MAINSTREAM TO MILLPOND?
THE FIJIAN POLITICAL EXPERIENCE 1897-1940

by

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Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis is based on my original research
The prestige of the Fijian community in independent Fiji should surprise those who have been introduced to the country by the development writers of the 1960s or who insist on bringing to Fiji their perceptions of other colonized peoples. The thesis argues that there has been no fundamental shift of power in recent years to Fijians: they have never really lost its substance, namely, a strong leadership supported by effective social structures and traditional sanctions or emotions. It is true historically that the Fijian Administration encouraged parochial loyalties; the issues of district politics seem minute or out of proportion. At the same time the machinery and the leadership were there at each level of village, district and province for effective co-operation towards common goals and for a united front at national level through the Council of Chiefs.

It is argued that the Gordon-Thurston system of Fijian administration consolidated in the 19th century retained just sufficient momentum of its own to withstand a half century of official misgivings with those 'communal' aspects of Fijian life that seemed to be hindering the emergence of a new class of sturdy individualists - a kind of Fijian who never was and never would be. The desire of Fijians for education and for expansion into the commercial economy, and their changing concepts of status were not easily accommodated by a society adjusted to comfortable subsistence, nor were they satisfied by the eve of World War II. The familiar contemporary problems of developing countries were lurking in the shadows but
at least Fijians had the security of their lands and an alternative design for living that, for all its problems, still seems capable of enviable results and further development.
The Fiji Government kindly gave me access to the records of the colonial government up to 1940 in the National Archives of Fiji. I owe a great debt to the Archivist Mr S.T. Tuinaceva, the librarian Miss Helen White and to Etuate Bakaniceva, Masood Khan, Tomasi Saladuadua, Paula Moceisadrau, Eparama Ulutegu, Samsoni I. Kafoa, Josateki Bakeidaku - they gave me not only their time but friendship. George Cama gave my family a second home and an enormous kindred in Suva and Moala. Josefo Meke taught me much in the field as did numerous others. I should especially thank for their frequent and memorable hospitality in Fiji Ratu Tiale W.T. Vuiyasawa and Ratu Penaia Lalabalavu Latianara; also Pio Manoa, Brother Petero Vakaqotabua S.M., Felise Daveta, Petero Sikeli, Lepani Siga of Naroi, Ratu Ilisoni Nacolauli of Nadrau, Malakai Waqatabu of Penang, Semi Ketewai of Nadarivatu, Ratu Jese Dagoya of Nabobouco, Ratu Maratino of Nadivakarua (Bua), the Tui Vuna, Bruce Burne, Peter and Prue Stone. In Canberra the Australian National University and the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History gave me particularly generous assistance to tide my family over a long series of adversities. No scholar could have had a better supervisor or friend than Dr Deryck Scarr. My warmest thanks also to Robyn Walker, Rose Mustapha and Maureen Krascum for typing the drafts, to Anvida Lamberts for the final copy, and Imants Lamberts for the maps. My wife Alice Anne, our children and our generous parents and brothers and sisters in Sydney know how much I was sustained by their love and support.
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NOTE ON FIJIAN WORDS

Standard Fijian spelling is used throughout, and on the maps. In the interests of Fijian readers a rather large number of Fijian words is retained in the text. The glossary gives all these words except those that occur only once alongside a translation. In any case translations of recurring and basic words such as tabua, whale's tooth, are often repeated— with apologies to Fijian readers who might expect more effort of those embarking on Fijian history.

b is pronounced mb as in number

<table>
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<td>mb</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>end</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>finger</td>
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GLOSSARY

bai tabua  'sacred fence of whales teeth', secret society of Tuka adherents
bose  council
Buli  official title of government district chief
burua  mourning feast and ceremonies
dalo  taro, staple Fijian tuber
draunikau  sorcery
galala  'free' farmer legally exempted from communal obligations; in current usage a man living apart from the village
gauna  time, era
kai  inhabitant of, man of
kaisi  commoner, low-born (pejorative)
kai vale  chief's household servants
kererekere  the practice of 'requesting' goods of a friend or relative
koro  village
lala  chief's right of commanding goods and services
lali  wooden drum
lotu  church
luveniwai  spirit - 'children of the water'
maqiti  feast
mana  supernatural power
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>masi</td>
<td>cloth made from bark of the paper mulberry tree</td>
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<td>mata</td>
<td>envoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>matanitu</td>
<td>political confederation of <strong>vanua</strong>; the government</td>
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<td>matanivanua</td>
<td>spokesman for the chiefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>mataqali</td>
<td>social unit of the second order of inclusiveness; legally a patrilineal descent group and the proprietary unit of most Fijian land</td>
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<tr>
<td>meke</td>
<td>a song integrated with dance movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>noi</td>
<td>dialectual variant of <strong>kai</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>oco</td>
<td>food given in return for work, especially housebuilding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ovisia</td>
<td>officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>papalagi</td>
<td>country of the white man</td>
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<tr>
<td>gali</td>
<td>tributary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qalivakabau</td>
<td>tributaries of Bau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roko Tui</td>
<td>government title of heads of provinces - in some areas also a hereditary title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sevu</td>
<td>offering of first fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solevu</td>
<td>a large ceremonial exchange of food and goods between two sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulu</td>
<td>length of cloth wrapped round the loins (<strong>lava lava</strong>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabu</td>
<td>taboo</td>
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<tr>
<td>tabua</td>
<td>whale's tooth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talai</td>
<td>Fijian title for the Native Commissioner or equivalent officer</td>
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</table>
tama
a muted shout of respect in unison on
the first approach of a chief, as e.g.
duo! o!

