeal is revealing. He was a man of pernickety conscience who, in relation to European or Fijian women, had often been ready to insist on conditions which allowed them 'self-respect' and 'decency' as an absolute moral imperative; and was keen to coerce, educate and train Fijian women, as we have seen in previous chapters, to the fulfilment of their dignified roles as mothers. O'Brien had that tendency to revere and defend a certain rarefied ideal of womanhood which, some have said, goes hand in hand or even necessitates its opposite: the whore. He supported, for instance, a proposal to introduce in Fiji an ordinance to outlaw the slander of women, based on similar legislation in England which clearly sprang from the energies of the virtuous woman: sexualised prostitute dichotomy. In Fiji, Girmitiya women were the most slandered in these terms and it comes therefore as no surprise that the proposal foundered on the argument that unscrupulous Indian women - undeserving of such protection - would exploit it! Yet in Gangya's case O'Brien expressed no moral outrage against the brutal treatment of a mother. He spoke instead amorally of political and economic interest: to be impressed upon the plantation management, he ordered, was 'the very damaging character of the affair (it is just the sort of thing that might lead to the Indian Govt. stopping emigration to Fiji)'.

Pressure from campaigners and the Indian government did lead to numerous reforms. From 1908 planters were required to install water, superior latrines, separate kitchens, verandahs and spouting in the lines. In 1912 labour offences liable for penal sanction were minimised; the ability of employers to impose inappropriately heavy tasks was curtailed; legal provision was made for schooling plantation children; and a hookworm campaign under Dr Harper was commenced in Navua which dramatically reduced Indian morbidity and mortality in that district and led to similar campaigns in other parts of Fiji. In 1915 penal sanctions for labour offences were finally abolished, a committee recommended measures to lower suicide rates, and officials were asked to stop using the tainted terms 'Coolie' and 'Free Indian'. As Gillion observed, everything was being done to place indenture beyond reproach. Some evidence of genuine concern within the administration for Indian mothers appears in this period too. The Registrar-General compiled figures on Indian still-births and Indian infant mortality, declaring these too high and an issue of great importance 'affecting as it does the lives of so many human

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55 'Memorandum of the Governor of Fiji for Consideration of the Triennial Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Brisbane', 16 Apr. 1901, contained in O'Brien to Secretary of, State, 9 Apr. 1901, CO 83/72.
57 CSO 2457/1898.
58 O'Brien's minute, 9 May 1898, CSO 2457/1898.
59 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 177.
beings'. 60 A committee appointed to consider ways of lowering the death-rate among children on plantations submitted its recommendations in 1915 - nurseries, fly-proof latrines and extended maternity leave among them. 61 These improvements can only have enhanced health conditions; and as Gillion also noted indentured Indians were better catered for, despite many shortcomings, in terms of inspection, hospital facilities and drugs than the indigenous population. 62 Even after provision to Fijians had been expanded, there was still considerable truth in Finucane's statement that the Colony's 'medical service is almost wholly taken up with his [the indentured Indian's] sanitary and medical care'. 63

Yet the benefits of these reforms should not be over-stated. Shlomowitz has pointed out that rates of indentured infant mortality had already begun to fall prior to the full impact of the campaign against indenture. 64 One could also argue, reforms notwithstanding, that the lives of Girmitya women by the late 1910s remained little changed in certain controversial respects. They were still in a sexually vulnerable and outnumbered position, extremely harsh attitudes persisted in plantation and government circles, and medical provision for indentured women continued to be a politically and culturally charged issue.

Contrary to proponents of 'Indian shamelessness', Indian women, according to their champions, felt ashamed - more so than European women - by masculine medical intrusion. Andrews talked of the pain they endured when treated not just by male doctors, but worse, by 'Australian men: sometimes unmarried and unqualified men'. 'Sahib,' they complained, '... if you like to put us to shame in the Hospital to be handled by Sahib men, we shall never keep our modesty'. 65 The politics of sexual humiliation and oppression in Fiji intensified this aversion. The forced vaginal inspections permitted under the Contagious Diseases Ordinance had clearly been experienced as violating and must have established, for Girmitya women, an association between medicine and the other structural and ideological pressures to live the part of 'prostitute'. Once abolished, one hospital attendant recalled how Coolie women had 'challenged him to examine them without consent, brandishing the repeal of the C.D.Ordinance in his face'. 66 Yet medicine did not shed these associations. In a case from 1907 discussed by Kelly, the evidence of a Medical Officer deriving from his vaginal inspection of a Girmitya women who claimed

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60 CSO 5123/1914.
61 CSO 10439/1914, 10751/1914, 702/1915; 2172/1915.
62 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 106.
63 Finucane, 'The Islands and People of Fiji'. p. 10.
64 Ralph Shlomowitz, 'Infant Mortality and Fiji's Indian Migrants, 1879-1919', The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 23:3 (1986), [offprint consulted unpaginated].
66 Corney's minute, 19 Oct. 1895, CSO 4256/1895 contained in CSO 4801/1897.
she had been raped, ultimately weakened the prosecution and suggests the enduring influence of the 'prostitute' stereotype.\textsuperscript{67}

The testament of an Australian overseer who worked in Fiji during indenture's twilight leaves little doubt that brutality was engrained. One evening Walter Gill and another CSR employee chanced upon a Coolie pushing a girl in a cane truck whose foot was sliced in half. This pair had been turned away from the plantation hospital 'by an overfat Muslim... without a single humane instinct'. Gill and his companion took the two back to the hospital and did their best to tend her injury, but because the European doctor refused to see any natives or Coolies after 5 pm, she could be given no morphia or professional aid. Gill continued, 'At nine next morning, she gave birth to her baby. The birth seemed effortless, as though she was incapable of feeling more pain. The child was a girl, so before she [the mother] died she made her man promise to take care of the dog'.\textsuperscript{68}

As other aspects of indenture were reformed, critics stressed even more heavily the suffering of Girmitya women. Increasingly too, the voices of women activists joined in protest. After 1916 the campaign moved into a new phase. Opponents had felt sure that indenture was as good as finished. In March 1916 the Viceroy announced its imminent abolition, and due to shipping difficulties caused by war this was in fact the last year in which Fiji received indentured immigrants from India. Yet then reports that another five years were to pass before Fiji would formally be debarred from indenturing labour provoked an uproar.

January 1917 was the start of an India-wide campaign which, according to Gillion, 'enlisted wider public support than any other movement in modern Indian history, more even than the movement for independence'.\textsuperscript{69} At the opening demonstration in Allahabad, a paper by Andrews on Fiji's Girmitya women was read aloud, after which the poet and nationalist Mrs Sarojini Naidu invoked the heroines of Hindu tradition and challenged her countrymen to halt this degradation.\textsuperscript{70} A deputation of prominent women from all over India, led by Mrs Jaiji Petit of Bombay, called upon the Viceroy requesting an end to indenture - an unprecedented action on the part of Indian women which Gandhi recalled 'had a great effect'.\textsuperscript{71} Mrs Annie Besant led the campaign in the Madras presidency and was an important link between the nationalist cause in India and feminist circles in England.

\textsuperscript{69} Gillion, \textit{Fiji's Indian Migrants}, p. 182.
Andrews' second report on Fiji in 1917 helped bring the campaign to a feminist constituency in Australia and New Zealand as well. On leaving Fiji, he toured Australia appealing to female audiences. More graphically than the previous report authored with Pearson, he emphasized female suffering, and dramatized the themes of sexual depravity and corruption of family life. The greatest danger to Indian health in the Colony, he declared, was the spread of syphilis - the 'Great Scourge' which feminists had so often depicted as the disaster inflicted on many an innocent wife.72 Aside from the cancellation of indenture and the demolition of the lines, many of Andrews' exhortations appear to have been phrased with a dual purpose - to address the evils of indenture, but also to sound rallying cries for imperial womanhood. Andrews proclaimed the urgent necessity of employing matrons in hospitals with Indian female patients, adding that women would see to matters which would otherwise go unnoticed. He called for 'stamping out' sexual relations between European men and Indian women. And the children of the indentured needed to be taken immediately in hand - and given better housing, education and healthier surroundings. In stirring terms, Andrews described how the women of India had already risen nobly to this cause and he conjured a vision of Sisters-in-Empire, where the stronger were morally obliged, in sympathy and solidarity for their weaker sisters, to correct the errors and moral deficiencies of masculine rule.73

Women responded. Florence Garnham, who worked for the London Missionary Society in India, was commissioned by a coalition of 45 Australasian women's groups with names like the Women's Peace Army, the Society to Combat the Social Evil, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Travellers Aid Society, the Kindergarten Union and the League of Loyal Women, to visit Fiji and write a report. Garnham identified four essential problems - the disproportion of the sexes; the lack of privacy in the lines; social breakdown leading to lawlessness and leaderlessness; and the loss of self-respect. She recommended the cancellation of indenture as soon as possible; the employment of women doctors and certificated nurses; a scheme of education which would restore to Indians their cultural values; and the legal recognition of Indian customary marriage. 'Moral interests,' she stated, 'should precede commercial interests'.74 Her report was concise and sober and its impact is suggested by the fact that in 1919 her recommendations were adopted by the Governor of Fiji, and the last remaining contracts were abolished the following year.75

But there were two kinds of Indian mother: the indentured and the free. The campaign had focussed almost exclusively on the former, who by the second decade of the century constituted a shrinking minority.

For Indian women the transition from indentured worker to free settler meant moving out of an infrastructure which did provide medical supervision and hospitals,

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72 Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 146-149; 243-247.
75 Rodwell to Secretary of State, 14 Aug. 1919, CO 83/146.
however defective, into an existence with very little provision of this kind. Once labourers completed their contract, administrative responsibility for their health ceased. Indian settlers could go to the Colonial Hospital in Suva, but this was handy only to a few. They could use plantation hospitals for a fee if one was nearby and providing there was room, but these hospitals were haunted by memories of death and indenture and were often avoided. They could, on liability of a fee or if destitute for free, call upon the services of a government Medical Officer or Native Medical Practitioner if one was available. Many free Indians, however, lived in scattered settlements and found it difficult to summon help. The case of one woman by the name of Kailasia illuminates the difficulties a non-indentured mother might face.

Kailasia and her husband belonged to a small Indian settlement in the Dreketi district of Macuata, Vanua Levu. She gave birth on 14th July 1912, died the next day, and was followed by her infant a few days later. On the request of other Indian tenants, a European settler called Lynch wrote to the government about these events. Kailasia's husband was poor and had been unable to secure the services of any Indian women who usually attended childbirth. One had pleaded sickness while the other had demanded two guineas 'cash down'. Kailasia being in difficulties, Lynch eventually found a Fijian and an Indian woman to help, but was convinced that the lack of timely assistance had contributed to the deaths. He then made the following proposals: that the government should specify fixed fees for such cases; make attendance obligatory on the part of unengaged midwives; and that midwives (meaning here Indian midwives) should 'be registered as qualified and given the right to practice'. In cases of dire poverty - like Kailasia's and her husband's - the payment could be met in part by their neighbours and in part by the government's special fund for destitute Indians.

The government's response showed little sympathy for Kailasia, but some for her husband: 'A peasant Indian with two or three young children and a wife hanging on to him who has not reached what may for convenience be called Indian affluence has no small task to face nowadays'. But the proposals for improving the provision of midwifery to Indian settlers were firmly rejected by the Agent General of Immigration and dismissed as impracticable by the Chief Medical Officer.76 When the Governor suggested that since Fijian girls were being trained as midwives Indian girls should be trained too, the CMO replied that their training was not 'of such importance as the training of Fijians for the same purpose: because Indians wish to have families & take care that they do'. The Agent General elaborated, '...the training of Fijian midwives was the outcome of enquiries made into the decrease of the Native population, which showed that the high mortality of infants was due in part to the barbarous methods of the Fijian nurses and midwives. There is but little similitude I believe between the Fijian and the Indian in this respect, the latter taking great care of their children'.77

76 Actually, Lynch's suggestions were misread as proposing the training of Indian midwives, which he did not suggest, nor necessarily imply.
77 All references to CSO 5215/1912.
Free Indian women were thus no longer whores, but excellent breeders and competent carers. Even under indenture the odd official had spoken warmly of Indian mothers. Dr Harper claimed '...their instinct of motherhood is at least as unselfish and enduring as our own'. Later such statements were taken further and widely espoused, with the Colony's highest medical authorities declaring Indian mothers beyond compare.

Kailasia's case demonstrates how the characterization of Indian women as naturally good mothers was used to resist suggestions that medical services should be extended to them or to Indians in general: they proliferated extremely well without. Indians were also said to enjoy easier and more salubrious living conditions in Fiji than their homeland; while new settlers everywhere should expect to manage without amenities. According to the local press, Indians suffered nothing like the hardships which men and women endured on the Australian frontier, or which early European settlers had suffered in Fiji.

Nevertheless the campaign against indenture forced the government to improve medical services to Indian settlers and to acknowledge the needs of Indian women. In 1919 a select committee on Indian conditions recommended district hospitals, government dispensaries, the employment of a lady doctor, the training of four Indian men to be Indian Medical Practitioners, and the training of four girls to be Indian Obstetric Nurses. The first of these recommendations to be implemented was perhaps the most politically strategic: the appointment of a lady doctor. This was clearly intended to appease the administration's vociferous feminist critics, most of whom had never set foot in Fiji. Mildred Staley, who had worked for many years as a medical missionary in India, was appointed in 1921 and based at the Colonial Hospital in Suva. She also opened a women's dispensary in the suburb of Toorak and worked closely with the Methodist Mission. Her position however was abolished in 1923 as part of a government retrenchment program.

Dr Staley's dismissal only served to keep the medical treatment of Fiji's Indian women a live issue within and beyond the Colony. What was perhaps the first petition sent to a Governor of Fiji by either Fijian or Indian women was signed by Mrs E. I. Prasad and other 'Indian Women Subjects' concerning the provision of a lady doctor and trained Indian midwives. They stated that Dr Staley had 'effected cures among hundreds of us who for many years have been suffering in private from distressing maladies which, for modesty's sake, we were unable to disclose to male doctors' and lamented

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78 Dr Phillip Harper, confidential CSO papers, quoted in Kelly, A Politics of Virtue, p. 56.
79 Dr Hoodless, Director of the Central Medical School, quoted by Margaret W. Guthrie, Misi Utu: Dr D.W. Hoodless and the Development of Medical Education in the South Pacific, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1979, p. 35.
80 Fiji Times and Herald offprint, 'Hindu Morals' and 'Indian Health', reprinted form articles communicated to the Fiji Times and Herald, Aug. to Sept. 1918; 'Indians in Fiji, Western Pacific Herald, 25 Nov. 1918 in MOM 521.
81 LCP 46/1919.
that 'a very great number of our sisters and little children have lost their lives through having been unable to secure the services of a well trained midwife'. The London-based International Woman Suffrage Alliance took up this petition and brought it to the attention of its sister society the Women's Indian Association in Adyar, Madras. Among the many feminist bodies which repeatedly petitioned the Secretary of State or the Governor of Fiji on the issues of a lady doctor and medical services to Fiji's Indian women were the Feminist Club, Sydney; the National Council of Women of New South Wales; the Committee to Deal with the Social and Moral Conditions of Indian Women in Fiji, London; and the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, also in London.

The feminist campaign overlapped with calls from inside the Methodist church for a medical and women's mission to Fiji's Indians. While this kind of work was an established part of missionary endeavour in India, it was slow to start in Fiji. Among the inhibiting factors was the attitude, earlier discussed, of the church to its mission sisters. Trained and adequately resourced women were needed, but Fiji's Methodist single women missionaries, most of whom were attached to the Indian department, continued to suffer low status, a lack of training and wages that caused them acute financial embarrassment. Florence Garnham, accustomed to the provisions of the London Missionary Society, reproved the Methodist Board on all these counts - making it clear however that 'I am not a Suffragette!' A second factor was the sheer difficulty of winning Indian converts. Due to the breakdown of caste under indenture, there was no constituency of the low caste and outcaste, as in India, receptive to the promise of social emancipation through Christianity. Nor could missionaries win converts by argument. Burton complained, 'We cannot think the thoughts of these people. There are too many convolutions of their brain, or else the tortuosities are too intricate for an Englishmen to thread his way through'. Hope of making converts through the expansion of mission-run schools were baffled by those Indian parents who steeled their children against the missionary message, while Indian-run schools came to rival those of Christian missions. The most dependable source of Indian Christians for the Methodists remained their two orphanages. Even so, numbers were small. By 1920, there were

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82 CSO 3504/1924.
83 Address by Miss Garnham before the Mission Board on October 4th 1918, MOM 521. Calls for the improved training of mission sisters had been made the year before by Rev. John G. Wheen, J. Garrard & G.J. Waterhouse, Report and Recommendations of the Commission appointed by the Mission Board to Visit the Fiji District 1917, Sydney: Epworth Press, 1917.
86 By 1911 the Methodists were the largest purveyors of education to Indian children, with some 414 pupils in six establishments. Smaller numbers were taught by The Seventh Day Adventists, Roman Catholics and Anglicans. When plantations were required to make schooling opportunities available to children, the mission offered teachers, seeing scope for Christianization. Thomley, 'The Methodist Mission and Fiji's Indians', p. 147; Cyril Bavin, The Indian in Fiji, p. 194.
only 125 full Indian members of the Methodist Church out of an Indian population near 60,000.87 Money spent on Indian work won few souls to Christ.