taralala
dancing European-style with body contact
taukei
owners, Fijian term for themselves
tikina
government district
tokatoka
social unit of first order of inclusiveness;
extended family or families
tui
leading chief of a vanua
Tuka
an immortality cult
turaga
chief (general word)
turaga ni koro
government chief of the village
vakamatanitu
pertaining to government
vakamisioneri
an annual Wesleyan collection for support
(ari) of the church
vakaroroqo
'go to', acknowledge allegiance to
vakaturaga
in a chiefly fashion
vakavanua
pertaining to the land, customary,
traditional
vakaveiwekani
in the manner of relatives
vakaviti
Fiji-style - often used pejoratively
by local Europeans
vasu levu
the chief's sister's son enjoying rights
over the property of his uncle's people
vata
raised sleeping shelf
veitauvu
having common ancestors
vu
guardian ancestral deity of the tribe
Vuniduvu
high priest of Tuka cult; inspired author
of meke
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Fiji Legislative Council Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Fiji Colonial Secretary's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>The Colonial Sugar Refining Coy (now CSR Ltd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAF</td>
<td>National Archives of Fiji</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Native Commissioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLC</td>
<td>Native Lands Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMP</td>
<td>Native Medical Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>Native Stipendiary Magistrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Fiji Methodist Mission Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMB</td>
<td>Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Canberra</td>
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The political experience related in this thesis is confined to the Fijian community just as Dr K.L. Gillion restricted the scope of his *Fiji's Indian Migrants* to the Indian community.\(^1\) In the period up to the Second World War the points of contact between these two numerically preponderant races are difficult to document: illegal land transactions, money-lending activities, neighbourly acts of co-operation and occasionally employment of members of one race by members of the other, especially by cane farmers. When the first Indian time-expired labourers began to take up pieces of land at the end of the 1880s they were prevented by the government from scattering through the Fijian countryside and compelled to concentrate themselves into settlements. Whole provinces were excluded from Indian penetration: Kadavu, Lau, Lomaiviti, Colo East, Yasawas, most of Cakaudrove and Serua. Generally there was little social mixing of Indians and Fijians, almost no intermarriage and absolutely no institutional basis for political co-operation at local or national level. Each community has a sharply distinct history. In his *Fiji and the Franchise: A History of Representation 1900-1937*, Dr Ahmed Ali has already exhaustively surveyed the political positions of the Indian, Fijian and European communities in the colony.\(^2\) He offers a view of the Fijian position which

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differs from that proposed below, but his thesis and Dr Gillion's forthcoming second volume will complement this study of the Fijians for those seeking a more complete coverage of early 20th century Fijian history than can be undertaken here.

In the last 15 years a number of social scientists have studied the post-Second World War Fijian community. Only the barest outlines of the earlier colonial period have been available to them. The publication in 1959 of the Spate Report on the economic problems and prospects of the Fijian people marked the beginning of a vigorous body of literature that came to similar pessimistic conclusions to Professor Spate's about the state of Fijian society and offered confident recommendations for drastic modifications of the institutions and laws by which Fijians had been governed since 1874. These writers were agreed, as Professor Milner has lately put it, that the social reality of Fiji had been forced into a procrustean bed designed by misinformed administrators intent only on adhering to the dogma and orthodoxy established once and for all in the 1870s and 1880s. The Fijian Administration was declared to be not only paternalistic in its approach but constrictive and inhibiting in its practice... stifling all the natural Fijian enterprise, energy and initiative....

Anxious to make an interim 'case for the defence', Milner suggests firstly that the advocates of individualism


as against the old 'communalism' are themselves affected by a romantic illusion when they cast the independent Fijian farmer (galala) in terms of the rugged frontier of a new and better society. Secondly, he argues from history that protective legislation was 'desperately needed' in the 19th century while in the 20th century fear of Indian domination became one of 'the political facts of life' militating against changes. For all its faults the system gave Fijians physical and cultural security. Thirdly, he suggests that Fijians have in fact come to terms with the modern world, but without losing 'what was not only valuable but unique and irreplaceable' in their culture including a distinctive view of life. The slow pace of acculturation and the sluggish growth of the Fijian component of the economy have been a price worth paying. Finally he makes the now conventional attack on the 'neo-paternalism' and 'cultural arrogance' of those who presume to deprive Fijians of the right to state and solve their problems in their own way - an argument that pushed to its logical extreme would also preclude the reverse possibility that islanders or any people of one culture might have something to 'say' to members of another. Milner does however allow himself to stand in the role of humble admirer and friend of the Fijians; he articulates on their behalf the main reason research findings have been coolly received or ignored in Fiji. His point is well taken that some scholars have been insensitive to, or have felt obliged to ignore

1 This proposition is examined historically in Chapter Six and supported in the conclusion.

2 The summary and quotations follow Milner, pp.xxiv-xxx.
the very things that distinguish Fijians in the eyes of themselves and everyone else who has known them. However awkwardly such qualities submit to sociological analysis, most Fijians seem to have a dignity, joie de vivre, stylish self-assurance and natural courtesy that strike 'a refreshing and distinctive note in an increasingly universal and monotonous world'.¹ The attractiveness of the Fijian people is, notoriously perhaps, the foundation of multimillion dollar investments in the tourist industry. Then along came the scholars armed with sharp demythologising tools to expose the other side of paradise - like so many visitors rushing past their hosts through a beautiful house to see what they could find in the garbage can.

Milner's protest is timely, and at one with Dr Isireli Lasaqa's in another recent volume. Lasaqa dislikes the assumption of some social scientists that in the conflict of traditional systems of social organization and land holding with introduced commercial and legal systems it is always the old that must give way to the new:

The implication, and it may border on arrogance, is that the new is perfect; it need not be modified and there is no room for give-and-take... to ignore the local perception of the local situation is to invite valid methodological criticism, and to reach false conclusions.²

Sir John Thurston made much the same point in Fiji nearly a century ago. 'The mistake that has always been made here', he argued, was the unthinking assumption that 'the

¹ ibid., p.xxxvii.

practices or principles of highly civilized states of society can be generally applied to all conditions of mankind throughout the world'. Fijians have always valued their distinctive civilization.

Despite great problems they still confidently project a stereotype of themselves that reinforces, in a slightly different dimension, the impressions that most people take home with them after the briefest experience of Fijian hospitality. Fijians will often say that as a people they have been endowed by God with magnificent physiques and spiritual powers - from the mana of their chiefs to the calling of turtles and sharks - a style of life full of companionship and song, kindred-guaranteed security and ceremonial splendour. They contrast their life style with that of the Indians who, in the Fijian view, have none of these things. They are smart, they are a thousand years ahead in commercial expertise, they have enviable possessions - concrete houses, cars, clothes - yet none of the finer human things that make life worth living. 'To live like an Indian' means, in Fijian, to work too hard for one's money and not know how to enjoy it, still less to share it: a life of selfish isolation. The Indians of course have their own stereotype of Fijians as primitive bushmen, slow-thinking, dangerous when aroused.

As regards self-assurance the balance tends to favour the Fijians, for the success of the Indians is tempered by a marked sense of insecurity and uncertainty, knowing

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1 Quoted by Deryck Scarr, *Viceroy of the Pacific (The Majesty of Colour, vol.2)*, Chapter Two, read in draft by kind permission of the author.
the divisions within their own community and fearing the future direction of Fijian politics. The stability and economic prospects of the country apparently satisfy foreign investment analysts more than these prospects encourage the many thousands of Indians trying to move their money and themselves overseas. 'My brother in Canada' is something of a status symbol. Although in the educative rhetoric of Fijian leaders Fiji is proclaimed an outstanding example of multiracial harmony, it is obvious that there is a rather precarious balance of imbalances: the control of the monetary economy in European, Indian and Chinese hands; the land, armed forces and the parliamentary system in Fijian hands. After so much scholarship concentrating on the economic failures of Fijians and the irrelevance to their needs of the Fijian Administration, it should have come as a surprise to see Fijians in this strong constitutional and political position after Independence. The problem is to account for a formidable Fijian presence belied historically by their pre-Cession disunity and their enduring parochialism; economically by their failure in commercial activities, and administratively by the alleged weaknesses of their political institutions. The power and status Fijians enjoy today is beyond dispute. It is the political basis for the cultural achievement lauded by Milner and for their self-confident stereotype of themselves. The British did abide by their most important undertaking at Cession, to ensure that Fijian interests would be paramount. G.K. Roth and, following him, Milner locate this achievement in terms of a continuous British policy of enlightenment and a body of practical wisdom built up over the years: the results have been impressive, therefore the policies must have been basically sound all along, no matter what the scholars say.
One useful contribution an historian could make to this debate is an investigation of the ground which all the participants have avoided: the actual policies of the rulers of Fiji and the actual responses of the Fijians during the longest and least known period in recorded Fijian history - that beginning with Thurston's death in 1897 and ending with the reorganization of the Fijian Administration in 1945.

To anticipate somewhat the argument of the following pages, it will become obvious in the first and second chapters that what British were saying about Fijians and enunciating as policy in this period was in sharp contrast to the Gordon-Thurston era of the 19th century and not very different to what modern critics of the Fijian Administration have been saying in the 1960s. In practice however the British did allow the institutions that took root in the 19th century to continue on the momentum they had already built up. Although it was a time of discomfort and anxiety for Fijian leaders, the inspection of individual careers in the third chapter reveals the kind of compromises they made to retain effective leadership of their people, while in the fifth chapter an examination of the districts or tikina in action shows something of the flavour of a vigorous local-level political life and its relationship to official goals. The fourth chapter interposes an examination of spontaneous movements - cults, the Viti Company, murmurings of discontent within the Methodist Church, the push for education - which reflect a variety of adjustments to the colonial situation or aspirations that are not easily reconciled within the Fijian Administration itself. The final chapter is devoted to the theme of individualism to show that the development writers of the
1960s had an ancestry longer than they realized and that the Fijians had participated in quite a few experiments designed to make better citizens of them even before the Second World War. While it would do violence to history to force the Fijian experience into a single explanatory model, the prevalent view of the Fijian Administration as a static, authoritarian, bureaucratic machine stifling the lives of the many for the advancement of a few is modified by close attention to many instances where it can be seen, especially at the lowest level, that the needs and preoccupations of the people and their leaders were often satisfied within and through institutions that subsumed whatever basis of decision-making and co-operation had prevailed in ancient times. In other words, exposure of what was 'pseudo-customary' as against 'authentic' in the philosophy and practice of the Administration should not forever be allowed to distract attention from the successful acculturated compromise often achieved between the aims of colonial government and the priorities of the people.

It was this compromise, unevenly effected at particular moments or places, along with the security of Fijian land rights, that prevented the dissolution of a distinctively Fijian polity. At the same time, the Fijian Administration was not so self-sufficient that it could satisfy all the aspirations of a people constantly exposed to different life styles and philosophies. There was some experimentation with new ideas and institutions, several attempts to penetrate the commercial economy more effectively and occasional returns to pre-Christian avenues of redemption from mundane existence. In the end, though, it was the consistent structure of leadership and organization supported
by the Fijian Administration and not the adoption of either new or old strategies that did most to maintain the paramountcy of Fijian interests and their freedom of choice in their own land.
The Fijian Administration foreshadowed under the government of Cakobau, the high chief of Bau, in the three years before the cession of the whole group to Great Britain in 1874 was firmly established by the first substantive governor Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon and his adviser and eventual successor Sir John Bates Thurston. It was premised on the conviction that Fijian society had existed for centuries on its own terms and that the presence in the group of some 1,500 European settlers was no reason political ideas developed in British countries should be forcibly imposed on Fijians when they still felt and acted as communities, looking to their clans for assistance when they needed it rather than relying on their own sole efforts as 'individuals' - the emergence of whom was a 'moral and social process' not to be brought about by ordinance.  