In the years following the abolition of indenture, the Reverend J. F. Long and his wife Dr Olive Long joined Reverend Richard Piper and a handful of others in advocating medical work among Indian women.88 In her spare time, Olive ran a dispensary from the verandah of the Ba Mission House and within a year treated two thousand women and children, some of whom had travelled long distances.89 According to her husband, 'Her greatest sadness is to see case after case come to her and have to be turned away again'.90 A medical and redeeming mission by European women to Indian motherhood in Fiji would, Long declared, 'touch the HEART OF HINDUISM...[sic]' and offer the most promising avenue of evangelisation.91 He proposed, with Dr Staley's endorsement, the building of a mission hospital in Ba, where Indian women could be treated, and where Indian nurses and midwives could be trained.92

This concept materialised in the Ba Methodist Women's Hospital opened in 1926. Tired of criticism for dismissing Staley, the government agreed to subsidise the salary of the doctor in charge, Doreen Hensley. Modern and solely staffed by women, the hospital was a showpiece and for many years the only place in the Colony where Indian nurses - mostly Christian girls drawn from the orphanage at Dilkusha - were trained. To some this heralded the beginning of great things. Staley's dispensary in Suva was reopened, a dispensary operated at Davuilevu under Nurse Hester Clarke and Florence Marke aided the Methodist work while the Anglican church posted another qualified nurse, Miss Boulton, to Labasa.93 An important aspect of this medical mission was visiting. Florence and Hester called on Indian homes while Dr Hensley travelled around Ba conducting roadside clinics. Plans were put forward for a thorough program of medical and nursing outreach. 'Are we,' asked Hester, 'as a Church, going to consolidate what we have already started to do for the Indians here by a real earnest & determined attempt to reach the Indian women & girls?[sic]?'94

The answer was no. In 1929 the Fiji Chairman retrenched mission sisters from Indian work.95 Nor did the Government - having opened hospitals for Indians in Lautoka, Nadi, Penang and Labasa and commenced the training of Indian Medical

88 Cape, Bavin and Piper had all stressed the importance of medical work; Cape, The Rev. C. P. Cape's Report, p. 4; Bavin, The Indian in Fiji, pp. 195-196, Richard Piper, Tentative Proposals for a Methodist Mission Hospital at Lautoka' 11 Jun. 1918, MOM 521; 'Indian Medical Mission Work', MOM 521; Richard Piper, 'The Indian Problem in Fiji', 31 Mar. 1918, MOM 520.
89 Rev. J.F. Long to CMO, 3 Nov. 1924, CSO 4361/1924.
91 Rev. J.F.Long, 'The Friendless Indian Women of Fiji'.
93 CSO 98/1925.
94 Hester Clarke to J. W. Burton, 16 Sep. 1926, MOM 524.
95 General Secretary to Chairman, 9 May 1929, MOM 526.
Figure 18: Indian nurses, Ba Methodist Women's Hospital

Figure 19: Dr Hensley and colleagues at Ba Methodist Women's Hospital
Practitioners consider much more should be done. The impetus for these initiatives had in fact come largely from parties outside the Colony and without the international campaign which obliged the Government to improve medical provision for Indians, it is doubtful that proponents within the local Indian branch of the Methodist mission would have gained the support they did achieve.

Government reluctance to help Indians was hardening in the interwar era. Aptly Gillion subtitled his history of Fiji's Indians from 1920 as the 'Challenge to European Dominance'. The abolition of indenture followed by the Indian strikes in 1920 and 1921 signalled unwelcome developments to Fiji's European population of less than 4000. As cane production moved into the hands of small Indian tenants, the stubborn dream of white planter prosperity finally vaporised. Small white shopkeepers and even large European firms felt Indian competition. And there was internal and external pressure on the government to concede to Indians a larger role in running the Colony - which leaders like Vishnu Deo campaigned for on the basis of equality with whites. Thus European dominance was economically, ideologically and politically threatened and with it the principle of indigenous paramountcy. Increasingly the Indian man came to be seen as endangering a cosy colonial order. The rapid demographic increase of the Indians exacerbated anxieties about his political containment.

On the specific matter of medical services for Indian women the Fiji government considered itself unreasonably harassed. On inquiring of other Crown colonies with Indian populations whether they employed lady doctors, Mauritius, British Guyana and Trinidad all replied to the negative; while the Indian government itself was remarked to make practically no official provision in this respect. Another sore point was the training of Indian girls as midwives and nurses. This was frequently pressed by Indian members in the Legislative Council. They wanted their girls to have opportunities for training and Vishnu Deo insisted that this should be to the European standard. Yet when training (to the standard of Fijian nurses in Suva) was offered at the new Lautoka hospital which had been conceived with this purpose in mind, no candidates could be found. In practice, Indian girls were married extremely young and midwifery was associated with pollution and low status. Only Christian girls were exempt from these considerations. In the absence of Indian trainees, and with some bitter comment, Fijian nurses needed for work among their own people had to be posted to Lautoka.

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96 Annual Medical Report for 1924, LCP 32/1925; CSO 1875/1926.
99 CSO 2584/1926.
100 CSO 5347/1929.
102 CSO 805/1926; and *Fiji Times*, 17 Jun. 1926.
Graph 2: Indian population (Census '36)
Statistics only stiffened the administration's position. Indian mortality rates looked unbelievably good. They were double-checked in case the government was accused of deceit. 'So low a death rate with so high a birth rate is almost if not quite without equal in the world'. With 6.1 deaths per mille and 34.3 births per mille for the years 1920-1924 Indian rates were respectively the lowest and the highest in the Colony, and lower and higher than rates in England and Australia. Indian infant mortality in 1924 at 45 per mille compared favourably with Australian rates for the same year of 57 per mille. Figures such as these were taken by the administration to reflect the glowing health of Indian settlers. The constant petitions from overseas feminists on Indian mothers, babies and death-rates seemed utterly out of touch with realities in the Colony and were disparaged as the writings of 'troublesome people'.

The most decisive factor in the mission and government retreat from Indian women was, however, the restoration of Fijian mothers to the agenda. They had been forgotten by the administration and elided from public discourse by the language used by missionary and feminist campaigners to represent the Colony's Indian women. These, not Fijian women, were described as 'defenceless natives' or 'Fijian womanhood', as if the Taukei, as earlier predicted, had already died out. The attraction of Indian women to the metropolitan missionary and feminist imagination has been analysed elsewhere, and we have certainly seen here how Fiji's Indian women were readily rendered into standard scripts of late 19th and early 20th century feminism. To this, as much as Indian nationalism, the Indian mother in Fiji owed her rise. But Fijian women had never inspired such feminist feeling. Men within the government had been the authors of past measures in their name, and occasionally they had tried and failed to ignite white sisterly ardor. In the mid 1920s, these men again reinstated na tina ni gone itaukei, as the next chapter will show.

103 CMO 14 Apr. 1926, CSO 1695/1926. A number of considerations probably detract from the good impression made by these statistics: many older immigrants may have returned to India to die; and, as the CMO concluded (minute 24 Aug. 1926) there was possibly some underregistration of deaths. The deaths of infants are particularly liable to under-reporting.

104 CSO 3506/1924.

105 Katherine Bompas to Secretary of State for India, 11 Jul. 1924, CSO 3504/1924, and Long's 'The Friendless Indian Women of Fiji'.

Chapter Ten

Fijian Mothers, Again

A second wave of government efforts to save the Taukei from 'extinction' came in the mid 1920s. The Decrease Report was explicitly resurrected in a changed demographic context, where Fijian mothers were pitted against Indian mothers in a reproductive competition with political futures at stake. To aid na tina ni gone itaukei, a latter-day Hygiene Mission of European Women to Fijian Women was introduced in the form of the Child Welfare Scheme.

The Child Welfare Scheme, commenced in 1927, nevertheless presents some striking contrasts with its predecessor. The energies of Fijian women were enlisted as nurses, members of village committees and leaders of the work. The scheme itself authorised a role for women in village health and marked the first of the modern women's organisations that indicated the capacity of women to contribute - though the word was little used at the time - to development. It certainly provided the basis on which gains in maternal and child health were consolidated in the koro after World War 2. But in the 1930s many considered this Scheme too had failed to lower Fijian infant mortality. As we shall see, expectations were quite unrealistic and suggest once more that emphasis had been misplaced on 'bad mothering' without recognizing factors outside mothers' normal control. Ironically, disappointing results were taken to confirm the view that Fijian mothers were at fault; and the achievements and potential of the scheme were placed in jeopardy by transferring its control into hostile hands: the Medical Department.

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The word 'extinction' in the 1920s slipped between literal and metaphoric descriptions of the Fijian fate. The Taukei were increasing, but this trend was not perceived with clarity or optimism. The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 had wiped out preceding demographic gains so the census of 1921 returned the lowest Fijian population recorded by any census - 84,475. In the 1920s moreover an explosion of literature on Pacific depopulation, including works by Rivers, Pitt-Rivers and Roberts, further popularised and entrenched the prognosis that the peoples of the Pacific were doomed - though most Islander populations were now in fact recovering. Fijians too used the seasoned language of na lutu sobu itaukei as if nothing had changed. A letter from the villagers of Muana in 1928 for instance expressed the hope that Child Welfare might 'result in an increase in the Fijian race'. If not in an absolute numerical sense, political


2 CSO 4810/1928.
and economic extinction for the Taukei was presaged by administrators and others perturbed by the rapid Indian increase. When the Child Welfare Scheme was inaugurated, Governor Hutson exhorted his Fijian audience to save their babies and vowed to do his own best 'to increase the Fijian people so that they may retain their position of influence in the community' - implying that on current trends, this position would be lost. 

Renewed interest in the Fijian mother was triggered by the comparison of Fijian and Indian infant mortality rates. The last time statistics on Fijian infant mortality had been routinely published was 1915 (when, in a telling coincidence, recommendations were made for reducing death-rates of indentured children). In the mid 1920s however the resentment, fear and irritation Europeans felt over Indian demands, in health provision but more controversially in other areas such as electoral reform - seems to have prompted an exercise in comparative statistics. Sir Alport Barker, partisan of a 'White Fiji', editor of the Fiji Times and member of the Legislative Council, asked how infant mortality rates among the racial groups compared. The following statistics from 1925 were tabled: Europeans 29.4 per mille; Indians 46.0; Fijians 172.2; Polynesians 72.7; and half-castes 67.4. The figures that made the greatest impression were the Indian and Fijian. The babies of Taukei mothers were apparently perishing at a rate more than three times greater than those of Indian mothers. War once more was declared on Fijian infant mortality.

Proposals for a system of Child Welfare had already been made - but with Indian mothers in mind. A. W. McMillan, the YMCA's field secretary in Suva for Indian work, had suggested to the Governor that a Mother and Child Welfare Society should be established in Fiji on the model of the Plunket Society in New Zealand. Founded by the doctor Truby King and named after the wife of a Governor, Plunket doctrines for the rearing of sturdy babies were a national creed in New Zealand and a major export to its dependencies in the Pacific, to Australia and beyond. The government took McMillan's advice but adapted it to different priorities: Fijian, not Indian women. Those who had the Indian mother at heart could only hope for a 'day not far distant' when similar efforts would be made on her behalf.

The Child Welfare Scheme was projected as the fulfilment of a disregarded recommendation of the Decrease Report. Islay McOwan, appointed in 1926 to the new office of Secretary of Native Affairs, praised 'this very full and exhaustive report' and attributed the arrest of Fijian decline to the implementation of many of its

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3 Governor's message, contained in CSO 2033/1927.
4 See ch. 9.
5 CSO 4904/1926; LCD 12 Nov. 1926.
recommendations during the century's first decade. But the report's recommendations relating to infant mortality, he said, had been neglected. 'The cause of this infantile mortality is well known, viz., the ignorance and the indifference, amounting almost to a lack of the maternal instinct, amongst Fijian women'. Its remedy, of course, was 'a mission from European women to Fijian women'.

Why did McOwan legitimise the Child Welfare Scheme by reference to the Decrease Report when other models and authorities, besides Plunket, could have been cited? The Colonial Office itself was promoting baby-care and preventive health. In the 1920s the Secretary of State invited officials from Fiji to imperial conferences on Infant Welfare and reported initiatives worthy of emulation such as baby shows in Tanganyika and health plays in Jamaica. Dr Sylvester Lambert, the Rockefeller Foundation's Pacific health representative moved to Suva in 1922 and tirelessly promoted public health. The League of Nations took an active interest in bettering conditions in the mandated Pacific territories and sponsored a survey of the region's health. Colonel Richardson, the administrator of Western Samoa had described to Hutson the child welfare work underway in Samoa and vaunted his own ambition to keep every Samoan centre flush with Glaxo, a recently formulated New Zealand dried milk. The Plunket doctrines suggested by McMillan were already in practice there.

A number of explanations for McOwan's tactic could be conjectured. Possibly the new literature on Pacific depopulation had revived the Decrease Report's intellectual authority. In 1925 there was some thought of reprinting it. Rivers, Roberts and Pitt-Rivers all cited the document and also used Basil Thomson's *The Fijians: A Study in the Decay of Custom* which drew upon the commission's research. Possibly some officers in the Fiji administration had never escaped the formative influences of their youth. McOwan had served under O'Brien and well remembered his zeal 'to save the race'. As a young man he had perused reports by hygiene sisters and attributed the shortcomings of their work to its spasmodic and inconsistent character. Possibly, by deriving Child Welfare from the Decrease Report, the claims of the Indian mother were conveniently elided.

But perhaps most important was the philosophy of native administration which in some ways the Decrease Report implied. As earlier discussed, the Commission was founded on a defence of the Native Policy and a denial that it was responsible for na lutu

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8 Secretary for Native Affairs to Colonial Secretary, 10 May 1928, LCP 71/1928.
9 CSO 1281/1924; 2937/1926; 5993/1929.
10 CSO 1491/1928.
12 CSO 3358/1925.
14 CSO 579/1900; CSO 3093/1900.
sobu itaukei. Yet by the 1920s the old administrative ideals of indirect rule and the communal economy were much compromised. The native tax scheme, requiring Fijian men to pay tax collectively in their own garden produce, had been allowed to collapse. The role of Fijian office-holders in the native administration had been progressively diminished and their autonomy reduced. The short-lived Provincial Inspectors had marked the beginning of this demotion. From 1913 Roko Tui were partially phased out and those remaining were placed under District Commissioners. Then in 1921 the office of Native Commissioner was abolished. Many Fijians interpreted this as a sign of their decreasing importance. Village conditions and food production were also deteriorating in many places due to men leaving in quest of paid employment, but effective powers were denied to the Fijian district administration to check this exodus. McOwan deplored these trends as destructive to Fijian welfare.

Yet most of McOwan's European colleagues welcomed what they saw as the gradual inroads of individualism into Fijian life, driving Fijian society from a primitive to a more advanced economic stage. Important persons in the Medical Department suggested that the process should actually be hastened in the interests of health. When Dr McGusty was asked to comment on Fijian infant mortality, he implied that greater liberty and enterprise were needed: the Indians were thriving, he believed, due to the invigorating effects of independence. The Chief Medical Officer Dr Montague claimed protective and paternal policies had failed: '...we have not increased their affection for and care of their children, we have not got them to adopt civilized methods of caring for the sick, our treatment still carries on an unequal contest with the native medicine man, the mothers of young children have not the opportunity, even if they have the desire, to devote themselves to their care'. His prescription for Fijian infant mortality was simply this: private property and industry. Cotton, he mused, might produce 'the greatest hygienic results'.

The Child Welfare Scheme assumed significance in this philosophical conflict. For the Medical Department, any such scheme simply missed the point, which was the pernicious effect of communal and traditional constraints. McOwan on the other hand argued that the Medical Department's hospitals and Native Medical Practitioners had missed the point: 'It is not apparently so much a question of cure as of prevention; the education of the mother rather than the treatment of the child'; and for McOwan, village life was no impediment to education. The Colonial Secretary Seymour agreed, and stated his impression that Fijian women 'have no place in the scheme of native life and

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15 Nevertheless, the report included criticisms of the native administration and some of its recommendations - like Provincial Inspectors - contravened the original principles of indirect rule.
19 McOwan's minute 12 Jun. 1926, CSO 2551/1926.
polity'. The Child Welfare Scheme would, he hoped, give them this position, and raise the status of their sex.20

In foregrounding the Decrease Report and its recommendations, much more hinged on Child Welfare than merely Fijian infant mortality. Contextualised in this way, the Scheme implied that the basic principles of the original native policy were sound; and that the government had strayed from nineteenth century wisdom, which in the Decrease Report tended to locate the problem and solution with women. This type of gender analysis, married to the conservative administrative ideal, continued into the era after World War 2, when Ratu Sukuna and G. K. Roth reshaped the native administration closer to the nineteenth century type. Roth in particular sensed, in that long line of thought which linked him back through the likes of McOwan to Thurston, that it was not the system which needed to change, but the mothers.21 The Child Welfare Scheme, according to McOwan, should be seen 'as part fulfilment of a duty of trust under the Deed of Cession'.22

Other factors also motivated supporters of the scheme. Many, like Barker, doubtless hoped that by saving more Fijian babies, the day of Indian demographic majority, with its political implications for Fijian and European interests, could be postponed.23 The funding of the scheme discloses another set of interests. Initially moneys were sought from the Colony's Immigration Fund originally intended to finance labour immigration. The Governor argued that since the importation of labour was no longer feasible, employers of labour would increasingly rely, as they had already been doing since the abolition of indenture, on Fijians. The Child Welfare Scheme could thus be seen as an investment in the supply of a future workforce. Approval for this source of funding was not obtained, but the Colonial Sugar Refining Company did agree to subsidise the scheme at the rate of £2000 per year.24 This generous gesture may well have been tinged with the hope of a dividend.

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Dr Regina Flood-Keyes Roberts, an MD from Buffalo University and wife of the American consul, has been portrayed as the heroine of Child Welfare in Fiji.25 She brought to Suva previous experience in this work from Western Samoa.26 With a

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20 Seymour's Minute, 27 Jun. 1928, CSO 2864/1928
22 McOwan addressing the Legislative Council, 1931, transcript in CSO 1299/1930.
23 Sir Alport Barker's involvement in the preliminary discussions of child welfare is indicated by the letter from Hutson to Barker, 6 Aug. 1926, in CSO 3464/1926. It seems likely that Barker played an important role in redirecting the early suggestions for child welfare work away from Indian mothers and towards a purely Fijian focus.
24 LCP 71/1928; 99/1928; CSO 5904/1928.
motorcar provided by the local magnate and politician Sir Maynard Hedstrom, from December 1927 she concentrated her energies on over twenty villages within reach by road from the capital.\textsuperscript{27} The following year, despite the reluctance of the colonial administration to recognise American medical qualifications, she was registered fit for practice in the Colony.\textsuperscript{28}

The novel feature of the Child Welfare Scheme was the village Women’s Committees. Dr Roberts described them as follows. The selection of committee members was left to the villagers. Committee meetings were held once a week, and women were appointed for different tasks. The elected President was responsible to the Medical Officer. Every morning and night a bell was rung. At the morning bell, the children would gather to be checked for minor complaints and cleanliness, while the night bell signalled curfew. The committee arranged for all kitchens, houses and latrines to be inspected weekly, and persons responsible for dirty premises were reported to the proper official. The Turaga ni Koro and Buli were informed of all cases of illness. Serious illness was reported to the Medical Officer while minor complaints were treated according to committee instructions. Though attempts were made to achieve uniformity among committees throughout Fiji and many older Fijians today still remember the bells, there was considerable variation in practice.\textsuperscript{29}

Roberts had ‘a dominating personality\textsuperscript{30} - and with her sedan, personal status, throng of assistants and interpreters, as well as the Medical Officer and frequently Mrs Seymour, the wife of the Colonial Secretary or visiting dignitaries in tow, descended on villages in style. Meetings were conducted with flair and formality. On arrival, the Turaga ni Koro, Chiefs and Women’s Committee were appropriately greeted, before the entourage moved to the house which had been specially prepared for the meeting. ‘The Buli, Turaga-ni-Koro, members of the Women’s Committee, and all children under fourteen years of age with their mothers are ordered to attend’. A short talk was given on topics like infant feeding, flies or latrines; later Regina used bible stories to make a sanitary point. The Women’s Committee would next report to the Medical Officer on village health conditions. This completed, all the children sitting in rows in the centre of the room filed up for medical inspection. The final act of the drama was the weighing of infants. Each mother brought her child up to the scales and the result was publicly announced. Praise to the mother whose infant had gained weight! Everyone clapped. Shame to the mother whose infant had lost weight! She was admonished, a special note was made against her name and she returned to her place ‘in dead silence’. Not just among the women of the village, but between villages, Dr Roberts strove to create ‘a

\textsuperscript{27} CSO 1795/1928.
\textsuperscript{28} CSO 508/1928.
\textsuperscript{29} Regina Flood-Keyes Roberts, ‘Child Welfare Work in the Suva-Nausori Region’, CSO 1795/1928. See also the instructions for child care under the Programme of Work, Provincial Council Tailevu, 8-11 Nov. 1932.
\textsuperscript{30} Hunt’s minute, 28 Jun. 1930, CSO 914/1930.
spirit of emulation'. An element of potentially unpleasant surprise attached to some village inspections, which were made at irregular intervals, unannounced.\(^3\)

The theatricality of such meetings impressed everyone, including village men whose initial fascination was mistaken for a profound and intelligent interest in Child Welfare.\(^3\) European onlookers were certainly dazzled. Aside from Mrs Seymour, these on occasion included the Governor and Lady Hutson, Sir Maynard Hedstrom and Lady Hedstrom, Major Furse, D.S.O., Dr Heiser and Dr Lambert of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Cilento on his survey for the League of Nations, and other senior officers in the Fiji administration.\(^3\) McOwan enthused that Dr Roberts 'understands natives and gets on good terms with them immediately' - despite her inability to speak Fijian.\(^3\) Instructions were given for her approach to be adopted for Child Welfare throughout the Colony.\(^3\) Dr Roberts' ability to compose and type professional looking reports further enhanced her authority.