The chiefs had ceded the group to Queen Victoria unconditionally only after receiving the strongest reassurances that they were giving as chiefs vakaturaga, in a chiefly manner, and could 'trust to the Queen's justice and generosity as

1 Im Thurn, address to the Legislative Council, 14 Oct. 1907, Legislative Council Proceedings 1907.

2 Deryck Scarr, quoting Thurston, draft manuscript of Viceroy of the Pacific.
their Sovereign and highest chief to return to them all or whatever part of their gift she may think right. They must also trust to her to govern them righteously and in accordance with native usages and customs.¹ Cakobau saw cession as a means of protection against the local white community: 'of one thing I am afraid, that if we do not cede Fiji, the white stalkers on the beach, the cormorants, will open up their maws and swallow us up'.²

Gordon believed that a betrayal of this trust in British rule would have led to a bloody war on the scale of the Maori Wars in New Zealand. It might easily have come to that, had he brought in troops to quell the highlanders of Viti Levu in the 'Little War' of 1876. Anxious to impress on the chiefs that Fiji was still their country and its peace and prosperity their responsibility, he obtained contingents from every province and allowed three of the coastal chiefs of Viti Levu to conduct a Fiji-style campaign under the partial supervision of his personal staff and one or two trusted officials. The advice of the Colonel commanding a detachment of Royal Engineers stationed in the colony was not sought, with the result that the disturbance was quelled with a little skirmishing and much Fijian diplomacy before it could develop into anything that resembled a race war.³

¹ David Wilkinson, open letter to Sir Everard im Thurn, Western Pacific Herald, 3 July 1908.
² Interview between Cakobau and Sir Hercules Robinson, 10 Oct. 1874, encl. im Thurn to CO, 15 Apr. 1908, CO 83/87.
³ Gordon, Letters and Notes written during the disturbances in the Highlands (known as the 'Devil Country') of Viti Levu, Fiji, 1876 (privately printed, Edinburgh, 1879).
Gordon's projection of himself as Supreme Chief on these occasions where he approached his brother chiefs for practical help and advice, literally counselling with them around the yagona bowl, had its ludicrous moments, no doubt, but vain traits in Gordon's personality and defects in his understanding of Fijian society need not have inhibited an appreciation of the political wisdom of his and Thurston's style of government. Whereas the autonomy of the Fijian Administration has offended most recent observers - an imperium in imperio, 'an unnecessary expense which Fiji cannot afford'— it needs emphasizing perhaps that in the 19th century the Fijian Administration was really the only imperium, and a partnership which recognized the capacities of the chiefs to manage their own affairs while patiently educating them to new goals.

European settlers, excluded from any real say in the colony's affairs, deprived even of elected members in the Legislative Council until 1905, had a very different conception of what these goals should be. Fijians were to renounce the darkness of their own culture and to aspire to the virtues of English civilization. As in other countries:

a poll-tax would teach them the dignity of labour by forcing them to work or produce for their tax-money - and benefit the planter, bone and sinew of the country, by providing a reservoir of cheap labour, or the merchant by putting copra into his trade-stores at whatever price he felt able to pay...like the Maori Fijians must be accorded the full personal liberty of British subjects so that they might

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draw water and hew wood for the white purchasers of the land they must also, if truly free men, be free, and freely encouraged, to sell. Only in this way could black savages be introduced to the go-ahead Anglo-Saxon's age, the age of individualism, the market, progress.

These demands were rejected by Gordon and Thurston. Although the whites were exempted from legislation designed to meet the needs of Fijian society and subject only to European magistrates, they were severely restricted in their dealings with Fijians. Alienation of Fijian land, except to the Crown in special cases, was halted, leases restricted to 21 years, and all existing claims submitted to a Lands Claims Commission. Less than a third (517) of the 1,683 applications were granted as claimed; 390 were granted ex gratia in whole or part; about half the 800,000 acres claimed were returned to the Fijian owners. Labour recruiting activities were severely restricted. The local government of the provinces became a Fijian preserve.

The colony was divided into 12 and later 17 provinces for the purposes of Fijian Administration (a lesser number of magisterial districts served for the European, Indian and other populations). In most cases a province (vasana) had a focus of local political power in the village of a high chief commanding the allegiance of a loose confederation (matanitu) of allies, conquered foes and

1 Scarr, Viceroy of the Pacific, Chapter One.

groups related by blood or marriage. Each chief was appointed **Roko Tui** of his province and as deputy of the Governor was responsible for the welfare and good order of the people.

In 1897 there were 13 Roko Tuis and four European Governor's Commissioners. The three interior provinces of Colo North, East and West preferred European rule to the elevation of any one of their disunited social groups, while in Naitasiri the highest hereditary chief and his family were out of favour with the people and had reluctantly been dismissed. Ten of these Roko Tuis could claim to be high chiefs of their provinces; none of the 13 was without status or connection with the provinces they ruled. Ra for instance was ruled by Ratu Joni Madraiwiti, one of the highest chiefs of Bau Island, which was the dominant power in eastern Fiji and had long been able to call on parts of Ra to provide men for the Bauan armies. The salary of a senior Roko was on a par with a junior European Stipendiary magistrate (£350) and in addition they received a twentieth share of all lease monies in their province. In the sugar provinces this share amounted to £200 or £300 a year.

The strongest unit of administration was the district or **tikina**. The 17 provinces were subdivided into 173 **tikina**, not for administrative efficiency as such (many **tikina** had less than 200 people, few more than 500), but to correspond as closely as was convenient to the less inclusive federations of allied social groups called **vanua**. The installed chiefs of the **vanua** were appointed to take charge of the preparation of taxes and all government work. They were in this capacity styled Buli and were generally responsible to the Roko for the state of the **tikina** and for
implementing the resolutions of the various councils and the Native Regulations described below. Their salary was only £3 to £10 a year because they had the right both at custom as chief (in most areas) and by regulation as Buli to levy services from their people in food contributions, traditional manufactures and labour to meet their own personal needs and those of the community. (The Rokos enjoyed a similar right, which was called lala, and likewise all hereditary chiefs, subject to the supervision of the Roko or Buli.) The Buli also received a twentieth share of the rent monies of his district.