In the background, often beyond the reach of motorcars, other white women employed in the work were much less glamorous. Nurse Suckling was the real inaugurator of both the scheme and the village committees, which she commenced in May 1927 before Roberts' arrival. Suckling had first come to Fiji as the wife of a Methodist missionary. On the death of her husband in the 'flu epidemic in 1918, she worked in the Indian orphanage at Lautoka before returning to New Zealand for her children's education. When the government was looking for a suitable person to start the Scheme Mrs Suckling, by then Matron of Christchurch Hospital, was recommended: she had the professional qualifications, missionary dedication and a knowledge of Fiji.\(^3\) These characteristics she shared with the other sisters who later joined the Scheme, Nurses Brewer, Geeves, Ricketts, Field and Hammat.

These Child Welfare Sisters were a distinctive kind of white women worker. They were drawn from the culture of the Methodist mission (a few, in fact, were taken from Indian work), but unlike the Methodist sisters in the earlier Hygiene Mission, they were widows or unmarried women and hence worked without a husband or family duties. Unlike the Roman Catholic sisters, or even the single Methodist sisters, they often lacked the institutional setting of a school, hospital or orphanage. Nurse Suckling's home was a Fijian style house in Wainibokasi in the Rewa delta, from which she travelled mostly on river or by foot. Dr Harper marvelled that no white man or woman could survive her working conditions.\(^3\) Though sometimes glimpsed by other Europeans, she lived mostly outside their society in close but not always untroubled relations with the

\(^3\) Dr Regina Flood-Keyes Roberts, Routine of Child Welfare Work, LCP 45/1930 and CSO 4810/1928.
\(^3\) CSO 4180/1928.
\(^3\) Report by Dr Roberts, 1 Apr. 1929, in CSO 4810/1928.
\(^3\) McOwan, 14 Apr. 1928, CSO 1795/1928.
\(^3\) LCP 45/1930.
\(^3\) Nurse Hester Clark, 5 Sep. 1926, in CSO 2551/1926.
\(^3\) SNA 857/1928.
Scheme's Fijian nurses. Her reports, in homely hand and prose, reveal the unusual perspective from which the European Child Welfare Nurses saw the world. The Chief Medical Officer described her reports as 'interesting' for their 'simplicity'.

The bulk of the Child Welfare nursing staff was Fijian. By the mid thirties the Scheme's ratio of Fijian nurses to European was 3:1. Some lived alongside the European sister, others were posted to Child Welfare Stations where they worked in relative autonomy. On the whole the European sisters spoke of them warmly. When Nurse Geeves summarised her career in the Scheme from 1930 to 1944, she praised the Fijian nurses for their conscientiousness, for gaining the confidence of parents, and proving 'an invaluable asset to the Child Welfare Movement'. Nurse Field asked *Na Mata* to publish a piece praising one of her nurses, Laisini. Like so many esteemed Fijian nurses, Laisini had first trained as a Native Obstetric Nurse and was later re-employed with her authority enhanced by age. Nurse Suckling in one report wrote:

I have had satisfaction from my Native Nurses. I had one 'Nellie' who had to be moved on account of health she did her work very well. then (sic) I had 'Marula' she was a good worker but I had to have her transferred on account of a white man now I have 'Salina' - she is rather a heavy type of a girl and I am afraid the travelling will knock her up. 'Frances' is a splendid girl she does her best and is keen to learn all she can.

'Frances' was Faranisese Daunibau, who was not in fact a 'girl', but had married and raised children before joining the scheme. She became Senior Child Welfare nurse at Wainibokasi with a residence of her own beside that of Nurse Suckling and her services to Child Welfare later earned special commendation in the Council of Chiefs. In contrast with some of the European nurses, her handwriting was even and her letters assured. Perhaps some connection with progressive Methodist circles is indicated by the fact that Mosese Buadromo, Secretary of Viti Cauravou or the Young Fijian Society had formally requested her to accompany him, his wife and child to Lau. But Faranisese evidently remained at her post.

Some of Faranisese's surviving letters show her readiness to act. In 1934 she wrote directly to the Secretary of Native Affairs about a mother called Marica, who lived together with her illegitimate child and three other adults in a small, dilapidated and unhealthy shack. Faranisese clearly blamed the Turaga ni Koro for this state of affairs. She also wrote on the topic of traditional midwives. The Child Welfare Scheme, as a

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41 SNA 955/1930.
42 CSO 1240/1928.
43 CSO 1705/1930; Acting Governor's address, Council of Chiefs, 1936.
44 SNA 1599/1929.
45 SNA 2374/1934.
new movement thrusting into the villages, perhaps excited some of the antagonism which
the first Native Obstetric Nurses had encountered. McOwan had already been briefed on
this by Nurse Suckling, but as Faranisese explained, it was not the custom to speak freely
to white women on such matters. Faranisese therefore explained practices of traditional
midwifery and how *bui ni gone* often sought to shame government-trained nurses and
undermine their work. Both Suckling and Faranisese would have welcomed government
action against traditional midwives at that point.46

Faranisese’s spirit of independence was not unique and no doubt derived in part
from the increasing professional confidence of Fijian nurses during the interwar era. This
sometimes brought them into conflict with the European child welfare workers. Five of
Regina’s nurses resigned *en masse*, and Nurse Suckling fell out with at least two - Lite
Tadulala and the Rotuman nurse Tipo - both very experienced and highly regarded.47
The nurses also shared a strong corporate sense. Mrs Suckling noted how they
constantly wrote letters to each other and kept in contact about their work, and so were
well aware of differences in conditions and pay.48 In many ways child welfare was
more arduous than hospital nursing, for it required, as the Native Obstetric Nursing
scheme had done at first, much travelling. Many nurses found constant walking ‘over
these awful roads in this awful weather’ hard.49 Another tangible grievance was rations.
These were provided to hospital nurses but initially not to child welfare nurses, who came
to the conclusion that they were expected to do more for less.50

One honour, however, was available to Child Welfare Nurses and not to their
hospital-based colleagues. These were the Child Welfare medals which had been
introduced by McOwan, and were silver, embossed with the figure of a Fijian mother and
child and the wording ‘*A Dauveimororoi*’ - the term used for nurse, but which also had
the broader meaning of someone who cares for others.51 McOwan had intended to
distribute the medals widely but since only 100 had been struck and there were so many
deserving candidates, they were only awarded to exceptional individuals. On a tour of
the provinces around 1930 he presented the first twenty to thirty medals, for the most part
to nurses in the scheme. For some it represented official recognition after a lifetime’s
dedication - as in 1935 when Jojiana Kawai, a Child Welfare Nurse at Nadi, was
awarded a medal after twenty three years of service.

A number of chiefly women were also honoured for their work in Child Welfare.
Adi Litia Tawake and Adi Fulori Colata were commended in the Council of Chiefs and

46 SNA 2225/1929.
47 For the resignation of five of Regina’s nurses, see SNA 302/1929; For Suckling’s clash with
Tipo see SNA 2495/1934; for her clash with Lite, SNA 72/1929.
48 SNA 72/1929.
49 SNA 72/1929.
50 McOwan’s minute 31 Jan. 1929, CSO 5990/1928.
51 See ch 8.
many mara
dma or women of rank were given medals. Some idea of the challenge such women undertook is suggested by the work of Adi Litia. As wife of the Roko Tui Ra she introduced Child Welfare to that province in 1931. Her husband Ratu Isireli Tawake was a distinguished Bauan chief and a member of the Viti Cauravou which warmly endorsed the scheme. Despite his support, or, in the refractory politics of Ra, perhaps partly because of it, Adi Litia lamented the apathy of the village and district chiefs. She was also compelled to request financial assistance from the government for the unavoidable expenses of travelling, food and dispensing. A striking contrast could be drawn between her straits and Dr Roberts. Not only did Regina enjoy a car gratis, but an allowance of 100 pounds per year to run it. This compares with a salary of 200 pounds per year for a European Child Welfare Nurse who generally travelled on foot or by horse (sometimes, like Nurse Brewer, suffering injury by falling off), and an annual salary for Native Nurses from 24 to 36 pounds.

Though Adi Litia was subsequently granted some assistance towards travelling, two years later Dr McGusty confessed that such was her work she really should be paid. On occasion she wished to relinquish Child Welfare - the distances were great and she had domestic duties - but the committees were keen and Adi Litia persisted.

A further source of Fijian leadership came from women in the Methodist Church. A Methodist women's association was founded in 1924 under Mrs Ruby Derrick, wife of the headmaster at Davuilevu boys school. Her organisation was known as the Ruve, Fijian for 'dove' as well as for Ruby's name. It originally catered for the wives of Fijian ministers and from the start took an interest in domestic skills and child-care. Later it came to be seen as a sister organisation to the Viti Cauravou which had been established with Mr Derrick's help, and both associations were committed to the ideals of progress and enlightenment. The Ruve threw its weight into Child Welfare, and the minister's wife was probably an influential figure in many of the village women's committees. Aside from her status as wife of the talatala, she was often viewed as more sophisticated than other village women and as an outsider could sometimes enjoy a certain political neutrality.

In 1933 the Ruve claimed a membership of 3,000 in 127 branches and promoted Child Welfare in many areas that were rarely if ever visited by the government's salaried workers in the scheme.
For Fijians, the most famous Child Welfare worker was perhaps Lolohea Waqairawai, whom we met in chapter eight. For 20 years she was Vice-President of the Ruve, and for a further 16 Vice-President of its successor the Soqosoqo Vakamarama which is today the biggest women's association in Fiji. Twice honoured by the Queen, Lolohea's efforts on behalf of Fijian women and children are still remembered thirty years after her death.

In the early 1930s Lolohea was based at the school in Vunidawa and was the force behind Child Welfare in Colo East. A letter in 1934 to the Travelling NMP for Child Welfare Work in that province mentions many of the practical issues with which she dealt. These included the usual hardships of travel, transport and expenses which Lolohea met with great difficulty from her own purse, hinting that a little financial assistance would be both helpful and justified by the results so far achieved. She made long journeys on foot or by boat, with her infant in arms and a couple of young girls at her side. Lolohea wanted regular quarterly meetings held for the Child Welfare women, and asked the NMP to speak at these gatherings. She suggested the strategic location of nurses for specific campaigns against coko (yaws) and karokaro (a skin condition). She was anxious for the proper care and maintenance of equipment, like scissors and lint. She requested exercise books so that women's committees could keep proper records, and appealed for the NMP's help in stirring Bulis to implement measures so that husbands could better care for their wives around confinement. All these proposals Lolohea put forward with characteristic humility. Like other child welfare workers, she also gives glimpses of infants most at risk, such as the orphan she encountered at Lutukoro who had been left to the care of a small girl, the baby's sister. Both were in want of food and clothing. 'I pitied them and gave them some things belonging to my own child', wrote Lolohea and asked the NMP if there was not some better way of helping children in such need.

Ordinary women were the mainstay of child welfare in the villages. Dr Roberts described how the president of the Kolokololevu committee, which she was unable to visit in person, walked regularly to Suvavou for medicine and instructions that her committee then punctiliously performed. All the women's committees she supervised were 'energetic' and deserved credit for improved health conditions. Mrs Barnes, wife of the Medical Officer at SavuSavu described the village workers there as 'keen and proud Fijian women'. In the island of Cicia the Native Medical Practitioner praised their zeal. An emphasis here was on improving accommodation and in just two weeks Cicia's seven committees had woven 706 mats for domestic use while the Lomati committee had decided to pour gravel into every house and kitchen and appropriately

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61 SNA 1736/1934.
62 Report by Doctor Roberts 1 Apr. 1929 in CSO 4810/1928.
63 SNA 145/1932.
Figure 20: Lolohea Waqairawai in 1963
overlay it. In committee work women of humble birth often earned respect and standing. When Adi Cakobau and Adi Torika received their child welfare medals, they told the Governor that an old woman by the name of Ruci Yawana had rendered greater service than either of them. Ruci was thanked by the Governor personally and later awarded a medal too.

The mobilization of Fijian women in the Child Welfare Scheme was hailed as an historic development. Governor Hutson declared '...for the first time since annexation.... Fijian women have been moved to combine to take an active part in movements for the betterment of their race ...' The scheme acquired something of an international reputation. Mary Blacklock, in her report on the welfare of women and children in the colonies which was circulated by the Colonial Office, cited the work of Fijian women's committees to show the importance of giving indigenous women responsible roles. Elsewhere the scheme was eulogised as vesting leadership in Fijian women for the entire field of maternal and child health, and lifting their status 'to a revolutionary extent throughout Fiji'.

The scheme certainly incorporated Fijian child-bearing and rearing into the symbolics of public culture and imperial display - in a manner analogous to that throughout the European world which from the turn of the century had celebrated motherhood as a patriotic duty, often with markedly militaristic imagery. The Child Welfare medals were one example. Another was the ceremonial launching of the scheme. A gathering addressed by the Governor was held at Nakelo, where school children were assembled for inspection in the village square: the girls in neat white dresses, the boys uniformed and in military formation, bearing home-made wooden rifles. The following paraphernalia was requested by Nurse Brewer when she introduced the scheme to Nadi: a Fijian flag (workers were 'to swear allegiance to King, Country and Race'), a Child Welfare Banner in white with red lettering, a Book of Native Laws; armbands bearing the red monogram 'Child Welfare in Fiji'; and distinctive uniforms for nurses. Nurse Geeves blended symbols and rituals of Church and State with such success, that in the late 1930s her entry to the British Empire Baby Week Campaign won Fiji 2nd prize.
care on orphans borrowed from the hospital.73 In later Agricultural Shows Dr Roberts brought in women's committees and staged entire Child Welfare Meetings.74 Baby shows had been part of the Child Welfare concept from the start.75 Mrs Wilson gave this account of one at Lomanikoro in 1940, where 24 of the best selected babies from each district in the province of Rewa were competing:

Unfortunately the day was marred by heavy rain and the ceremony had to be held indoors. A representative gathering of Europeans also attended, and Dr A J Borg took the chair and the proceedings were opened with the usual kava ceremony followed with a meke by the small children. The judging was made by Dr Borg and Mrs King Irving. It was not an easy task as all the babies were in excellent condition, and behaved as if they had attended Baby Shows frequently. When a decision had been made the prizes were awarded, and a special prize was given to Ratu Sekeli for his resemblance to a well-known European politician. Twins from Toga won a prize, in addition to earning one in the under 2 years class. The special cake for this Baby Show was then cut and a piece given to the mother of each prize winner. Lakesi the youngest prize winner in the Province helped cut the cake. The Ceremony concluded with afternoon tea and speeches, and the happenings of the day will form many a long conversation in the neighbouring Fijian villages.76

These spectacles were intended to educate and enthuse Fijians, but had the effect of convincing Europeans that the scheme was working. Great improvements to health were therefore confidently anticipated. The Acting CMO in 1930, for instance, declared that owing to Child Welfare children in the Rewa delta now seemed cleaner, better clothed and better nourished. Skin diseases were virtually eliminated; conjunctivitis was rarely seen; marasmic children were uncommon; diseases were promptly reported; and the impacts of epidemics much reduced. All these achievements, he hoped, would soon show in lowered infant mortality.77

Unfortunately, these impressions were deceptive. The early years of the scheme coincided with the appearance of a more virulent strain of dysentery, and other epidemics of measles, mumps, influenza and whooping cough. The damage of these was on occasion exacerbated by natural disasters - between 1929 and 1936 at least three major cyclones struck Fiji.78 Sukuna described conditions in Rewa after one in early 1931: the villages were 'spongy and sloppy' from the floods; 'the latrines had filled in'; houses were 'damp and uninhabitable'; people were crowded into the few buildings with floors; and adding 'to the general depression' was a lack pure water in many places due to a broken water-main.79 As District Commissioner in Lau he described the effects of the 1936 hurricane on the island of Kabara as the worst of its kind he had witnessed: 'The

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73 SNA 1402/1927.
75 MccOwan's minute 21 May 1927, CSO 2033/1927.
76 M. A. Wilson 'Baby Show at Rewa' Native Medical Practitioner, 3:3 (1941) p. 555.
77 J. W. Hunt, 22 Apr. 1930, LCP 45/1930.
78 Hunt’s minute, 8 May 1930, CSO 394/1930.
79 Ratu Sukuna, Fiji: The Three Legged Stool, p. 113.
scene of desolation brought back war memories - graves burst open, trees torn down, house mounds levelled. Seas 12 feet above high-water mark swept the village demolishing everything in the way and tossing the debris in all directions. Even without associated epidemics, cyclones and their consequences invariably hampered Child Welfare in areas badly affected. Dr Roberts reported that the destruction of food crops by floods following the hurricane of December 1929 resulted in all the children losing weight, none of the babies showing the progress they had earlier made, while mothers, despite the distribution of relief, were 'not receiving proper food'.

Sanitary conditions were anyway generally poor. The gains made at the turn of the century under O'Brien had been allowed to lapse. Water pipes and tanks had not been maintained, even in areas of dense population near Suva. Roberts stressed the need for proper water in her villages. Suckling blamed an outbreak of typhoid at Kaba, where the old concrete tank had long been useless, on poor water. Nurse Ricketts complained that waterholes in Nakorovou had a bad and unwholesome odour. Sukuna commented that some villages in the Rewa had only mud-holes 'which in themselves are not only filthy but provide splendid breeding places for mosquitoes'. Without good water for bathing, it could also be difficult to keep clean. Suckling reported old people suffering dirty sores, 'We have tried to clean them up a bit, but it is a very hard job.' A further difficulty in these circumstances, which may have aggravated some skin disorders, was the laundering of sulu and shirts.

Latrines were a particular problem. Again Suckling observed, 'In many towns the latrines are filthy with numbers of flies all round the building ... Flies are dreadful in many towns'. Improved latrines were a goal of the Rockefeller campaigns in Fiji during the twenties and thirties under Sylvester Lambert, but often where new latrines were installed there was hesitation to use them, and most villages waited till after World War 2 for substantial improvements. Finally, much housing was bad. The stock renewed under O'Brien had long since perished. Many houses were crowded and lacked an outside kitchen which made, Suckling said, the main house hot and fly infested.

These conditions were partly due to the government's neglect of public health and village infrastructure for almost a generation. Tellingly, the main advocate for improving village sanitation during the interwar years was not a member of the colonial
administration, but the ebullient American interloper, Dr Lambert. Sections of the medical establishment evidently felt more threatened by him than his compatriot Dr Roberts, for his qualifications were granted the meanest recognition - he was licensed only to treat hookworm in Fiji and nothing more. As he noted, '...my official status, if any, was somewhat lower than that of an N.M.P.' 92 Yet poor sanitary and housing conditions were also aggravated by a factor to be addressed again in the next chapter: government-condoned male absenteeism. 93

This too doubtless affected food production. Subsistence crops had noticeably diminished in parts of the colony and Macnaught has remarked that 'for the first time in the history of Fiji there were reports of food shortages in good years'. 94 A reduced food supply was likely to disadvantage the more marginal members of the village or households in temporary difficulties. These people and their infants would consequently be all the more prone to ill health.

Child Welfare workers were in fact worried by problems they guessed derived from poor nutrition - and which could not be attributed simply to maternal ignorance or neglect. Mrs Barnes at a baby show she held in 1931 troubled over the contrast between the excellent condition of the babies and that of the toddlers 'who had every one of them lost their earlier good physique or were afflicted with sores or warts or ringworm or some other blemish'. 95 Such deterioration seemed linked with weaning and diet and European workers concluded that local produce was deficient in food suitable for children. Dr Roberts harked back to Samoa, recalling that where villages could procure free milk from a government station, there was little difficulty in saving young lives. 96 The cause and the solution were not however so simple. 97

Certain categories of infants seemed particularly at risk. European nurses often identified illegitimates. 98 Though this view needs qualification as the next chapter will contend, the plight of some illegitimate children and their mothers - like Marica and her baby whom Faranisei mentioned - illustrates the predicament of those women unable to command adequate resources. Another category comprised the children who had lost their mother. A number of the nurses remarked that, though members of the child's mataqali often did their best to help - and proved, according to Nurse Geeves that Fijians

92 Lambert, A Doctor in Paradise, p. 130.
97 Local food stuffs could in fact yield a good diet for infants and children as some contemporary studies argued. Moreover, there were drawbacks to milk, both fresh and dried, some of which have been indicated in ch. 7.
98 Nurse Suckling exclaimed 'I do wish something could be done for these poor children and also for the mothers.' CSO 1240/1928. Nurse Hammat remarked, '...The children whom I think, are not so well cared for are the poor, unfortunate illegitimate ones.' Nurse Hammat, Labasa, 17 Sep. 1937, F 48/175.
understand 'perhaps better than we do, family and racial obligations' - in practice however a wet nurse for an orphaned infant was often impossible to find.

Marasmus among Fijian children was perturbing too. Dr Roberts described it as a condition of progressive emaciation due to enfeebled constitution and improper nutrition rather than any specific disease, and stressed that marasmic children required special feeding and trained attendance. Nurse Suckling also wrote about children who needed 'feeding up' and Dr Clunie confessed that his night-time thoughts were haunted by 'the drawn, pinched little faces of infants who might have been saved by proper organisation and facilities'.

A 'home' or 'orphanage' was needed for these children and had actually been suggested many times at the turn of the century, by Laura Spence and others. For marasmic Fijian children concerned Europeans or church people, usually nuns and the families of Methodist missionaries and Fijian ministers, intervened when they could but lacked specialist training. While the Methodists ran homes for Indian children which often employed qualified nurses (and photo albums showed how babies brought in as skeletons became pudgy), the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva was really the only institution capable of giving professional attention to Fijian orphans. This environment was far from ideal, not least because the children stayed in wards with sick patients and were thus exposed to infection. Due to concerns raised by Child Welfare workers, in 1928 a separate orphanage was built on the hospital grounds, partly funded from Fijian sources voted by the Council of Chiefs. Even so, this could only have had very limited effect and the sketchy data on file suggests that a large proportion of these orphans died in care.

While the lack of specialist facilities for marasmic children was highlighted, there were others who received no benefit even from basic medical services or the Child Welfare Scheme itself. The NMP Henry T. Lewanavanua reported that often mothers only brought healthy children or those with minor ailments for inspection by Child Welfare Nurses and concealed those who were seriously ill. One European Medical Officer recalled how mothers tried to make a good impression:

I have had to undress many young cowboys and sailors in the country, even down to the age of one year, and I remember that one baby of about six months was brought in to see me, wearing a little closely fitted cap on which many waving white

100 CSO 1299/1930.
101 SNA 1700/1932.
102 Mrs Straube in CSO 4616/1898; Laura Spence in CSO 4599/1902; de Boissière in CSO 3893/1903.
103 CO 5539/1928; Resolution 2, Council of Chiefs, 1928.
104 Director of Medical Services, Dr Pearce, 25 Mar. 1937 and 29 Apr. 1937, F48/175.
chicken feathers had been sewn, so that it looked like some strange kind of bird nesting in its mother's lap.106

But mothers who were poor and whose children were sickly must have felt their inadequacies all the more keenly and dreaded the humiliation of inspection. Roberts' child welfare tactic of publicly shaming mothers whose infants were doing less well may indeed have had drawbacks and, as Lewanavanua remarked, the old association in people's minds between colonial medicine and punishment persisted. Some parents were still frightened to take a child to hospital, lest 'the Native Regulation or law will take its course...'.107 Thus many mothers who most needed help for their children were probably deterred, even when facilities and services were to hand.

Parts of Fiji, even relatively accessible, remained however outside the reach of hospitals, doctors and Child Welfare. There was scant evidence, for instance, of the scheme in Buell Quain's detailed ethnography of the village where he stayed for from 1935 to 1936 in the Province of Bua which boasted energetic European Child Welfare workers, an Assistant Provincial Commissioner committed to maternal and child health, and a sophisticated Native Medical Practitioner, described by Quain, who kept a dairy herd for the promotion of milk. Yet no women's committee or visits by the nurse were mentioned - though Quain did note that two village women had been appointed to supervise child health. They sent the children to bathe in the mornings and applied iodine and salicylic acid to any spot that looked like ringworm. These, according to Quain, were 'magic rituals' performed without understanding to appease the administration while a number of the village children continued sickly.108 In Lau, while Ratu Sukuna lauded NMPs Tomasi Mawi and Wilisoni Lagi for their work in Child Welfare and praised the Women's Committees for their arts, crafts and village cleanliness, elsewhere he indicated shortfalls. In 1939 only 4 islands in the Lau group had NMPs, and 'As inter-island communication is spasmodic, it very frequently happens that sick infants receive no medical attention whatsoever from birth to death'.109

The awaited improvements in Fijian infant mortality did not show unequivocally in statistics. Alport Barker complained in 1937 that the number of Fijian children who died under the age of one had steadily increased for the three years till the end of 1936, and much worse was the increase in the deaths of children under five - '... the cold hard fact that stares us in the face is that we are apparently losing ground in our endeavour to

107 Lewanavanua, 'Cleanliness in Fiji', p. 364. I remember the first time I accompanied nurses on a village visit. Before the other women arrived to have their babies weighed and checked, a mother brought in her child whose emaciation she had tried to disguise by dressing the little girl in thick stockings and a very full and frilly dress. The Fijian nurses treated the mother with great sensitivity and tact, discussing what should be done without in anyway shaming her.
108 N 8/1/5; Buell Quain Fijian Village, pp. 69-70.
109 Ratu Sukuna, Fiji: The Three Legged Stool, pp. 123, 162; and Sukuna 12 Jun. 1939, N 71/2/2 part 1. Thompson, who did fieldwork in Kabara 1933-34 noted that a visit from the NMP occured once every one or two years, Fijian Frontier, p. 138.
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*: Total includes Fijians, Indians and others.

save Fijian children'. Expressed as crude infant mortality rates the situation was not quite so bad: from 1925 rates had trended downwards - notwithstanding peaks from 1928 to 1930 and another peak in 1936 associated with epidemics and natural disasters [table 8]. Still, as Barker argued, Child Welfare to be successful simply had to combat such occurrences.110

More searching questions about Fijian infant mortality were impossible to answer. Barker asked how rates of infant and child mortality for Fijians and Indians compared on a province to province basis, how these rates correlated with the activities in each Province of the Child Welfare Scheme, and what exactly were the causes of death in each age category?111 Aside from the technical difficulties of identifying and certifying cause of death, the designers of the Scheme had given little thought to 'performance indicators' and there were very few officers in the administration good at statistics. One exception was Dr Hoodless of the Central Medical School who originally came to Fiji as a maths teacher, while Dr Lambert was granted access to government data on which he made statistical studies. His *East Indian and Fijian in Fiji: Their Changing Numerical Relation* drew several contrasts between the Indian and Fijian mother. The former married younger; had more babies; lost fewer of them; and belonged to a population with a larger proportion of females coming to reproductive age [table 9]. On current trends Lambert argued Indians would soon overtake Fijians. Hoodless predicted this would happen within 10 years.112 Thoughts like these clouded the reception of the 1936 census which was the first since 1881 to report a Fijian increase.

The apparent failure of the Child Welfare Scheme was no surprise to members of the Medical Department against it from the start; but some commentators blamed the Medical Department for its failure. Lambert for instance had always maintained that Fijian mothers loved their children no less than Indians and more should be invested in the medical training of indigenous men and women.113 Charles Johnson, in 1938 personal assistant to the Colonial Secretary, claimed that almost without exception District Medical Officers 'have been most sceptical of the whole campaign and have taken very little practical interest in it'. Consequently Child Welfare suffered a lack of support from doctors crucial, Johnson suggested, to its success.114 This absence of strong medical leadership was the main weakness in the scheme identified by Miss Elizabeth Tennant, a public health adviser for the Rockefeller Foundation, when she visited the Colony in 1936.115

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111 Questions by the European Elected Member for Souther Division and draft answers in F 50/34/2 Pt 1.
114 Johnson's minute, 12 Feb. 1938, F 50/34/2 Pt 1.
Figure 21: Fijian Child Welfare nurses, Ba.

Figure 22: Indian mother, aged 15, and her two children.
Sadly, this lack of support from the Medical Department was taken as a compelling reason for, in 1938, placing the Child Welfare Scheme under its control. The work continued, but with no commitment from the top. Johnson's earlier remark that 'quite a few Fijian Women's Committees are still struggling on in an endeavour to keep the work going' was probably even more pertinent at this time.

Director, McGusty, made his Department's position clear. The Child Welfare Scheme, he said, had never and could never produce permanent results in Fiji - with the exception of Lau, which was largely Polynesian. As for other (implicitly non-Polynesian) mothers: they were 'chiefly to blame' for the deaths of their children, through neglect, indifference, etc. 'Unless the Fijian women can be made to realise the responsibilities of motherhood the position of the race must become more and more serious....The preservation of the Fijians,' he continued, 'requires that they shall be made race conscious as well as health conscious'. Not Child Welfare, he reiterated, but individualism and self-reliance would assist to this end. The 1939 Annual Medical Report stressed the bearing of the 'psychological factor' on the well-being of Fijian infants. While 'the communal mode of living is likely to retard Fijians beside the individualistic peoples with whom they are now in contact' it noted some hopeful signs: Fijians now comprised the bulk of labourers in the new gold mines and a few were learning to be commercial sugar cane farmers. These economic activities would then, implicitly, improve mothercraft and infant survival.

McGusty's use of racial, gender and economic types as categories of medical explanation doubtless made sense to the single most influential figure in the Fiji administration during the second half of the 1930s. Juxon Barton, formerly of East Africa, and variously Colonial Secretary and Acting Governor in Fiji, was described by Sukuna as suffering 'the African complex'. Barton has the distinction of being the greatest detractor of Fijian women ever to have run the Colony. Mother-blaming was the order of the day under Barton and dogmatic pronouncements like 'The great trouble is the anthropologically admitted phenomenon of thoroughly bad motherhood amongst Poly-

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117 Johnson's minute, 12 Feb. 1938, F50/34/2 Pt 1.
118 Many of settlements in Lau had always enjoyed greater protection from disease due to their relative isolation. During the thirties, owing to the copra slump, traffic and contacts were further reduced. The Child Welfare Committees seem to have melded with women's groups already in existence for the manufacture of handicrafts. The handicraft aspect of the Child Welfare Committees in Lau is stressed in the reports cited in this chapter, but is not prominent in the reports I have read relating to Child Welfare in other parts of the group during the thirties. Laura Thompson noted that on Kabara, prior to the introduction of Child Welfare Committees, the Bull had 'introduced many Tongan customs (for instance, barkcloth makers guilds for women) to Namuka. His enterprise is to a great extent responsible for the industriousness and high standard of living found on this island.' Fijian Frontier, p. 64.
119 V. W. T. McGusty, 4 Mar. 1939, F 50/34/2 Pt 1.
120 Copy of the Annual Medical Report for 1939, in F50/34/2 Pt 1.
and Mela-nesian races... were repeated ad nauseam. These assumptions shaped Barton's attitude to Child Welfare and the related question of Fijian nurses. He opposed improving their training or increasing their role in the Medical Department, claiming Fijian women were the most backward and mentally defective of any race he and other experts had encountered.

Ironically, while Barton claimed the authority of anthropology for his condemnation of Fijian mothers, the anthropologists Laura Thompson and Buell Quain working separately in Fiji during the 1930s described the love lavished by Fijian parents on their children, and as we have seen, some of the European nurses in the scheme - unlike their predecessors in the Hygiene Mission - echoed these perceptions which certain members of the medical profession, like Lambert and Clunie, seem also to have shared. Their views however could not prevail. Moreover, the alleged defects of Fijian mothers were overly magnified by the Indian contrast. Indian women, since they married at puberty, did have longer child-bearing careers and other factors did favour their infants' survival - including a greater inherited immunity to many diseases which were new to Fijians. In the sense outlined by historians like Crosby and McNiel, the Taukei had only just emerged from their first century of pathogenic onslaught. Yet their infant mortality rates in the 1930s were not much greater than they had been in Great Britain a generation earlier and compared quite favourably with other parts of the Empire where Blacklock claimed figures of between 300 and 500 per thousand were reported.

The observations of Child Welfare workers indicate factors which neither the scheme nor mothers could tackle unaided. Epidemics and natural disasters aside, problems of housing, water and food supplies were really matters that could not be solved by mothercraft alone. Properly resourced and encouraged, women's committees may have been able - as they have subsequently demonstrated - to make greater improvements in these other areas of village life affecting health. Alas, the Child Welfare Scheme itself was patchy and the administration was generally poor to perceive and exploit the abilities of Fijian women. Even the work of valiant leaders like Lolohea and Adi Litia would have been greatly facilitated by the tiniest financial help. And the proponents of wage labour for men were simply mistaken in thinking that absentee husbands, fathers and brothers, who were anyway paid too little to bring money back home, would generate superior maternity. As the next chapter argues, too often women were left struggling in villages that were strained and depressed.

122 Minute 1 Aug. 1938, F 50.34/2/Pt 1.
123 Dr Pearce to Colonial Secretary, 27 Nov. 1936 CF 50/14.
124 Quain, Fijian Village, p. 299 and passim; Thompson, Fijian Frontier pp. 36 ff.
125 Lambert repeatedly stressed this point. See also W. H. McNiel, Plagues and Peoples, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979, pp. 90 ff
126 McNiel, Plagues and Peoples, pp. 59-61 and passim; Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. See discussion in chapter 2.
Yet the Scheme did define, within Fijian colonial society, a wider and more complex space for female agency. In this new field of operation were combined many 'traditional' aspects of a women's culture concerned with reproduction, caring, collective endeavour and the operation of female chiefly authority with more recently developed roles: a maturing nursing profession, women's church organisations, women better schooled than their mothers had been, and women in their capacities as the wife of a minister or Fijian official. Their public function was legitimated by a 'modern' ideology of domesticity which they translated, adapted and indigenized - and which they also used to authorise attempts to influence their fellow men and women and to enlist the colonial administration on their behalf. If the tangible successes of their efforts in Child Welfare were initially few, the scheme laid a foundation for women's later work in health and welfare. That their task was complicated by the materially difficult and ideologically unsettled position of Fijian women in the interwar period, the following chapter will further show.

Chapter Eleven

From Maternity to Paternity

Illegitimates or na luve ni gaunisala - 'children of the path' - form the focus of this chapter. During the interwar period, babies born out of wedlock took a curious place in the discourse on 'decrease'. In the late 1930s a link between Fijian illegitimacy and the deaths of Fijian children, earlier stressed by the Decrease Commissioner James Stewart, was earnestly researched by the Fiji administration. Some Fijian men also propounded a link between na lutu sobu itaukei and ex nuptial babies. They claimed that interracial liaisons involving Fijian women and the resulting progeny - usually illegitimate - were propelling the race to extinction. The discourse on decrease was thus invoked in their effort to safeguard indigenous paternity and all that this seemed to entail. Despite divergent interests, European and Fijian responses to na luve ni gaunisala converged on one strategy: to restrict the mobility of Fijian women.

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In 1938 Dr Hoodless of the Central Medical School argued that illegitimacy was the main cause of elevated infant mortality rates among the Taukei. According to confidential figures from the Methodist Mission, out of roughly 3,500 Fijian children born every year, 700 were illegitimate - approximately one in five Fijian babies, contrasting with only one in every hundred among Indians. Hoodless believed that if rates of illegitimacy among Fijians could be lowered, or rates of infant mortality among illegitimates reduced, Fijian infant mortality overall would improve. This proposition was based on the correlation in European societies between illegitimacy and infant death.