The power of the Buli was reinforced by a system of courts. Native Stipendiary Magistrates presided alone on district courts and sat with the European Stipendiary Magistrate on provincial courts, which were the courts of first instance only for serious charges such as arson or rape. These courts implemented a stringent code of Native Regulations which had been framed in close consultation with Fijian leaders. They gave the force of law to what was defined as reasonable and just if Fijian hierarchical societies were to survive the superimposition of colonial rule. A man had to remain in his village, then, and keep planting (actual quantities were specified), co-operate with the chiefs in the communal enterprises (disobedience became a legal offence), bring his grievances to orderly councils and courts, and play his part in all the ceremonial occasions demanded either by custom or the new order. To European observers the Native Regulations appeared to work only in the interests of the chiefs, for the commoners had lost the right of violent redress against the abuse of power. They could now only intrigue against an oppressor, bringing district or provincial administration to a standstill
until Government House intervened. That the chiefs often abused their powers is undeniable (see Chapter Three) but the alternative, as Gordon and Thurston had known it would be, was the day-in and day-out enslavement of the plantation labourer compelled to leave his family and village to raise a poll tax - in other words the rapid destruction of a Fijian way of life.

The weakest link in the Gordon system was at village level, where the elected turaga ni koro or chief of the village had the unenviable task of implementing all the orders of higher officials while answering for the conduct of his relatives and friends in the village. He could in practice do very little without the support of the hereditary village chiefs, who were often reluctant to assume the position themselves because it seemed to give responsibility without reward. The Buli summoned these turaga ni koro and 'chiefs of the land' to a monthly district council. They discussed every aspect of village life, not distinguishing between traditional activities and the work of government proper. Then in October or November of each year the Bulis and chiefs of the whole province met in a more formal provincial council and submitted for the Governor's assent resolutions which then had the force of law. Finally from time to time - but in principle annually - the Governor convened the Council of Chiefs (Bose Vakaturaga) where the assembled Roko Tuis and representatives of lesser officials advised the colonial government on many matters referred to them or raised on their own initiative. Its opinions could not be disregarded lightly so long as the government was serious in maintaining the paramountcy of Fijian interests. The Chiefs sent a personalised report of the state of the people to the
Sovereign, who replied with suitable expressions of interest in their welfare and pleasure in their abiding loyalty.

The surprising loyalty of the Fijians to British rule was strained but not undermined by the obligation to pay substantial taxes in kind. Thurston's taxation scheme made unaccustomed demands on the villages by requiring all able-bodied men to cultivate a marketable crop in a communal tax-field under the direction of the chiefs. The scheme was a development of the traditional lala rights of chiefs to command garden-planting to meet their own needs and ensure the prosperity of the people. The produce of each district had to realize a cash figure as part of the sum allocated to the province by the Legislative Council. The produce was collected at central points, shipped to Suva or Levuka and sold by tender to the highest bidder. Prices realized were often double the price Fijians would have received in small, direct dealings with the storekeeper-agents of the European commercial houses, more than double if payment was made - as was the practice - in goods marked up at a higher price to Fijians. In good years cash refunds were returned to the producers, too late perhaps to act as a direct incentive to production, but pleasant windfalls which helped them buy imported drapery and foods, build churches and schools, and especially to maintain a fleet of sailing cutters which gave them an independent means of transport probably better than villages in more remote coastal areas have today.

The scheme was implemented also as a rational management of the colony's natural resources and the only feasible way of making Fijians substantial producers in their own right. To meet the particular problems of provinces such as Rewa and Tailevu which had few marketable
products, Thurston experimented with a variety of new crops such as coffee and cinnamon. His greatest success was the establishment of the sugar industry. In 1880 he persuaded the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) to establish its first mill at Nausori, and shortly afterwards another was built at Rarawai, Ba. In the first decade of cane production to 1889 Fijians grew 53,870 tons worth £29,599 at the Nausori mill, earning considerable refunds above the provincial tax assessments. The western side of Viti Levu was better suited to cane. In a good year such as 1889 the 5,963 people of Ba and Yasawas earned a refund of £2,339 from the proceeds of their cane fields.¹

Despite its financial success and political advantages to Fijians, the immediate physical demands of tax-work were a chronic source of the grumbling that seems endemic in any society where initiative comes from above. The scheme presented major logistical problems and required a level of managerial or accounting skill that was not easily found among Fijian leaders. European tax-inspectors had to be employed to supervise the work and a colony as poor as Fiji often had to make do with men recruited locally. Little love was lost between many of these men and Fijian officials. When Thurston's strong but sympathetic hand was taken away in 1897 the scheme began to generate a pattern of non-co-operation that led to its collapse within a decade.

¹ Scarr, *Viceroy of the Pacific*, Chapter Ten.
In the old days when we were darkminded and in a savage state we lived. Nowadays when we are civilised and enlightened we die.' (The turaga ni koro of Cautata)¹

Thurston's successor in Fiji, Sir George T.M. O'Brien, was a bachelor who preferred the company of his spinster sister and Roman Catholic clerics to Suva's society of planters, lawyers and merchants - or to intimate relations with Fijian leaders. A painstaking and practical man, he had the views of the age on the importance of cleanliness, privacy, the one-family household, thrift and enterprise. If he brought to his review of the government's Fijian policy a sense of justice and much patience, he lacked the rapport that had distinguished the career of his predecessor. O'Brien took it for granted that the political battle for the survival of a Fijian polity had been won: it was now urgent that something more be done to ensure the physical survival of the appalling number of children dying in their first year and later. Between the census of 1891 and that of 1901 the Fijian population declined by 11,397 to 94,397 - despite a birth rate as high as 37 per thousand. One third of Fijian children failed to reach their first birthday; in the Yasawas and the Colo provinces the proportion was four out of 10. The Colonial Office and the colonial government in Suva were sensitive to these statistics for political as well as humane reasons. The decrease figures were ammunition for the vociferous section of the European community who resented their lack of elected representation

¹ Quoted by W. Sutherland, minute, 13 Dec. 1910, Fiji Colonial Secretary's Office (hereinafter CSO), 11/784.
in the Legislative Council and the economic self-sufficiency of the Fijians, and saw a solution in federation with New Zealand or even Australia where governments had dealt with the 'native problem' in ways far more conducive to economic progress. In Fiji the federationists tried to drum up support amongst the Fijians themselves, telling them that they were oppressed by the government, unjustly taxed, that obedience to hereditary chiefs was shameful in a British country, and that they should disregard the restrictions imposed on their liberty to leave their districts and find work.¹ They took every opportunity to vilify the Fijian Administration in the sympathetic columns of the Fiji Times and Australasian newspapers:

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coddling administration...has resulted in the unfortunate aborigines being relegated off the face of the earth at a most alarming rate...when overtaken by sickness he quietly succumbs as a happy release from his troubles.²
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The decrease in population had been a worry to the government for over 20 years. The measles epidemic of 1875 had carried off about one fifth of the pre-Cession population of perhaps 140,000. Subsequent epidemics of whooping cough, dengue fever, dysentery and influenza took several thousand more lives. After 1891 there was a decade free of epidemics yet deaths consistently exceeded births. Dr Norma McArthur has correlated the decline in the number of births in these years with the arrival at reproductive age of the seriously depleted cohorts born just before and

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¹ O'Brien to Sir Ian Anderson, 30 Nov. 1901, CO 83/73.  
² Fiji Times, 9 Sept. 1899.
just after the 1875 measles.\textsuperscript{1} No such explanation was
evident to the anxious government officials of 1893 when
they sent circulars to everyone of note or of long
residence in the colony inviting them to submit opinions
to a Commission of Inquiry into the decrease:

The Fijians, it appeared from the collected
replies, were suffering from a combination of
every known physical, moral and social disease
in its most acute form. Collectively they
were cankered through and through with
monogamy, in-breeding, unchivalry, communism
and dirt; individually by insouciance,
foreign disease, kava-drinking, and excessive
smoking. The salvation of the race could
only be attained by bottle-feeding and
cultivation of foot-ball; by coroner's
inquests and the keeping of cows; by securing
the young gallants from sunset to dawn under
lock and key, and turning lady missionaries
loose among the maidens.\textsuperscript{2}

'But the most potent cause of all', wrote a planter from
Serua 'is Tobacco and self-abuse amongst men, women, girls
& boys'.\textsuperscript{3} If the respondents agreed on one thing, it was
that Fijian mothers were bad mothers — 'a race of blunted
sensibilities', claimed one official: 'I have lived amongst
natives during the past 23 years and have never seen any
particular affection shown to a child by its mother.'\textsuperscript{4}

A Wesleyan missionary contributed the story of a mother

\textsuperscript{1} Norma McArthur, \textit{Island Populations of the Pacific}

\textsuperscript{2} Basil Thomson, \textit{The Indiscretions of Lady Asenath}

\textsuperscript{3} G.R. Burt to the Governor, 12 Feb. 1892, CSO 92/620.

\textsuperscript{4} Frank Spence to the Colonial Secretary (hereinafter
CS), 11 Feb. 1892, CSO 92/252.
with a frail child living in his compound at Vuna Point, Taveuni. He asked her to come twice a day to his house for fresh cow's milk, yet 'although her child was dying of starvation, she found it irksome to apply for milk. Her maternal affection failed under the strain of walking 110 yards twice a day...she is but a type of most Fijian mothers of delicate children.' In their final report the Commissioners also blamed the Fijian men for treating their women 'as mere beasts of burden, and sexual conveniences'.

Fijians, too, had discussed the reasons for their decrease and had proposed a remarkable array of remedies of which a Kadavu Buli's was the most effective: the Buli Sanima prosecuted several couples before the NSM of Kadavu on the grounds of abortion. There was no evidence other than that they were married and childless. The cases were discharged but all the wives subsequently gave birth to healthy children. On the same island the Buli Nakasaleka simply ordered 13 childless women to have children and nine of them did so within a year, the remaining four within two years. The Roko Tui Bua interrogated all the married women of his province and produced the following statistics: there were 12% childless for natural reasons or because they knew how to prevent conception, 17% who conceived but

1 W. Slade to CS, 18 Feb. 1892, CSO 92/645.
3 S. Smith, minute, 10 June 1898, Kadavu Provincial Council Book. It is not known whether these children subsequently lived.
4 W. Scott, minute, 12 Apr. 1911, Serua Provincial Council Book.
artificially aborted the offspring, 46% who had children but neglected them until they died, and only 25% who had healthy families. For this situation the Roko blamed the import of 'foreign ways', meaning Tongan, and the abandonment of good old Fijian customs such as the spacing of families by a long period of sexual abstinence after childbirth.¹

Despite this evidence of real interest in their own welfare, Governor O'Brien seems to have adhered to the prevalent stereotypes of the day. They were well expressed in a book by former colonial official Basil Thomson, The Fijians: a study in the decay of custom. Fijians, we learn, if not natives everywhere, are incapable of any routine or any moderation; system of any kind is incompatible with their nature; custom makes no provision for innovation.² What a Fijian most wanted, agreed the Colonial Secretary in 1902, was to be left alone to eat, to sleep, and to follow his own devices...all forms of authority are irksome, even those to which they have been accustomed for many generations, though without them they would fall at once to the level of the animals.³

Fijians were seen as emerging from the physical struggle of intertribal warfare to the 'moral struggle of modern

¹ A Veitarogi ni Lutu Sobu [An enquiry into the decrease], encl. Ratu Tevita Suraki to the Native Commissioner (hereinafter NC) 29 Nov. 1898, CSO 98/5154. The high proportion of barren women is still the case amongst Fijians (about 11%).


³ W.L. Allardyce, minute, 6 Dec. 1902, CSO 02/5451.
competition'.

It was a difficult, perhaps fatal 'time of transition' - the phrase that neatly sidestepped further analysis for the next 50 years. Neither O'Brien nor any of his successors until Sir Philip Mitchell (1942-1944) doubted that the salvation of this squalid decaying society was for Fijians to become more like 'the sturdy yeoman' of England were romantically understood to be: hardworking, individually self-sufficient, thrifty farmers and artisans, loyal to their social superiors and devoted to their families in the privacy of picturesque, clean little cottages - with separate bedrooms. But where to start?