In Fiji too, this connection had long been made. Since the early colonial period Fijian chiefs had often claimed that children born out of wedlock were dying because the Mission denied succour to mother and babe. In the 1890s, one of the Decrease Commissioners, Stewart, accused Christian dictates for ensuring that 'the embryo bastard has no very grateful prospects'. Fijian illegitimates, he declared, were numerous and 4 out of 5 died. In the 1920s and '30s, reports by Child Welfare sisters lamenting the 'poor, unfortunate illegitimate ones' appeared to confirm the applicability to Fiji of McCleary's message, in his contemporary study on child welfare in England, that 'in no field of welfare work is the need for help more urgent' than among illegitimate babies.

1 The issue received little consideration, however, in the Report itself. See DR, pp. 25, 122.
2 Hoodless, Memo on Infant Mortality in Fiji, 5 May 1938, F 50/34/2 Pt 1.
3 See for example Smith, The People's Health, pp. 69-70.
4 For some early examples, see Council of Chiefs, 16 May 1883; 'Report of the Committee of the Fiji District Meeting Appointed to make inquiry as to certain statements made at the Macuata Council of Chiefs with regard to alleged neglect of the Mothers of Illegitimate Children in consequence of Mission rules' MAF: M/14.
5 Stewart's minute, CSO 1740/1894.
Did a causal link between illegitimacy and infant mortality hold in Fiji? Were mothers really stigmatized and their babies denied? The word 'illegitimacy' translates into greater cultural and historical complexity in Fiji than Hoodless seemed to realise. The precedents of polygamy, for instance, had implications for illegitimacy in the Christian era. Formerly a chief could have children by different women: principal wives, junior wives, servants, and others outside his household whether chiefly or common. In a sense all these children were legitimate, since such behaviour was legitimate for a chief. No shame attached to a woman for submitting to him either. In some cases children borne even by lowly mothers had a certain status. The term *ikaso* could apply to them, and in some genealogies, the line of heralds was traced to such an ancestor.

Polygamous practices continued. In the village where Quain stayed during the 1930s one gentleman with chiefly pretensions had children by several 'wives'; and generally speaking, the fact that chiefs might father children out of wedlock was accepted. Monogamy may even have increased the demand for illegitimate sons in chiefly circles. Whereas once a chief could select from a larger range of 'legitimate' offspring by different wives, under monogamy the field of choice shrank. For a father disappointed in the talent of his legitimate children, the illegitimate son certainly offered an alternative. As administrators noted, many of the chiefs selected for special education and groomed for government service were born outside marriage.

The pre-Christian attitude to illegitimate children conceived in other circumstances is difficult to say. One cannot extrapolate from observations made in the late 19th and 20th century. Customs relating to kin and marriage varied and documented practices may have departed significantly from their antecedents. Infant death inquiries from the 1890s and later suggest however that illegitimate babies were loved at least by their maternal kin. The anthropologist Lester, in the 1940s, claimed that wherever the

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7 DR, p. 122. Cf. anecdote in ch. 8. Analogous attitudes were noted earlier in Rotuma. The Resident Commissioner of Rotuma in 1897 remarked that the illegitimate child of a chief conferred prestige on the child's mother and her kin, relating the story of a woman he knew who was a member of the Wesleyan church. One of her daughters had borne the illegitimate child of a young chief, while the other wanted to marry a commoner: '[T]he mother is greatly opposed to the marriage and says to her daughter, what do you want to be married for, cannot you do the same as your sister'. CSO 3905/1897.


9 See ch. 5.


11 I am not confident to comment on illegitimate daughters.

12 The Late Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was one example. See Daryl Tarte, *Turaga*, Suva: Fiji Times, 1992, pp. 16-17. The District Commissioner Lomaiviti, in criticising Hoodless, remarked 'As a case in point of how the Fijians view the matter the Colony is at the present moment being represented at the Coronation by one illegitimate Chief and another is the prospective candidate for the Vunivaluship'. Minute, 31 Mar. 1937, F 118/1-1.

13 Sukuna maintained that before European and Tongan influences took effect, 'it was impossible for children to be born out of wedlock'. I assume Sukuna is referring to ex nuptial children fathered by non-chiefly men. Ratu Sukuna, *Fiji: The Three Legged Stool*, p. 119. Cf. DR, p. 122.

14 See for instance the case of the infant Cua in ch. 6.
system of cross cousin marriage obtained, affairs were legitimate between people related in this way and a kind of legitimacy was therefore bestowed on any children conceived - even if the parents were not formally married. Further, if an unmarried woman bore a child to a man who was not her cross-cousin, the child's status in relation to its mother's cross-cousins was still incorporated into this classificatory system though the blood-link was lacking. Illegitimate children were thus 'legitimized'.

The experience of early nurses who fell pregnant out of wedlock suggests, however, that such events were not always blithely accepted and often made the mothers feel some shame. Perhaps they were sensitive to the charge of promiscuity, for the mothers held in particularly low esteem were those perceived as loose. They were sometimes 'unfortunates' - intellectually handicapped, or otherwise marginal women, like the sexually accessible microcephalic deaf mute in Quain's village who had already borne four children. Nevertheless, these had been claimed by their fathers, and lived and gardened in their paternal villages. One determinant of an illegitimate child's treatment appears to have been whether the biological father was known or likely to acknowledge paternity. More crucial was whether the mother could summon material support.

Overall, the Fijian illegitimate probably had advantages over the European. He or she was a resource, whether strictly legitimate by birth or not, and according to Quain was often treated with special kindness. The mother and her relatives usually cared for the infant as best they could. Even the biological father and his kin were likely to lay a claim at some stage. Despite the Mission's disapproval, and despite certain disabilities conferred upon illegitimates under colonial law, neither seems to have exerted a deep or consistent influence. Hoodless' correlation between illegitimacy and infant mortality among Fijians was therefore unlikely to have been so clear-cut.

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17 See ch. 8.
18 Quain, Fijian Village, pp. 324 on female 'looseness'; on the microcephalic deaf mute, pp. 324, 119-120.
19 Fison once insisted that the derogatory word kaisi, usually translated as 'commoner', was strictly-speaking the term of abuse for bastards whose fathers were unknown - kai meaning person and si meaning sperm. Cakobau reportedly agreed - though this may simply have been a concession of courtesy. Lorimer Fison to Basil Thomson, 14 Dec. 1893, Thomson Papers, ANL.
20 Quain, Fijian Village, p. 294.
21 Nurse Suckling relates examples of Fijian fathers of illegitimate children happy to contribute to their support so long as their paternity was officially registered. SNA 2460/1931; SNA 2840/1931.
Well before Hoodless made an issue of illegitimacy, the Viti Cauravou or Young Fijian Society had already politicised the question of mixed race children born to unmarried Fijian mothers and related matters of interracial liaisons and wedlock. The Society originated at the Methodist school and training institution Davuilevu near Nausori, where in 1920 a yalo vou, 'new spirit' reportedly seized the young men. They wanted progress for the Taukei and conceived a soqosoqo or society dedicated to this purpose. Initially sections of the Mission disapproved, perhaps because these aspirations resembled those which Apolosi Nawai - before the war a carpenter at Davuilevu and variously represented as a seditionist, visionary and charlatan - had dramatised in his Viti Company. But in 1923 the headmaster Mr Derrick presided over the Society's establishment. Its first members were students and old boys. Mosese Buadromo, who had served in Fiji's Transport Corps in France, became president. Its newspaper Na Viti edited by Derrick commenced publication in 1924 and the government's Queen Victoria School (QVS) in near-by Nasinu joined forces. Opetaia Dreketirua, assistant master at QVS became the Society's vice-president. Membership, which by 1926 was 700, increased by 1932 to 4,000. During the late 20s and early 30s the Viti Cauravou tried to bring change to the Colony and initially, to provide an alternative to the Council of Chiefs. The administration was ambivalent and condescending.

Issues concerning Fijian women and racial survival to some extent divided the Viti Cauravou. Some senior members were saturated in the discourse of na lutu sobu itaukei and took matters such as health reform, modern motherhood and child care very seriously. Dreketirua, who succeeded as president from 1926 to 1929, exemplified this outlook. Together with the QVS headmaster Thompson he had prepared a government booklet on hygiene for Fijians. In 1926 he submitted to McOwan, the Secretary of Native Affairs, a beautifully hand-written and carefully meditated thesis on a subject which, as he explained in his covering letter, had long lain heavily on his heart: 'A Mate ni Gone Lalai' or infant mortality. Dreketirua's analysis combined lessons he had learned from European teachings, concerning for instance the necessity of feeding infants by the clock, with ideas owing more to Fijian beliefs, such as the fatal consequences of conceiving a child on top of 'bad blood' in the womb. He also drew contrasts between Indian and Fijian practices affecting fertility and infant survival.

Under the influence of men like Dreketirua the Viti Cauravou strongly supported the Child Welfare Scheme. Dreketirua asked for greater coercive powers to be granted to village women's committees and praised the work of the Ruve, Mrs Derrick's Methodist

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22 For accounts of Apolosi, see Macnaught, The Fijian Colonial Experience, ch. 6; and Macnaught, 'Apolosi R. Nawai: The Man from Ra, 'More Pacific Island Portraits, ed. D. Scarr, pp. 165-192.
23 Joeli Ravai, 28 May 1932, CF 50/6. For a history of the VC, see its published programme for the 1926 annual meeting contained in MAF M/55; Na Viti, (Sep. 1932) in CF 50/6 and A.W. Seymour to Secretary of State, 2 Aug. 1933, CF 50/6.
24 Thompson & Dreketirua, Ai Vakatekivu ni Hygiene. Some of Thompson's reports on Matavelo are quoted in ch. 9.
25 SNA 1032/1926.
women's association. The Ruve published pieces on maternal and child health in Na Viti, which also reprinted literature from the O'Brien era such as Dr Corney's instructions for the treatment of the umbilical cord. The Viti Cauravou had a subcommittee on health and specifically addressed the subject of infant mortality.

Coupled with this concern for infant mortality was an interest in progress for Fijian women. The Society tirelessly advocated equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Girls, it resolved, should have access to the Colony's best schools - even the elite QVS. Girls should also go to university. If they could not be sent overseas for degrees, the government should establish a 'College for the South Seas' where Fijians of both sexes could study - and thus the University of the South Pacific was anticipated by almost 40 years. It also maintained that 'if the future mothers of the Fijian race are not given a better education the increase in the number of the native population will be retarded'; and claimed that the contrast between educated and ordinary village mothers proved this point. Yet even disregarding infant mortality, the Viti Cauravou would probably still have promoted female education. Members had often been told that progress was impossible for men if their women were left behind. The modern Fijian youth - or cauravou - needed the modern Fijian maiden.  

To others in the Viti Cauravou the real threat to Taukei survival was posed, not by infant mortality, but liaisons between Fijian women and alien men. In the same year that Dreketirua submitted his thesis, Mosese Buadromo warned McOwan that 'It will not be long (if proper care is not taken for the rising generation) before the true Fijian race [na kawa dina vaka i Taukei] will utterly disappear. Infant mortality is a slow process, but swift indeed is the process by which the Fijian race is turning into an Asian race, and in these circumstances, the traditional customs of the Taukei will quickly vanish too'.

The Society observed that mixed-race illegitimates were increasing. Others shared this concern. When Provincial Councils in 1939, as a consequence of Hoodless' statements about illegitimacy, were asked to discuss its causes and remedies, many stressed interracial liaisons. In Serua, topping the list of causes was 'Intercourse with Indian Taxi Drivers'. In Tailevu, second was 'fornication for gain with Europeans, Chinese and Indians'. Child Welfare sisters mentioned the contribution of non-Fijian men too. Nurse Suckling complained 'I have come across many children belonging to

26 SNA 1577/1928.
27 Na Viti, (Apr. 1926), contained in CSO 1913/1926.
30 This was a common justification for investing in girls' education. See for instance, Blacklock, 'Certain Aspects of the Welfare of Women and Children in the Colonies', p. 232.
31 Mosese Buadromo to Secretary Native Affairs, 18 Aug. 1926, MAF M/55.
32 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1928, CSO 771/1929.
34 Tailevu Provincial Council, 7-11 Nov. 1939.
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--- Excludes Fijians working as labourers for Europeans, estimated to number 3,000.
*:*- Not enumerated.
**:*- Included with 'All others'.
*:*- Estimate only: Rotuma was annexed after the census had been taken.

### Table 11

**Fiji populations enumerated in successive colonial censuses, 1921 to 1966, by sex.**

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<td>2,353</td>
<td>3,717</td>
<td>5,320</td>
<td>6,095</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1,271</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>3,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>1,572</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td>2,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**All components**

| P | 157,266 | 198,379 | 259,638 | 345,737 | 476,727 |
| M | 88,464  | 107,194 | 136,731 | 178,475 | 242,747 |
| F | 68,802  | 91,185  | 122,907 | 167,262 | 233,980 |

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*:- Classification adjusted to correspond with other censuses

**:- Includes Part-Chinese in 1946, 1956 and 1966, probably also in 1936.

white men Indians & Chinamen in the towns and these have not been maintained by their fathers. The Viti Cauravou especially blamed Indian drivers and Chinese traders.

These perceptions warrant examination - for both their emphases and elisions. Interestingly, 'South Sea Islanders' were hardly mentioned, though more Pacific Islander males were enumerated in the census of 1921 than Chinese[table 11]. These were among the men brought to Fiji as indentured labourers between 1860 and 1912, mostly from the Solomon Islands or New Hebrides. They founded separate settlements which remain to this day, but many made their homes in Fijian villages and lived under Fijian regulations. Wherever their abode, from 1895 all Islanders were placed under Fijian regulations relating to fornication, adultery or the protection of married women. In 1930 the Council of Chiefs further recommended that the illegitimate children of Islander fathers be placed on the same footing as those of Fijian fathers. Fijian men apparently did not feel quite the same sense of rivalry or resentment towards men of this 'race'.

Attitudes to European men were ambivalent. They were named by Provincial Councils as the fathers of illegitimates, but the Viti Cauravou possibly thought it undiplomatic, in appealing to white administrators, to stress this point. 'We do not blame all non-natives' it was careful to say. But there were certainly precedents for resentment. In the early colonial period, the Council of Chiefs had often complained about the sexual behaviour of whites: 'If the European wishes to fornicate, let him bring women of his own nationality with him.'

White attitudes towards interracial liaisons during the '20s and '30s were coloured by an intensifying distaste for people of mixed race. The word 'half-caste' itself became too pejorative to be used in many official publications. Part-Europeans, as one educationalist observed, were more than ever described as combining 'all of the bad and none of the good qualities of the races that are mixed', echoing the value placed in much popular European thought between the wars on racial purity. In many mixed-race colonies this value was accentuated by administrative attempts to consolidate and clearly demark racial categories - a project which the racially ambiguous always troubled. But they were politically threatening in other ways too. In Fiji, the part-European population, though small, was growing faster than any other. Europeans not only feared Indians outnumbering Taukei, but part-Europeans outnumbering whites. Sukuna played on these

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35 CSO 2840/1931.
36 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1928, CSO 771/1928.
38 For some of the settlements in Fiji identified with Islanders from different groups, see Morgan Tuimaleali’afano, Samoans in Fiji: Migration, Identity and Communication, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1990, p. 6.
39 Native Regulation No. 5 of 1895.
40 Resolution 5 for amending Section 33 of Ordinance No. 1 of 1905, Council of Chiefs 1930.
41 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1928, CSO 771/1928.
42 Roko Tui Bua, Council of Chiefs, 12 May 1888.
fears when he warned that the European electorate would soon 'be white only in name, enlightened only in memory'.

Such prejudices may have further dissuaded white men from acknowledging their illegitimate children by Fijian women. Nurse Suckling gives the case of Mr Meek. Formerly of Customs, now with the Public Works Department, in 1933 he was approached to help an infant known to be his in a Rewan village. The child's maternal grandfather was dead, the grandmother blind, and the mother, on Suckling's intervention, was feeding the baby Glaxo. Mother and child were in a poor state, and Suckling thought Meek should help pay for the Glaxo. He denied paternity, so no help came from him.

The existence of Indian fathers to children in the koro came as a surprise to some. According to accepted wisdom, Fijians and Indians found each other so physically and culturally repulsive that sexual liaisons let alone intermarriage almost never arose. The Chief Medical Officer remarked that 'Indian half-castes are a new variety so far as my experience goes'.

Yet much evidence from the 1890s to the interwar period shows Indian men mixing with Fijians. During the days of indenture, Na Mata constantly warned the Taukei not to harbour Indian run-aways - which evidently they did. Indians often consulted Fijian healers, and Sister Stanislas found one residing permanently in a Serua village for treatment. Even in the 1920s it was not uncommon for Indians to live in the households of village chiefs, who referred to these men as na neimami kai idia na lewe ni koro, or 'the Indian belonging to the people of the village'. One Buli kept an Indian as his 'orderly'. In view of later complaints about the inability of Indians to assimilate, it is ironic that some officials found the punctilious observation by these Indians of Fijian customs profoundly disgusting. Odd names for households like 'Mohindji', an

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45 SNA 345/1933.

46 Montague's minute, 12 Mar. 1928, CSO 1240/1928.


48 CSO 1777/1899.

49 Acting Colonial Secretary, minute 27 Jan. 1925; Buli Namosi to DC Navua, 12 Feb. 1925, CSO 376/1925.
example noted by Capell and Lester in the Colo West village of Raiwaqa in the 1930s, may point to a thoroughly integrated Indian element that still preserved a trace of its history.50

Indians also worked under Fijians. Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi employed an Indian cowherd; a Fijian paragon of enterprise in Navua in 1908 employed ‘8 to 12 Indians at banana cutting’; in Taveuni in the early ‘20s numbers of Indians led a ‘nomadic existence’ getting casual employment from Fijians.51 The Indian hawkers was a common sight walking from village to village and Indian storekeepers, though mostly concentrated in centres of Indian or mixed settlement, were also found in predominantly Fijian areas, like Kadavu, the province of Lau, or inland Viti Levu.52 Some were ‘Fijianized’, and even known by Fijian names - like the storekeeper in Namosi in the mid ‘20s known as ‘Josefa’.53 Between the wars, new roads and cars (the Kings Road, completed in 1937, made it possible to drive around the whole island of Viti Levu) introduced formerly isolated communities to that new phenomenon: the Indian driver. Though Indian Seventh Day Adventists, Wesleyans and Roman Catholics remained few, common religious affiliation provided another context for a degree of interracial community.

Affairs between Indian men and Fijian women and sometimes even marriages did occur. For many an Indian with little opportunity of finding an Indian bride due to the sex imbalance of indenture, a Fijian wife was one means of founding an identity as a householder. Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi’s cowherd married a Fijian, and other examples crop up in the records.54 So do the complaints of men like Mr Dhum Singh who had lavished gifts on a Fijian girl and her family but whose hopes of marriage were disappointed - without a refund.55

In 1910 Burton claimed that intermarriage between Indians and Fijians was increasing.56 If so, factors came to militate against this trend. While the administration was always ready to use its legal powers to eject aliens from koro and government and mission had long endeavoured to make Fijians distrust Indians, in the 1920s and 1930s European efforts to polarise Fijian and Indian interests intensified.57 A sense of Indian
superiority over Fijians was also a consequence of political and cultural nationalism. Moreover, among those born in the Colony the sexes were roughly balanced, so Fiji-born Indian men could more easily find an Indian wife. This too made it possible to shape domestic lives upon patterns closer to those of their homeland, which in turn perhaps fostered practices of racial exclusivity similar to those noted in European colonial settlements where the disparagement of interracial marriage was more marked once European brides became available.