(iii) 'Good drinking water, milk for infants, and local European supervision'

O'Brien conceded that it was 'still the day of small things in Fiji' but felt that Fijian society would be immediately improved by better water supplies and medical facilities, by educating the people in sanitary matters and the care of young children, and tightening up provincial administration to enforce existing regulations - 'sheeves [sic] of regulations...hundreds of resolutions...all a dead letter'. What was new in this mundane package was O'Brien's determination to reform Fijians whether they wanted it or not. The eager reassumption of the white man's burden implicit in this programme of good and public works was underscored by O'Brien's lack of faith in the capacity of the Fijian élite

2 O'Brien, minute, 8 Jan. 1898, CSO 98/42.
3 O'Brien, address to the Legislative Council, 7 Oct. 1898, 33/99.
to further the aims of progressive government:

The chiefs would cheerfully agree to and verbally support any regulation or resolution whatever that the Government might desire - but always subject to the tacit reservation that they should continue to remain exactly as they were.¹

The Gordon system of administering through the society's own leaders should be supplanted, he advised the Colonial Office, by some agency more trustworthy and capable, in short by bringing 'the perseverance, conscientiousness and method of competent English officials into continuous and personal bearing on the details of administration of native affairs'.² O'Brien regretted that his predecessors' land policy had left the Crown without revenue from realizable assets and thus dependent for district administration on the goodwill of chiefs 'utterly indifferent to the welfare of the people'. To replace them overnight with European officers would have cost over £20,000, or slightly more than the whole native tax revenue. Not to mention the resentment of the people if they saw the abolition of a system to which 'in their queer conservative fashion they had become attached'.³ Still, revenue was increasing rapidly thanks to the growth in sugar exports from £208,889 in 1895 to £406,318 in 1903 and the consequent growth in trade and customs receipts. Only £74,492 in 1897, revenue had nearly doubled by 1903 (£138,167). Some 11,000 indentured Indians worked the

¹ ibid.
² O'Brien to CO, 31 Dec. 1897. Despatches hereinafter not given a Public Records Office serial number were read in the bound volumes of the National Archives of Fiji.
³ ibid.
company estates and a further thousand time-expired men and their families were just beginning to contribute sizeably to cane production on 1,500 acres of land at Rewa and Navua. Indian litigation made growing demands on the time of magistrates, but they were expected to devote their best energies to the task of redeeming Fijians from their squalor.

The government allocated part of the increase in revenue to eliminating some of the worst features of villages, especially poor water supplies. A scheme to supply the Rewa River delta with piped water cost £11,000 to complete. Numerous smaller projects were undertaken such as the construction of concrete tanks on the dry islands of Lau, and three provincial hospitals were built, with quarters for European medical officers. Unprecedented public works for the benefit of Fijians absorbed over £21,000 between 1897 and 1900. A further £2,000 was set aside from the beginning of 1899 for a new experiment in district administration: the appointment of four Provincial Inspectors to supervise the work of the existing Fijian officials in eight provinces.

From a developmental point of view the chief weakness of 19th century administration had been its want of executive control. This had been clearly perceived by Walter Carew, the experienced Commissioner of Colo East:

Nothing but the very strongest measures such as a Regulation compelling the cleaning of every village daily, Sundays and all, when the people rise in the morning, with severe penalties on all whether villagers,

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1 See O'Brien to CO, 15 Aug. 1900.
Turaga-ni-koros, or Bulis rigorously enforced, regardless of rank or position, will ever bring them out of their condition of sloth into which their failing sense of self-resepct and patriotism is fast sinking them.\footnote{Carew, minute, 11 July 1896, CSO 96/2425.}

Thurston himself had commented that 'no native would supervise as indicated in the Comrs minute, & yet his suggestions are necessary'.\footnote{Thurston, minute, 14 Dec. 1896, \textit{ibid}.} O'Brien now had the money and the men to resolve Thurston's dilemma - in a way Thurston would never have approved.

'The success of your appointments', the Provincial Inspectors were told, 'will be judged entirely by its practical results in the way of checking depopulation, ameliorating the condition of the natives and increasing the out-turn of native produce'.\footnote{CS to F. Spence (Bua and Cakaudrove), M.I. Finucane (Tailevu and Ra), E.C. Turner (Kadavu and Lomaiviti), and S. Smith (Ba and Nadroga), 14 Oct. 1898, CSO 98/3498.} They were to enforce the regulations relating to the planting of fruit trees and crops, the freeing of women in advanced pregnancy and after child birth from carrying heavy burdens or fishing, the care of the sick and of young children and generally the health and well being of the people. This charter was vague in relation to their status vis à vis Fijian officials with whom they were expected to work. They had no direct magisterial powers. Each of them went his own way to get results and left detailed accounts in daily diaries eagerly read by O'Brien. The margins are peppered with his 'Bravo!'
or 'very nice' or 'stupid of him'. He queries the need for a new stone fence for a village in Bua: 'Would not a wire fence be really cheaper?'; despatches a dozen bottles of Hepster's Extract of Codliver Oil and some preserved milk for an Inspector's wife to dispense; enquires anxiously whether the people are building latrines and whether 'their habits thereat' are improving - they were.

By the end of his first year as a Provincial Inspector (1899) Frank Spence had travelled 2,896 miles up and down the provinces of Cakaudrove and Bua. He found it effective to take his wife with him: 'What escapes my notice is seen by her.' Laura Spence kept her own diary. 'It is dreadful to see how the poor little creatures are neglected', she wrote, 'Some of the women are so densely stupid. It is a most trying and difficult work & requires a good temper...' In one month, August 1900, she visited 43 towns, inspected 299 houses, burnt 665 dirty mats, and treated 60 cases of ringworm. Her husband meanwhile was having trees felled, ditches filled in, drains dug, wells cleaned and, in some cases, villages moved bodily to healthier sites.