But extra-marital liaisons were not necessarily impeded by disapproval of mixed marriage; though, if some more recent Indian writings are any indication, Indian fathers - like the European Mr Meek - were unwilling to recognise or support the children conceived. Nandan recalls how his brother got Anna, a Fijian girl pregnant and then excreted on her brother. Sulochana Chand wrote of a bastard whose mother was Fijian and father Indian: while the child watched his father's funeral from a distance, those attending - who included the child's blood-kin - turned around and stoned him.

Fijian attitudes were less harsh, but some details suggest that greater shame may have attached to Indian paternity than paternity of other races. In Nandan's story, the pregnant Anna was said to have aborted the child and left for town; and the Assistant District Commissioner Nadi in the late 1930s claimed that though many women fell pregnant to Indians, such children were never allowed to see the light of day. Margaret Chung found in Kadavu that a child fathered out of wedlock by a European or a Chinese was more likely to be listed as a member of the mother's household than a child whose father was Indian. Namosi Provincial Council in 1939 resolved that men - including aliens - who fathered illegitimate children should be made to pay maintenance; and should be ordered to marry the girls and be punished if they did not - 'excepting that the Indian should not be ordered to marry the girl concerned'. Such an exception suggests that Indian in-laws were less welcome than others.

seen as politically crucial in crystallizing Fijian alignment with Europeans, though before the campaign of government and missionaries the strikers had some sympathy among their Fijian neighbours. For discussion of this episode see Gillion, The Fiji Indians: Challenge to European Dominance, pp. 59-61; Macnaught, The Fijian Colonial Experience, pp. 114-115; Lal, Broken Waves, p. 83.

A popular song with the refrain 'We are the people from a land of culture' was sung in the 1920s, and is quoted in Scarr, Fiji, p. 125. Vishnu Deo considered it degrading for those Indians in the colony, who did not belong to 'any aboriginal race of India', to be classified as 'natives'. Deo implied, however, that Indians who were 'tribals' could not object to the label 'natives'. His point was hence an assertion of 'Indian' superiority over 'primitive' people, whether in the islands of Fiji or the Indian subcontinent. CSO 5345/1929.

This can be calculated from McArthur, Island Populations, table 6, p. 39.

In the case of Fiji, this argument is consistent with that proposed by Knapman, White Women in Fiji, esp. pp. 143-145; Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power, pp. 225 ff.


Sulochana Chand, 'A Bastard Child' The Indo-Fijian Experience, ed. Subramani, St Lucia, Qld: Queensland University Press, 1979, pp. 165-166.

Assistant D. C. Nadi, 19 Jul. 1938 in F 50/34/2 Pt 1.

Chung, 'Politics, Tradition and Structural Change', footnote 19, p. 93.

Excerpt from Namosi Provincial Council, 12 Dec. 1939, in F 50/78.
But why did the Viti Cauravou view Chinese fathers with particular alarm? Chinese resident in the Colony were relatively few, and small numbers of Chinese had been present since the early days of sandalwood. Over a couple of generations, the descendants of most of these had probably blended into the Fijian population. But after World War 1 came a small Chinese influx. According to Censuses in 1911, 1921 and 1936 the Chinese population numbered 305, 910 and 1,751 respectively. The majority of these men established small stores throughout the group. In 1921 some 567 Chinese were living outside Suva and distributed in every province save Colo North. Most villagers now did business with a Chinese storekeeper who often fathered children from casual liaisons. From the number of part-Chinese children in the villages nearby observers deduced that the local storekeeper was an enterprising lover. In 1929 the DC Lau marvelled at the throng of Sino-Fijian illegitimates, and predicted 'it will not be long, if the present rate is maintained, before the whole of Lau becomes largely Chinese'.

Members of the Viti Cauravou uttered similar predictions for the whole of Fiji, fearing in addition that Fijian culture and Fijian lands would be lost. The steps in these processes were not however stated. Mixed race illegitimates, whose fathers had no part in their upbringing, in fact posed no threat to Fijian culture. The children were reared as Fijians. In relation to landownership it is also difficult to see how mixed race illegitimates could lead to Taukei dispossession.

The status of illegitimates in relation to land between the wars was complex. According to the law prevailing between 1919 and 1932, illegitimate children could not be classified as landowning members of the mataqali or clan, defined by the administration as the landowning unit. As if seeking to minimise the number of illegitimates claiming landowning status under cover of the mother's marriage to a man not the child's father, in 1927 a regulation was passed permitting husbands to 'de-legitimate' children of their wives sired by another. The blanket exclusion of illegitimate children from landowning status, which the Native Lands Commissioner in 1927 illogically defended as 'this essential safeguard to progress', was probably at variance with Fijian custom. At village level its impact is difficult to assess. The residents of Quain's village allocated land through both the mother and the father, with little apparent attention to registers or

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68 SNA 120/1927. Native Lands Ordinance No. 27 of 1932, which repealed and replaced Section 33 of Ordinance 1 of 1905. For a critique of the formulation of landowning units, see France, The Charter of the Land, esp. pp. 136ff, 173.

69 Children Legitimacy Regulation, Native Regulation No. 24 of 1927.

70 Native Lands Commissioner Boyd, minute 8 Oct. 1926, SNA 120/1927.
'legitimacy', though the strength of matrilineal claims had weakened under colonial rule.\textsuperscript{71} Possibly in special circumstances - for instance in disputes involving a person disliked for other reasons - the legal disabilities of illegitimates were invoked and exploited. \textsuperscript{72}

A numerous category of illegitimates, for whom some European and Fijian observers felt keen concern, were the children of Fijian parents living as man and wife. These were illegitimate in the dry legal sense only - they were not 'children of the path'. Once illegitimates had been banned from landownership, alarm for these children was raised. Both native officials and white administrators foresaw a growing class of landless Fijians and their offspring, disinherited simply because a couple had not formalised their marriage. Following resolutions in the Provincial Councils and Council of Chiefs, legislation imposing stiff penalties was introduced in 1927.\textsuperscript{73} No doubt the operation of this law could sometimes be oppressive. The 'polygamist and would-be chief' in Quain's village was repeatedly fined for living with the current \textit{de facto} wife, to help meet the expenses of which a son had been absent some years from the village earning wages.\textsuperscript{74} But such prosecutions only revealed a more intractable problem: the number of couples with children who could not marry because one or other parent was unable to divorce an earlier spouse - often from an arranged marriage which, in Fijian fashion, the bride and groom had complied with to please their kin, before drifting apart.\textsuperscript{75} To remedy the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{71} Quain, \textit{Fijian Village}, pp. 181-184.
\bibitem{72} This, I suspect, was the case with the stigmatized illegitimate referred to by Thompson, \textit{Fijian Frontier}, pp. 85-86.
\bibitem{73} See for instance excerpts from the Ra Provincial Council and the appeal of the Roko Tui Ra in CSO 282/1920; concerns expressed at the District Commissioners conference, 1930, CSO 2711/1930; and Resolution 17, Council of Chiefs, 1926. Under Native Regulation No. 4, 1927, section 57 (3) the man could be fined up to £5 or imprisoned for up to 3 months, while for subsequent convictions the fine was £10 pounds or up to 6 months imprisonment. A woman could be punished as the court saw fit, for instance, by being ordered to make a certain quota of mats.
\bibitem{74} Quain, \textit{Fijian Village}, pp. 444; 271, footnote 41; 119.
\bibitem{75} See for instance the District Commissioner Ra on 'Marital Complications of Fijians in Ra Province' CSO 1512/1929. The following letter (SNA 2081/1930), dated 8th Aug. 1930 to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Suva, illustrates the predicament (personal names have been changed from those in the original)

\begin{quote}
'Sir,

I beg to bring to your notice the case of an elderly (grey headed) Fijian who has been in my employ here for 6 1/2 years, and I ask you to very kindly advise me what he, or his wife, should do to regularise their position. When the 'New' regulation about this sort of thing was being 'worked' for the first time he was threatened with proceedings. I paraded him and his family before the D.C. and he was not prosecuted. He has however worried ever since and I think there must be some regular way out; hence my appeal to you on his behalf.

Position in brief -
SIRELI BAYA of Burenitu, Nalawa, Ra has lived unmarried with AMELIANA of Na Korovou, Mataso, Ra for upwards of fifteen years.

Their issue is

2 boys
3 girls

Eldest about 14 youngest about 3 years.
SIRELI was never married to anyone.
AMELIANA was married some 16 years ago to one
\end{quote}
\end{thebibliography}
landless status of illegitimates, in 1932 all illegitimate children were entitled to be listed as landowners; and in 1939 the divorce law was relaxed.\footnote{MOASA of Laba, Ra. There was no issue. MOASA is living with Sereima at Laba and they have 3 children. I hope this is fairly plain and that you will be able to suggest some way in which Sireli, or all of them, can get out of an unfortunate but very natural position which involves some 8 bastards, which is, as far as I can ascertain, the position of hundreds of Fijians in this Province all brought about by their fearful marriage customs. Yours faithfully, Victor Abel J.P. Ra}

The only convoluted way in which mixed race illegitimates could be seen as contributing to the alienation of Fijian lands was through the extinction of mataqali. Under the 1919 provisions, if a mataqali had no remaining legitimate members it was classified as 'extinct' and its land reverted to the Crown. Illegitimates prior to the 1932 amendment, whether of Fijian or alien paternity, could not prevent their mataqali from being classed 'extinct' if they were its only descendants. Mataqali were being declared extinct year after year, and the rate at which land was reverting to the Crown disturbed both the Viti Cauravou and Council of Chiefs.\footnote{The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1928, CSO 771/1929; Council of Chiefs, Resolution 7, 1928 and Resolution 20, 1933.} Once reverted, land could theoretically be allocated to non-Fijians. A more flexible administrative approach to the recruitment and retrenchment of landowning mataqali members would have been culturally more sympathetic and could have solved the difficulties of both overcrowded and depleted mataqali.\footnote{Quain , Fijian Village, esp. pp. 181-184. Also Chung, Politics, Tradition and Structural Change, footnote 22, p. 99.} Instead, the Viti Cauravou and the Council of Chiefs argued that land from mataqali classed 'extinct' should be retained by the yavusa.\footnote{The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1928 CSO 771/1929; 1930 Conference in CF 62/3; 1932 conference in, CF 50/6. Council of Chiefs, Resolution 7, 1928 and Resolution 20, 1933.}

Legitimate children born to interracial marriages gave a firmer basis to the Viti Cauravou's fears. Unlike most mixed race illegitimates, these children were generally reared under 'alien' influence: a foreign father. Therefore it was possible for these children to develop an attenuated respect for Fijian culture. Moreover, legitimate children under colonial law took the nationality of their father. In this way, legitimate mixed race children of Fijian mothers added, technically, to the growing number of non-Fijians in the Colony. These differences between mixed-race legitimates and illegitimates no doubt influenced the Viti Cauravou's condemnation of Chinese men as 'the chief offenders'.\footnote{CSO 2704/1930.} For despite their ex nuptial progeny, Chinese were distinctive for actually marrying Fijian women or forming \textit{de facto} unions.
In 1930 the Society advocated that 'a law be enacted for the protection of the mothers of our race' without which the 'early extinction' of the Taukei would result. A petition signed by 5,859 Fijian men was sent to the Governor, asking for interracial liaisons and interracial marriage to be banned. Possibly legislation in Western Samoa prohibiting marriage between Chinese men and Samoan women was the model. Petitioners stated their desire for 'the race to remain pure for all time'; for the preservation of Fijian customs, tribal institutions and divisions; and finally, for legislation safeguarding Fijian rights and possessions: 'Should things remain as they are, we fear that it will ultimately lead to the acquisition of our lands by the offspring of these unions'.

Another factor in this controversy was the general shortage of women. Though for the first time under colonial rule, males and females were approximately commensurate in both the Fijian and Fiji-born Indian cohorts coming of age between the wars, statistics show that women, in all Fiji's populations, were overall outnumbered by men [tables 10, 11]. The sex ratio of indenture and the predominance of men among later free immigrants were among the factors skewing Indian ratios. Sections of the white community - particularly straitened planters - had severe difficulty finding European wives. The shortage of Chinese women was self-evident. And some Fijians had internalised the observation, often made by colonial officials from the 1890s, that Fijian women were fewer than their men. Sukuna in 1926 believed that Fijians could ill afford to lose potential mothers 'since men so largely outnumber women'.

Fijian women may have been more exposed to interracial liaisons than were women of other communities. European women seem to have been 'out of bounds': in mixed marriages they were rarities, and interracial liaisons were perhaps few. Indian

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81 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1930, CF 62/3.
82 Michael J. Field, Mau: Samoa's Struggle against New Zealand Oppression, Auckland: A.H. Wood & A. W. Reed, 1984, p. 57. See also Wareham, Race and Realpolitik, ch. 5.
83 CSO 2704/1930.
84 See Censuses for 1921 and 1936. McArthur, Island Populations, tables 5 & 6, pp. 38-39. In fact, in the 15 to 45 age brackets at both the 1921 and 1936 censuses, Fijian women somewhat outnumbered Fijian men; Indian men still outnumbered Indian women, perhaps owing partly to the fact that most new immigrant arrivals were male, but the discrepancy was by no means as great as before.
85 See Annie Maude Griffin's anecdote about a planter's family: the daughters were sent to Australia where they married, but there was not the money to send the sons even to Suva for very long; so they married 'good Fijian women' whose children, being part-European, were placed in an 'unenviable' position by the prejudices of the day. Annie Maude Griffin, 'Fiji - Autobiography of AM Griffin' MAF M/94/(b).
86 Sukuna to Colonial Secretary, 15 Mar. 1926, Ratu Sukuna, Fiji: The Three Legged Stool, p. 106.
87 Basil Thomson noted 'It may not be a pleasant subject to dwell upon, but it is a fact that women of Anglo-Saxon blood do, even in these days, mate with Chinese, Kaffirs, and even Negroes despite the active opposition of the whole of their relations'. To what degree this comment was informed by his Fiji experience, I do not know; however in the primary material I have encountered very few marriages or extra-marital sexual relations involving white women in Fiji and men of other colour in the Colony, and those that are recorded were vehemently deplored. Knapman has analysed the opposition of white men to liaisons involving white women and coloured men, though anxiety never reached the pitch of feeling in Papua and New Guinea. Thomson, The Fijians, p. xvii; Knapman, White Women in Fiji, esp. pp.
women were married very young and strictly supervised by their families. So, while a Fijian man might see men of other races seducing or marrying Fijian women, he was less able to seduce or marry theirs.

But the incidence of interracial relations was probably exaggerated. While statistics on interracial marriage are scarce, if we accept Hoodless's figures for illegitimacy we can also assume that only some of his illegitimate 20% of Fijian children had non-Fijian fathers. Many 'Illegitimates' were the children of de facto Fijian couples and a large proportion of the remainder would have been fathered by Fijians too. Some of Nurse Suckling's files suggest that she spent as much time chasing Fijian men for child support as she did chasing fathers of other races - and in her villages, being close to Nausori and Suva, the opportunities for interracial liaisons were probably greater than in most parts of the Colony.88 In Quain's village, which he described as removed from the decadent influences of the coast, only one of the numerous illegitimate children was said to have a foreign father - who, as a Solomon Islander, did not really count. No children were attributed to the Chinese storekeeper half a day's walk away, and only one of the village women was mentioned as having been his mistress.89

An economic dimension to interracial liaisons and marriage was keenly perceived by Fijian men, contrasting the world of money with Fijian custom and the different types of masculine competency each inscribed.90 Many problems besetting Fijians were attributed by Fijian men to their shortage of cash. For Dreketirua, an important cause of infant mortality was the fact that Fijian men were liga lala 'empty handed' while Indians earned money.91 The Namosi Provincial Council explained illegitimacy in terms of masculine poverty. Moneyless young men, to meet taxation, went to towns and other centres of employment, where they fathered children out of wedlock; while the inability of older men to provide for their daughters drove these girls into the arms of men - often of other races - who bought them things and got them pregnant.92

Members of the Viti Cauravou were especially sensitive to this inadequacy. The Society was attempting, as its name suggests, to realise a new masculine type. This modern man, while declaring allegiance to Chief, King and Church, was also 'enlightened', educated, and earned money. To qualify for membership one had to operate a bank account. A handful of high ranking chiefs, such as Ratu Isireli Tawake, belonged; but its first presidents - Buadromo, Dreketirua and Joeli Ravai - were of undistinguished birth who had received good schooling by the standards of the day and in a sense were 'self-made' men. The Society claimed a right to speak, not on the basis of

88 SNA 2840/1931; SNA 345/1933.
89 Quain, Fijian Village, pp. 113, 373, 283.
90 For Fijian perceptions of this dichotomy today, and academic approaches to it, see Thomas, Entangled Objects, pp. 197ff.
91 SNA 1032/1926.
92 Namosi Provincial Council, 12 Dec. 1939, in F/50/78.
chiefly authority, but progressive accomplishment. It ambitiously promoted schemes for economic development - such as its Cooperative Sales Company, the Fijian Planters Syndicate and a proposed market in Suva - which however met with scant success.93

The petition for a law against interracial liaisons and marriage also failed. The Council of Chiefs resolved that such legislation would be 'derogatory to the dignity of Fijian womanhood and an unjustifiable restriction of liberty'94 - an opinion that reflected European statements. Failing this measure, in 1932 the Viti Cauravou proposed opening its membership to women, so that 'they will be influenced by the ideals of the Society and they will be inclined in the direction we desire in matters that affect the welfare of the Fijian Race'. This proposal was opposed on the grounds that it might undermine the Ruve, but had it been approved, any consequent effect on interracial liaisons is hard to imagine.95 Then in 1935 the Society asked the government to proscribe the goldfields for Fijian women, since their presence there caused bad behaviour and 'a rapid increase in half-castes'.96

The government however was more receptive to suggestions for restricting the mobility of Fijian women. Such measures had been legislated since the first Native Regulations. To the disapproval of missionaries, colonial administrators, and no doubt Fijian husbands, traditionally the option of running away from their husbands and staying with kin had given women a leverage within marriage, but Regulation No. 11 of 1877 empowered Magistrates to send them back.97 From 1887 women absent from their village beyond a stipulated period (initially, this was one month) without the Buli’s permission could be tried and punished; unmarried women were forbidden to leave without approval of parents, guardians or mataqali, and if found away from home could be apprehended under warrant and forcibly returned; while women found in towns without satisfactory explanation could also be returned under escort. Repeat offences were punishable.98 The elements of these provisions continued beyond World War 2.

Women who left their homes had always been accused of loose conduct, promiscuity, the spurning of village obligations, neglect of children, and irreverence. Individual cases however can often excite sympathy for the woman. In a file dating from 1888 about Rewan women in Suva, Unaisi a widow had run away after her uncles insisted she remarry a man she disliked; Aleca, a 19 year old girl, had fled to the capital because she disliked having sex with the Roko Tui Dreketi; Elina had the same

93 For the Fiji Cooperative Sales Company, see CSO 1796/1926; for the Fiji Planter’s Syndicate and market plans, see CF50/6. 94 Secretary of Native Affairs to President of The Young Fijian Society. 27 May 1931, CSO 2704/1930. 95 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1932, in CF 50/6. 96 The Young Fijian Society Conference, 1935, in CF 62/3. 97 Native Regulation No. 11 of 1877 with Regard to Adultery and Fornication; also see discussion ch. 3. 98 Native Regulation No. 1 of 1887 with Regard to Women Absenting themselves from their Homes.
When in that same year the Council of Chiefs discussed run-away women, it was even admitted there that the behaviour of chiefs was often to blame.

In the interwar period greater numbers of men and women were driven from their villages. The old system under which Fijians paid tax in produce had been abolished in 1913, after which the need for jobs to pay tax increased, while the Methodist Church had always preferred cash contributions. Following the end of Indian indenture the demand for Fijian labour increased; and later the depression and fall in commodity prices drove yet more men to seek work. From 1932, goldmines on Savu Savu Bay in Vanua Levu and in Tavua on the north coast of Viti Levu began operating and employment there was a Taukei preserve. At this time Fijians were also encouraged to exempt themselves from communal duties and attempt a livelihood as commercial cultivators, apart from the village on land leased in their individual names. Villages in some parts of Colo West had been emptied by this scheme.

The number of Fijians absent from their villages - the bulk of whom were male - was listed as 6,897 in 1921 and 16,729 in 1936 [table 12]. The degree of male absenteeism and its effects varied from place to place. In Lau between 1933-1934, Laura Thompson observed that in at least 50% of the villages, nearly all the young men between 18 and 30 were away for a year on labour contracts. Despite their absence and the shortage of cash owing to the collapse of the copra industry, parts of Lau were thriving as the traditional economy and manufactures, particularly women's back-cloth, revived. At the opposite extreme, villages in Colo North - always known as the most impoverished in Fiji - were entirely empty of able-bodied men and women who had been drawn to the Tavua mines.

Census figures on Fijians absent from their villages cannot capture the total number of man-days lost to the village economy over the course of a year, for while some men were absent more or less permanently, a much larger proportion left the village every year for periods of employment. A fuller picture of male absenteeism can be drawn from Quain's account of the village which he called 'Nakoroka'. One of the largest in inland Vanua Levu, it claimed a population of a hundred people, 21 of whom were small children. Sixteen men between the ages of 18 and 40 regarded it as their home. Of these, three were absent at the mines year in year out; a fourth returned for two or three months annually but did no gardening; a fifth was mostly absent from the village working for Indians; a sixth had returned after many years at the sugar mills in Labasa and was now planning to live apart from the village and grow yaqona commercially. Of those men in

99 CSO 1442/1888.
100 Council of Chiefs, 12 May 1888 and Governor's reply.
102 Laura Thompson, Fijian Frontier, pp. 80, 93-94.
103 DC Colo North to Colonial Secretary minute, CF 50/13.
Table 12
Fijians living in villages and not living in villages, 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Fijians living in villages</th>
<th>Fijians not living in villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kadavu</td>
<td>5,466</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau</td>
<td>8,756</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautoka</td>
<td>3,867</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomaiviti</td>
<td>5,270</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Makogai)</td>
<td>(191)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macuata</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bua</td>
<td>2,882</td>
<td>1,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naitasiri</td>
<td>2,698</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namosi</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadi</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadroga</td>
<td>4,287</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>5,171</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewa</td>
<td>4,020</td>
<td>3,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotuma</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serua</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailevu</td>
<td>9,732</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakaudrove</td>
<td>8,193</td>
<td>2,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo East</td>
<td>2,919</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo North</td>
<td>2,733</td>
<td>1,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo West</td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 80,922 16,729

this age bracket who mostly stayed at home, two were uncommonly lazy; a third was incapacitated by sickness in the family; a fourth was congenitally blind; a fifth had failing eyesight and twisted limbs; and a sixth was permanently prostrate with lesions to the spine caused by yaws. Only three of the four able-bodied men who resided in the village were described as productive, and even these had to spend two or three months every year away in quest of money.104

House-building and repair, village maintenance and food production all suffered from the reduced input of men. Quain described the people of Vanua Levu living in mean, dilapidated accommodation and growing less food. Poignantly, they attributed shrunken yields and harder times to the failure of chiefly mana. The goldmines were lowering village productivity, Chinese traders were beginning to vie with gardens as a principal source of food, and hospitality was often difficult to extend. Nakoroka however was better off than many villages, and its gardens still provided its people with subsistence.105

The withdrawal of men from the koro was not compensated by goods or cash they brought back. Once their earnings had satisfied taxes, fines, levies and their personal living and other expenses, there was little left over. Emberson-Bain has argued that the low wages paid to Fijians were justified on the claim that a Fijian's earnings were not needed to support his family in the village. Sukuna on occasion argued that it was; and sadly, where the subsistence economy deteriorated the need for money to buy essential food increased.106 In the early twenties men were observed returning from stints of labour both 'penniless' and without established gardens, and hence were unable to provide for their dependents or repay others who had cared for them.107 Though some counter-measures were legislated, they fell short of proposals made by the Council of Chiefs and were anyway later relaxed.108

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104 Most of this information is culled from Quain, Fijian Village, ch. 4.
105 Quain, Fijian Village, for housing, p. 65, passim; for reduced yields and chiefly mana, pp. 11, 227 and passim; for goldmines lowering productivity, pp. 10-11; 78; for Chinese traders becoming chief source of food, pp. 11; 67; for the poverty of some villages, pp. 11.
106 Atu Emberson-Bain, Labour and Gold in Fiji, esp. ch. 3; Sukuna, Fiji Legislative Council Debates, 27 April 1938, quoted ibid., p. 55.
107 Circular for Colonial Secretary to all District Commissioners, 24 Apr. 1922, CSO 6740/1921.
108 Under Native Regulation No. 4 of 1912, a man who failed to make adequate provision for his dependents was liable to a fine up to 40/- or imprisonment up to 6 weeks, with a maximum period of 3 months imprisonment for subsequent offences. The Council of Chiefs in 1926, (Resolution 16) recommended stronger punishment. Native Regulation No. 4 of 1927 introduced penalties of up to £5 or 3 months imprisonment for the first offence, and up to £10 or 6 months imprisonment for subsequent offences, while all or part of the fine could be paid to the person who maintained the guilty party's dependents. The problem of men who left the village but evaded the legal requirement to commute their communal obligations by payment in cash was also addressed. Under Native Regulation No. 7 of 1912 a Fijian could gain exemption on an annual basis from communal duties on approval and payment of a fee. This regulation was however often ignored. Heavier penalties were proposed in Resolution 12, Council of Chiefs 1926, and implemented under Regulation No. 7 1927. Now a person whose absence was not authorised by a certificate of exemption was liable to a fine to the provincial administration of £1 for every year of unauthorised absence; if he failed to pay the fine by the date prescribed, he could be ordered to pay an absentee tax to his village in addition to a fine of £1 to the provincial administration; or else
The material difficulties caused by male absenteeism bore hard on women, particularly those with small children. Nurse Brewer gave this typical description of an unmarried mother: 'the girls [sic] parents find the necessities until the mother can earn for herself & infant. & [sic] eventually the mother leaves the little one wherever she can & works for their support'.\(^{109}\) Yet many married women with legitimate children faced similar hardships. In 1921 the Under Secretary of Native Affairs explained that wives whose husbands were away working rarely complain but are often forced to improper means of obtaining money to support their families. In a few cases they seek work, I know of one woman in Suva who is earning $25/- per month as a nurse and who gives me $10/- per month to send to her mother at Rewa for her little child. The husband is working under indenture at Rotuma.\(^ {110}\)

Male absenteeism thus necessitated a degree of female absenteeism too.

The strong causal link between illegitimacy and infant mortality proposed by Hoodless looks even more doubtful when seen in these conditions. For Quain's village, at least, there was little apparent correlation between a child's health status and extra marital birth. The young children noticeably unwell at Nakoroka included the three yaws ridden children of a poor, married couple; a legitimate boy with a distended stomach, bulging eyes and deformed limbs; another legitimate boy who died after protracted illness; and sickly infant twins born in wedlock to a chiefly father. Only one illegitimate was noted for ill health, and that was a blue blood whose condition was not due to want of attention. The main variable noted by Quain in relation to child care was chiefly birth: chiefly children - born within and without wedlock - were pampered, better fed and more physically protected than the rest.\(^ {111}\)

The government's efforts to deal with illegitimacy in the name of infant health therefore seem somewhat misdirected. Chief among these were proposals for lowering the age at which Fijian women could marry without parental permission from 18 to 17.\(^ {112}\) Fijian women were believed to be marrying later than formerly, so it was argued they were now more likely to bear illegitimate offspring before marriage and were less able to compete with Indian women who were almost invariably married mothers by the age of fifteen. (Dreketirua had pondered this contrast and, and using a simile from tuber propagation, said Fijian girls were like 'stale yams' by the time they wed)\(^ {113}\). The regulation under which magistrates, on the complaint of an unmarried mother or her face imprisonment for up to 2 months. Subsequent legislation however reduced these penalties and made it easier for a villager to gain exemption. See Regulation 10 of 1932 and Regulation 4 of 1938.

\(^ {109}\) Miss Brewer to Secretary of Native Affairs, 14 Sep. 1937, F 48/175.

\(^ {110}\) CSO 6740/1921.

\(^ {111}\) Much of this information is drawn from Quain, *Fijian Village*, ch. 4; for the superior treatment of chiefly children, see also pp. 199, 309.

\(^ {112}\) Resolution 8, Council of Chiefs, 1938.

\(^ {113}\) SNA 1032/1926.
guardians, could demand maintenance from the biological father was also more strenuously implemented, and amended to empower magistrates to act on their own accord. Indeed, a circular was later issued instructing them not to hesitate, while some men, on Mrs Suckling's notification, were pressed to do more than just to pay maintenance, but to marry the mothers of their children. And finally were measures, which will soon be discussed, to curtail female mobility.

Anxieties about female absenteeism, as with mixed race illegitimates, often however appear disproportionate. In Quain's village, though he mentioned that troops of young women did leave for the goldfields to make money selling yaqona, most remained at home and if not, stayed with kin removed from economic centres. In 1931, the Provincial Scribe of Rewa - a province which in the 1936 census reported a female population of 3,774 - reported a paltry four women from his province were in Suva without permission. Of course, these women represented merely those recorded unlawfully absent, and does not account for those whose wrongful absence had not been brought to official notice or those whose absence was approved. Yet it does suggest that even a small number of illegal, female absenteeees could trigger grave concern.

The related outcries surrounding kava saloons and the dance Taralala also seem disproportionate. In the mid 1920s, when women were reallowed to serve yaqona in saloons, a petition signed by Ratu Joni Mataitini, now Member of the Legislative Council, and 36 others including Mosese Buadromo and Opetaia Dreketirua, claimed that this untraditional practice made women leave their homes and led to sexual promiscuity. Some Rewan women, Mataitini claimed, had deserted husbands and children for a life of the saloons. From the 1930s the spread of the Taralala caused further objection. Its titillating feature was that men and women danced demurely as couples, side by side. Perhaps partly because it originated in the Methodist school of Matavelo, Roman Catholic protests were particularly vociferous. Father Guinard attributed a 20% increase of illegitimacy in Namosi to the introduction of the dance. A petition from Fijian Catholics claimed it caused a host of evils which would lead to the decrease of the race. Some Europeans too deplored the dance, the ill effects of which were said to be graver in the unsupervised and racially mixed environs of the CSR lines, the gold fields or Suva. Against these condemnations a few voices were raised. Sukuna, normally opposed to women in towns ('It is', he said, 'undoubtedly, a grave question whether the rights of civilized women accustomed to moving in over-populated cities should be allowed to native women brought up in small villages'), nevertheless disputed the harm attributed to

114 Native Regulation No. 20 of 1912, succeeded by Native Regulation No. 18 of 1927.
115 Acting Advisor on Native Affairs to Provincial Commissioners, Circular No 7, 1 Jan. 1939, in F/50/78; SNA 2460/1931.
116 SNA 1697/1931.
117 Petition 22 Dec. 1924 and Colonial Secretary's minute 17 Feb. 1925 in CSO 4668/1924. For a description of kava saloons, also see Agnes K. Goode, 'Fiji of Today', Transactions of the Fijian Society for the Year 1921 [offprint consulted unpaginated].
kava saloons. His wife, having worked in one, perhaps influenced him on this point. On the Taralala, Roth knew only one occasion when the dance got out of hand - and that involved members of the Ruve and the Viti Cauravou.

Much, however, depended on the maternal functions of Fijian women which their mobility and associated activities such as these were thought to threaten. Though clearly by moving to the towns women were imagined as sexualised in a way that was incompatible with mothering and which contributed to the 'decrease', by defining Fijian motherhood as village-based, maternity also guaranteed the perpetuation of the koro by ensuring that women stayed there even if their men did not. While in the long run the destruction of the koro would have been the consequence of the economic development for Fijians the administration favoured, villages could be seen as serving useful cultural, economic, reproductive and political functions for Fijian men in a 'transitional' condition: the village offered a source of cultural identity and stability; it offered a fall-back for independent farmers who failed; it subsidised the low salaries of men who left for paid employment by providing some subsistence for the families their wages could not support; it ideally harboured and secluded the women who bore their children; and, in a Colony that was changing demographically, economically and politically, offered Fijian men a reserve which they could nominally rule and call their own.

Fijian women were certainly construed as a rightful field for a more vigorous operation of Fijian male authority. Juxon Barton in 1939 received a deputation of high chiefs, including Ratu Popi Seniloli and Ratu Sukuna, who made the usual complaints: women were leaving their children for Suva; consorting with Indians at the goldfields and elsewhere; and watching cinema. That the wives of government officials in town employed Fijian nannies - taking Fijian women away from their own children - provoked their particular indignation. Barton in turn declared his support for 'The rigid control of native women by the native authorities who have often asked me to help them to force the women to remain in the villages'. In a file Buxon entitled 'Behaviourism' he particularly deplored the spectacle of Fijian women whenever a tourist ship called at Suva. On another occasion he suggestively remarked: 'After all, if they [meaning Fijian men] have the good sense to want to control their women, the least we can do is to help them'.

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119 Sukuna, 15 Mar. 1926, reproduced in Sukuna, Three Legged Stool, pp. 105-106; and Sukuna's memorandum in CSO 4668/1924; also reproduced in Ratu Sukuna, ibid., pp. 98-102.
120 DC Bua's minute 12 Jun 1931, CF 50/3.
122 CF 50/15 and Barton's minute 23 May 1937 in CF 50/13.
123 Juxon Barton's minute 21 Mar. 1939, F 34/34/3.
124 CF 50/14.
125 Minute 30 Oct. 1938 CF 50/15.
Indeed, the promise of vesting increased power in Fijian men over Fijian women was probably some small recompense for their disempowerment in other fields. Within the Colony's administration, as outlined in the previous chapter, the influence of Fijian appointees had been reduced - without however opening other avenues of political expression. Some Fijians, like Mosese Buadromo, argued that the government by granting franchise to Indians without extending similar rights to the Taukei was humiliating and retarding them. Later resolutions of the Viti Cauravou for more popular methods of political representation were sternly repudiated, though democratically-tinged resolutions by the Council of Chiefs were more readily indulged. Economically, Fijians also felt disempowered. Some among Fiji's immigrant communities enjoyed conspicuous economic success, but money-making enterprises initiated by the Viti Cauravou were almost always viewed by the Government with distrust and disapproved.

In these circumstances, the ability to lord over women perhaps afforded Fijian men the ultimate, residual prerogative - without which they might lose, so it seems to have been feared, even their own means of reproducing themselves. Other details, aside from the petitions and complaints which this chapter has already mentioned, suggest however that consciously or unconsciously, male authority in the villages was contested. 'Women,' it was observed in 1926, 'do not submit so readily to controls as one they did.' Nurse Field, visiting towns in Nadroga in 1931 noted '...there seems to be some unrest among the women at times, the trouble seems to be with the old people & some of the men. The Minutes of Provincial Councils often record keen and lengthy discussions on women, particularly in relation to their movements, with protests that 'the women are getting more and more out of control...'

Some extreme proposals made by the Councils of Chiefs - for instance that women should not be allowed to leave their village without the permission of their husband - were not approved. But progressively, the legislation and mechanisms to restrict the movements of Fijian women were enhanced. Under regulations from 1912 a woman absent for 60 days without permission from parents or persons with authority over her could be fined a shilling for every day absent over this limit, or be confined at home for up to six weeks. The revisions of 1927 reduced the period a woman could...
be absent without official written permission from 60 to 28 days and prohibited certain areas.\textsuperscript{135} In 1932 the period without need for authorization was reduced to one week and additional areas were proscribed.\textsuperscript{136} Subsequently the gold fields were also prohibited and an unauthorised woman who stayed more than two days in such an area could be fined £1 or imprisoned for a month.\textsuperscript{137} Barton, experienced in the pass systems in East Africa, described these measures as 'Draconian' but justified from 'the native/eugenic point of view'.\textsuperscript{138} Penalties were further raised; the list of prohibited areas was lengthened; and instructions were issued for the regulations to be rigorously enforced.\textsuperscript{139}

In practice the law was difficult to implement. Only 170 women throughout Fiji were prosecuted during 18 months from 1936 to 1937, but perhaps these numbers subsequently increased under Barton's zeal. However, the policing and forced return of women from the towns required levels of administrative commitment, communication and coordination that were often lacking. Some women moved from place to place, or claimed exemptions - such as being under the care of a male relative, or in respectable employ. Women who returned under escort to their homes often reappeared in town after what was in effect a government-sponsored holiday back to their village. Even the punishments some women reportedly received on their homecoming - such as caning - were no guarantee of their staying put. Officials noted a measure of collusion from employers. Some managers welcomed the presence of Fijian women around mines or sugar lines for they kept employees - especially European employees - contented.\textsuperscript{140} And there was still demand for Fijian nannies and maids.

A comprehensive strategy for dealing with Fijian women in Suva was attempted in 1938, involving the Commissioner of Police, the Chairman of the Methodist Mission and members of the Suva Women's Social Service Committee. The latter advocated the suppression of kava saloons, a ban on young girls working in them, and restrictions upon yqona drinking by pregnant or young women.\textsuperscript{141} It also proposed a register for girls seeking employment as domestics; a girls' hostel and a native settlement to remove girls from crowded, mixed race boarding houses; a curfew; the appointment of a woman Probation Officer; a home for delinquent girls; and radio broadcasts on such subjects as Native Law, good citizenship and mothercraft - presumably to keep girls glued to a wireless.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{135} Native Regulation No 4 of 1927.
\textsuperscript{136} Native Regulation No. 8 of 1932.
\textsuperscript{137} Native Regulation No. 2 of 1935.
\textsuperscript{138} Barton's minute 23 May 1937, CF 50/13.
\textsuperscript{139} Regulation No. 1 of 1938, Regulation 1 of 1939, Regulation 1 of 40; CF 50/15.
\textsuperscript{140} DC Colo North to Acting Colonial Secretary, 30 Aug. 1934, CF 50/13. This point is discussed by Bain, \textit{Labour and Gold in Fiji} , p. 131.
\textsuperscript{141} This was a matter of implementing the existing Native Regulation No. 19 of 1927.
\textsuperscript{142} Acting SNA, minute 7 Jul. 1938 and recommendations of the Suva Women's Social Service Committee in CF 50/15.
This range of proposals suggests a richer recognition of the urban reality. Excluding suburbs, Fijians living in central Suva had almost trebled between 1921 and 1936 to 2,372, which represented more than one quarter of the residents in the town itself. The reports of Miss Taylor, appointed Probation Officer in 1939, further illuminate the heterogeneous female population of the capital. Women from the koro - mostly of Rewa or Tailevu - were only one component in this mix. Many had children in the village. Some were in difficulty and a few were sick. Some were respectably employed. Some sought work. Others were 'amongst the worst of those loitering on the streets at night'. Though a great deal of Miss Taylor's efforts were devoted to 'wayward girls' neither she nor the police endorsed the stereotype of the immoral and uncontrolled woman who had abandoned her village. In fact, when World War 2 pulled even more people from the koro and the Colony hosted foreign servicemen, Miss Taylor was among those who praised the conduct of Fijian women in town. While forcible repatriation continued to be practised, and further restrictions were introduced under Defence Regulations, increasingly it was sensed that the government and missions could no longer exclude the city from their vision of Fijian life. For many Fijians, including mothers, urban work and residence was now a necessity.

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Questions of paternity were shaped by the Viti Cauravou into a distinctive, indigenous contribution to the discussion between the wars of Taukei survival. For half a century, the colonially authored discourse concerning na lutu sobu itaukei had revolved around the reproductive competence of Fijian women. The government's concentration during the late 1930s upon 'the children of the path' was another symptom of this preoccupation. But the advocacy of the Viti Cauravou disclosed a different set of heartfelt interests. The predicament with which members identified is implied in the petition's complaint, to which so many subscribed their name, about 'the rapid increase in the number of non-Fijians whose mothers are members of our race': foreign men - men who were not 'empty handed', men who had political voice, men who had a future - were denying Fijian men their posterity and the future to which they aspired. In the post war era, the Young Fijian Society aged, languished and expired. Some historians, casting over its traces, have sensed in the yalo vou that seized the young men at Davuilevu in 1920 a 'lost opportunity'. However, many of the measures they supported sought to curtail, control and contain the agency of Fijian women; and their thinking still resonates with contemporary controversies surrounding ethnic and national identity in Fiji with troubling implications for some Fijian women and their

143 Census 1936, table 5.
144 Miss Taylor's Report, 'The conditions of Fijian women in Suva' 29 Jun. 1940 in CF 50/15.
145 Advisor on Native Affairs, minute 10 Feb. 1942 in CF 50/15.
146 Petition, 29 Oct. 1930, CSO 2704/1930.
147 Lal, Broken Waves, p. 73.
descendants. To the Viti Cauravou, Fijian mothers though Taukei themselves, were not necessarily the mothers of other Taukei: sometimes their children did not count as such.

Figure 23: The Taralala during war-time.

Figure 24: Village child welfare inspection during peace.
Conclusion

World War 2, though it never brought battles to Fijian shores, brought American and New Zealand servicemen, took Fijian soldiers to Guadalcanal and other fronts where they proved heroes, produced transient markets and employment at home for Indians and Fijians, and further emptied villages as men and women were drawn to the military bases and towns. Fijian girls now danced the Taralala with men in uniform.

When thoughts turned to peace, the future of the Taukei was once more raised. 'In return for the fine war effort of the Fijians', wrote the Fiji Times, 'we should get them back to normal as quickly as possible, and help them in the big job of saving the race'.

The emphasis again was on marriage, a proper family life, correct infant care and feeding.¹ The census of 1946 then returned the long anticipated figures: Indians outnumbered Fijians 120,414 to 118,070, confirmation for some that Fiji's post-war destiny was indeed to be the 'Little India of the Pacific'.² Fijian mothers were still much blamed for this demographic result. As Ratu Edward Cakobau, the great-grandson of his namesake, told the Lomaivuna Baby Show in 1948, 'Far too many children who should have lived to use up the land died because mothers were not particularly careful of their babies'.³

But the Mothers of the Taukei were no longer so discursively important. The demographic race with Indians had been lost and the interests of Fijians were seen as more than ever to be safeguarded in political institutions to which programs for boosting their reproductive performance were no necessary adjunct. At the start of the post war era, the Deed of Cession debate in the Legislative Council set the tone, reaffirming Britain's historic obligation to protect indigenous interests regardless of Taukei numbers.⁴ And in some respects, the Colony now returned to earlier times. Sukuna, who took charge of a revived Fiji Administration and exercised enormous sway, was an admirer of Thurston's native policy and O'Brien's program in health and sanitation. He pursued a philosophy of 'back to the koro' in which Fijian well-being, within a scheme of colonial guarantees, was furthered by strict attention to tradition and village development.⁵ Some older Fijians today idealise this era as one of swift punishment for

[Graph 3 overleaf: Fijians, Indians and Others, 1881-1946 (Census '46)]

¹ Fiji Times, 27 Mar. 1945.
⁴ Lal, Broken Waves, pp. 139-143; Scarr, Fiji: A Short History, pp. 158-159.
those who violated sanitary regulations; of Fijian doctors who peremptorily demolished unsatisfactory latrines; and of village women's committees which rang their bells morning and night.

Improved material conditions in the villages no doubt contributed to improved health conditions in the late forties and fifties. Other factors included the post-war reconstruction of the medical department which, for the first time, properly integrated services to the Indian and Fijian communities, and at last had effective vaccinations and the new wonder drugs, antibiotics. The dreadful reign of infectious disease, inaugurated in Fiji nearly two centuries earlier, seemed nearing its end - as indeed, optimists proclaimed world-wide. Fijian infant mortality rates began to fall steeply. By the late 1950s, crude rates were lower for the Fijian than the Indian population, where they have mostly remained since then [table 8].

Finally, the overriding demographic concern became overpopulation. The Burns Commission of 1959 tackled this problem, leading to the government's endorsement of a comprehensive family planning program. One of Kesaia Seniloli's Fijian informants, a man who had served in Malaya, recalled leaving Fiji when the luvea levu provisions were still encouraging the Taukei to raise many children, and returning to exhortations to have fewer. Many Fijians only welcomed family planning as something Indians should do. They did; and by the late 1960s, Indian birth-rates fell below Fijian [table 9].

All these conditions after World War 2 made the old discourse on decrease politically and demographically redundant. Even its thesis of maternal incompetence as an explanation of Fijian decline was rendered obsolete. Between the wars Dr Sylvester Lambert had been wont to proclaim: '...the item which looms over everything else in the question of failing native races is the introduction of diseases to which they have no

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6 The thrust of the post-war reconstruction is outlined in Medical Circular No. 5/3/7, F48/401 which was consistent with the general directives of the the Colonial Office, 'Medical Policy in the Colonial Empire. Memorandum submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Colonial Advisory Medical Committee, 19 May, 1942', F48/559. Cf. Donald Denoon, Public Health in Papua New Guinea: Medical Possibility and Social Constraint 1884-1984, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 8, 'Miracle drugs, new perceptions and the post-war Public Health Department'.

7 This sense of world-wide optimism was captured in works such as A. Cockburn, The Evolution and Eradication of Infectious Disease, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963; and has been reviewed from the more pessimistic vantage of the present by, among others, Laurie Garrett, The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World out of Balance, London: Virago Press, 1995, esp. Introduction and ch. 2.


immunity [Lambert's italics]. I had seen its effects so often, right under my eyes'. 11
After the war, this theory was widely adopted, and simplified so many of the moral and
theoretical problems that had complicated earlier explanations of indigenous decline. It
was moncausal. It removed blame from the victim of disease, for whom a lack of
immunity could not be construed as a moral or instinctual defect. It also absolved
Europeans of guilt, by merely picturing them as unwitting vectors of disease who could
now compensate for that tragic role by orchestrating the remedial romance of modern
medicine.

But had 'maternal incompetence' been a factor in the Fijian decrease through
causing the preventable loss of infant life? If we accept that high rates of infant mortality
did contribute to decline, some arguments and observations clear a space for considering
'maternal incompetence' as a factor. The moncausal theory of 'non-immunity to new
disease' has, as chapter one indicated, been repudiated by those who argue that disease
causation is more complexly rooted in social, cultural, political as well as biological
factors; and that 'non-immunity' is a concept needing revision. 12 The reduction of
infant mortality in other countries - such as France and England - has sometimes been
attributed to educating mothers, which may suggest that ignorance and inappropriate care
contributed to the death of babies there. 13 Also, the contemporary pattern of infant
mortality in Fiji can raise questions. While overall, rates of Fijian infant mortality have
tended to be lower than Indian in recent decades, Fijian infant mortality rates for older
babies and for toddlers tend to be higher. 14 Often a crude contrast is made between Fijian
babies - born big and healthy to strapping mothers - and Indian babies - born smaller to
mothers malnourished and anaemic; whereas subsequently Fijian babies are more likely
to lose condition and Indian babies to thrive. The latter differentials are explained by
exogenous factors, such as diet and care. 15 This contemporary picture - drawn when
infant health has vastly improved and Fiji's infant mortality statistics compare very
favourably to most developing countries - still approximates some of the contrasts made
in the earlier colonial period, when observers used to ponder the apparent deterioration of

11 Lambert, A Doctor in Paradise, pp. 114-115. See also S. M. Lambert, The Depopulation of
12 Neel, 'Health and Disease in Unacculturated Amerindian Populations'; Kunitz, Disease and
Social Diversity; Black, 'Why did They Die?'. See discussion ch. 1.
13 Workers in such schemes at the time certainly took credit for reductions, but I doubt that any
historians would perceive the cause and solution so simply. See the discussion in Jane Lewis, The
possibility that health-visiting and mothercraft education contributed to the reduction of British infant
mortality, especially in infants under three months old, from 1902-1908 is discussed in F. B. Smith, The
People's Health 1830-1910, pp. 114-117. Cf. explanations of Australian Aboriginal infant morbidity
and mortality revolving around maternal ignorance, Peter M. Moodie, Aboriginal Health, Canberra:
14 Bureau of Statistics, Social Indicators for Fiji, Issue No. 5, Suva: Government Printer 1990,
pp. 14-17.
15 Robertson, 'Morbidity and Mortality', pp. 22-32. Bureau of Statistics, Social Indicators for Fiji,
Fijian infants. Even among (ethnically) Fijian nurses today I heard echoes of earlier commonplaces such as 'Indian mothers are good mothers'.

Two emphases in the colonial explanation of Fijian 'maternal incompetence' hinged on 'congenital' and 'circumstantial' causation. The main congenital theory took the form of alleging a lack of maternal instinct in Fijian women. This allegation persisted, as I have argued, despite the fact that official interventions in Fijian maternity produced no confirmatory evidence and plenty to the contrary. Leaving aside the question of 'maternal instinct', its predication on a racial category is in itself undone by the demolition of the 'race concept' in mainstream thought since World War 2. Moreover, in Fiji the allegation, as I argued particularly in chapters two and eleven, was primarily a political convenience invented and sustained by those anxious to protect the native policy.

'Circumstantial' causes of maternal incompetence can encompass a huge range of external factors that, in disadvantaging their mothers, disadvantaged their children. Though part three eventually rejected the proposition that 'the abolition of polygamy' contributed to the decrease, other chapters indicated that circumstances could certainly disable mothers and make the survival of their infants more difficult - though these circumstances were not always vividly appreciated by colonial administrators and were sometimes fostered by government policy. How, for instance, could the mother described by Faranisea Daunibau, living in a crowded leaky shack with impoverished kin, care for her infant in a desirable way? How could the mother of Mr Meek's ex nuptial child manage in her want? How could mothers, left in villages without enough men to help with housing and food production, be anything but hampered by their circumstances? And so one could go on.

My own verdict is however that even circumstantial theories of 'maternal incompetence' have negligible utility for explaining infant mortality in colonial Fiji in the period until World War 2. The absolute decline of the Taukei and their recovery before that date underscores, I believe, the destructiveness of introduced diseases. They killed, despite a system of native administration, which, in terms of disease prevention, minimised the exacerbations of land-loss, pauperization and cultural deracination. They killed little children, despite mothers and carers giving them their every love. This is the impression left by so many of the infant death inquiries with testimonies of mothers like Maramanitabua:

My child Lewadau was five months old when he came down with whooping cough last month and died on 2/3/93. When he was sick I took great care of him and made the right Fijian medicines but they were no use. In the time when he was suckling he suckled well. When I was pregnant I took great care of my pregnancy and I didn't carry heavy loads or do a lot of weeding. I always rested from some of the women's work when I was pregnant. My husband and I have a loving marriage, we don't get angry with each other. Then my child died in the epidemic - the epidemic last month. I have had four children, three are dead and one boy still lives.18

The failure of interventions to counteract the decrease further underscores the lack of effective remedies - save quarantine. Though O'Brien's efforts were later lauded for 'saving the race'; though Dr. Lambert used to argue that the growth of Islander populations could be correlated with improved medical services; and though Fiji boasted a record in colonial medicine and sanitation unrivalled in the South Pacific; I doubt whether such measures had great impact.19 The Hygiene Mission of European Women to Fijian Women was utterly useless. O'Brien's improvements to housing and sanitation were short-lived and cannot account for demographic gains once these improvements had passed and village conditions deteriorated. The initiative most successful in reaching mothers and enlisting their cooperation was the Child Welfare Scheme - but its operation only revealed how little the scheme could, under the circumstances, achieve. Before the great investment in medical services after World War 2 and the wider availability of the drugs and immunizations which stimulated the high hopes of that era, the capabilities of colonial medicine in Fiji were limited indeed. And by the time it was capable of making a difference, Fijian health was already improving due to other reasons.

These reasons may be indicated through a comparison and contrast with the European experience. Over the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European health, measured in infant mortality rates and life expectancy, has improved.20 Most of these improvements have been due to reduced morbidity and mortality from infectious disease and, as Thomas McKeown and others have argued, reductions were effected for the most part without the aid of medicine. Other factors - more and better food increasing the body's resistance to infection, and improved sanitation and hygiene reducing the body's exposure - were, in the European context, both prior to and more important than some of the most celebrated advances in clinical medicine. While I argue here that medicine played a similarly limited role in the initial recovery of the Taukei, analogous

18 Case No. 1, CSO 2020/1893.
19 McOwan to Colonial Secretary, 10 May 1928, LCP 71/1928; Typical statements were made in S. M. Lambert, 'Medical Conditions in the South Pacific', The Medical Journal of Australia, Sept. 22, 1928, esp. pp. 365-366 or Lambert, The Depopulation of Pacific Races, p. 6 and passim; D. W. Hoodless, Central Medical School, Suva: Government Printer, 1947; and the remarks in James Stevens Simmons et al, Global Epidemiology: A Geography of Disease and Sanitation, London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1944, pp. 236; 243. See also Crosby's comments on the limited powers of medicine in some cases when diseases are introduced to innocent populations, Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, pp. 286-287.
improvements in diet, hygiene and sanitation cannot be invoked. Instead I fall back on McNieIl's calculation that 120 to 150 years usually pass before a previously unexposed population is able to withstand new diseases sufficiently to increase once more. This is admittedly a rough measure and cannot account for the 'staggered impact' of different diseases introduced at different times and a range of other variables. Nevertheless, the date of Fijian recovery approximates those of most western Pacific Island populations, which suggests a similar, general process of acquired resistance selected over five or six generations since the introduction of Old World diseases in the late eighteenth century was at work.

This interpretation of na lutu sobu itaukei leads me, in the debate between those who favour biological determinism and those who stress social, cultural and political factors of disease in New World population decline, towards a strong acknowledgment of the former - without denying the role of human agency in the transmission and exacerbation of infection. While Fijian mothers in no way caused the decrease, I have also argued here that they were caught in the vortex of introduced disease: as women they were often more susceptible; as carers they bore the heavier burden of nursing the sick; and as mothers they suffered the loss of infants and repeated pregnancies, the physical and emotional anguish of which can have only been immense. Though the dynamics of disease-induced population decline differed from place to place, indigenous women everywhere must have been central victims of this process through the havoc it played with their reproductive role. That they were blamed in Fiji by a colonial administration for the deaths of their own children appears retrospectively a gross travesty.

Yet 'mother-blaming' in this Colony was implicated, even necessitated, by the founding policy of native preservation. Theories of maternal incompetence became bases, as in European or Neo-European contexts in which 'population decline' was discussed, for interventions intended to prevent 'extinction'; and this nexus was certainly preferable to official attitudes indifferent to or actively seeking the reproductive impairment of subject women. Within Fiji, as was shown, the administration had no heart-felt interest in Girmitya maternity: blaming indentured mothers for infant mortality condoned their inhuman treatment. In Australia, to draw a stark contrast, Aboriginal mothers had their children taken from them in a policy of maternal and reproductive denial now viewed as complicitly genocidal, the wide damage of which is still raw.
In Fiji, though mothers were maligned, at least the value of indigenous maternity was upheld. Fijian women also, despite difficulties owing to their being construed primarily as the (defective) means of Taukei reproduction, were able to use the official recognition of their maternity and certain consequent initiatives - such as girls' schools, the nursing profession and Child Welfare Scheme - to their own ends and to the greater service of their people. When we reflect on the half century in which the mothers of the Taukei stood, intermittently, accused, the limits of both discourse and memory afford perhaps some further consolation. Most of the energies deployed against the decrease were expended in writing, rather than in palpable interventions. Those irksome measures which did arise from the discourse were patchily implemented and often avoided. Finally, the ordeals Fijian women suffered in the sweep of new infectious disease and under a government which impugned them for *na lutu sobu itaukei*, have been, it seems, mostly forgotten.
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