Spence's counterpart in Ba and Nadroga, Sydney Smith, left the best account from which to surmise the

1 O'Brien, marginal, 3 Aug. 1900, CSO 00/2693.
2 O'Brien, minute, 19 Sept. 1900, CSO 99/3534.
3 Spence, diary, 28-29 Dec. 1899, CSO 99/38.
4 Spence, diary, 31 Aug. 1900, CSO 00/3534.
5 Laura Spence, diary, Aug. 1900, ibid.
reactions of Fijians to this unprecedented interference in their domestic affairs. Smith saw himself at war with the old system: 'I feel I am pulling in one direction trying to wipe out things Fijian and substitute common sense while there is a Roko perpetuating "the Fijian".'\(^1\) When he arrived at a village he dispensed with what he called 'the Fijian capers' - the ceremonies which make a visitor acceptable - and went straight on to inspect the drinking water, bathing places and houses:

I won't be bothered with their wretched presentations, and never do accept them...
The Roko (rotten institution) should be made to leave these things alone, and work; work hard. He is handsomely paid. Either that or get out of the road. Not hinder me.\(^2\)

Similarly in Tailevu, Islay McOwan had very foreseeable problems with the Roko, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, elder son of the great Vunivalu of Bau, Cakobau. The Roko asked O'Brien, unbelievingly:

Did you really appoint him [McOwan] to rule the province entirely by himself...he does so, and in any way he pleases, nor is there any consultation between us. I should know when he comes and when he goes; we should discuss things beforehand so that I can have my say - just as it was published in Na Mata.\(^3\)

O'Brien counselled McOwan to 'humour him a bit, and keep him au courant and not to let him feel that he is being

\(^1\) Smith, diary excerpt, July 1900, encl. CSO 02/5838.
\(^2\) Smith, excerpt, May 1900, ibid.
\(^3\) Nailatikau to O'Brien, 7 May 1900, CSO 00/1628. Na Mata was the Fijian-language semi-gazette of the government.
counted out'. It was a first hint of the practice that later developed of allowing the Roko Tuis the trappings and not the substance of power.

The Roko Tuis had an opportunity to voice their anger at the Council of Chiefs of 1902 where their ill-feeling was explained by Ratu Jope Naucabalavu in a sentence: 'The cause of our trouble is that new white men without knowledge have taken charge of our affairs.' They argued that if villages could be moved and Bulis dismissed without reference to themselves then their whole way of life was threatened - and by men whose specific goals, however progressive, made no allowances for the feelings of the communities involved. As a result of these protests and of reports of unrest in the provinces, the Inspectors were withdrawn in 1903 and replaced by three Assistant Native Commissioners based in Suva and Labasa. Inspections became much less frequent, but the powers of the Commissioners clearly overrode those of the chiefs. The policy of 'closer domestic interference' introduced by O'Brien was to be pursued with varying intensity for the next 40 years.

(iv) 'the Sisters are the enemies of dirt'

The inspectorate was not O'Brien's only instrument for improving the villages. He asked the Roman Catholic and Wesleyan Missions in Fiji to mount a Hygiene Mission and provide the detailed instruction that no Provincial

1 O'Brien, minute, 18 May 1900, ibid.

2 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs, 1902. (Bound volumes in National Archives of Fiji.)
Inspector could be expected to manage single-handed. Bishop Julian Vidal released eight European and 14 Fijian nuns to work in the vicinity of the Catholic mission stations. The Wesleyans were not much taken with the scheme, although the wives of their missionaries had done similar work before. With reason they feared that the Catholics would use the Hygiene Mission to infiltrate Wesleyan villages. They successfully demanded that the Governor restrict the Sisters to Catholic villages, drawing an angry reaction from some of their own adherents: 'Do you really believe that we should all die rather than a Catholic attend us when we are sick?'\(^1\) For the work of the Sisters was well received by the people, to whom it had been explained in these terms:

> the Sisters are the enemies of dirt, they are the enemies of all foetid atmospheres, they are kindly, they are loving, they are anxious to assist us and their example is one we might very well follow.\(^2\)

The Sisters sallied up into the hills of Namosi and other remote areas not covered by the Provincial Inspectors to root out the accumulated filth of years. Before bonfires of old mats, grass, clothing, and trees that had been growing too close to houses, they upbraided the startled populace for their unclean ways and showed the mothers how to care for their infants. After a few months of the campaign in Serua, the European magistrate reported that hardly a house had not been turned out and thoroughly

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1 'Komai Yavulala', *Na Mata*, May 1899, pp.74-5.

2 *Na Mata*, Mar. 1899, p.47.
cleansed. Raised sleeping-shelves (vata) were provided for every occupant - although there was doubt that they were much used.\textsuperscript{1} The Sisters began to grow discouraged as they realized that as soon as they were out of sight the people reverted to their old habits. Fijian officials were not always co-operative. With malicious humour the Roko-Buli of Serua made his point on a visit to the Sisters' own mission station while they were away in the hills. He had all the mats inside the church pulled out, pronounced filthy, and burnt on the spot.\textsuperscript{2} The Mission seems to have petered out about 1903 when the Sisters resolved to confine their activities to the more congenial task of educating children. It was not until the Child Welfare movement began in 1927 that a way was found to change the attitudes and practices of Fijian mothers.

(v) 'personally to enjoy the fruits of their labours'

After nine months annotating the diaries of the Provincial Inspectors and the Sisters' reports, O'Brien concluded that further fundamental reforms were needed if the material and social standards of Fijian life were to improve. He was depressed by 'the almost total extinction of all incentive to individual exertion',\textsuperscript{3} and chose as his first target the practice of kerekere.

\textsuperscript{1} McOwan to NC, 23 Oct. 1899, CSO 99/4930. See also delightful reports of Sister Stanislas, CSO 99/1777. The vata seem to be the historical origin of the rock-hard wooden structures that are the dread of visitors sleeping in Fijian homes.

\textsuperscript{2} CSO 99/3149.

\textsuperscript{3} O'Brien, Legislative Council address, 27 Sept. 1899, CP 29/00.
The relatives and friends of a man could, it seemed, 'request' his personal property in the sure knowledge that he would be too ashamed (madua) to refuse. Sydney Smith had told O'Brien, who repeated the example to the Legislative Council, that in Nadroga a man would buy a new lamp with the proceeds from his bananas - and break the glass on the way home in the hope that it would then be less attractive as an object of kerekere. 'Are there any people on the face of the earth so inherently and incurably industrious that they will exert themselves more than they need, if they are not allowed personally to enjoy the fruits of their labour?'

O'Brien hoped to abolish kerekere by the untiring moral persuasion of the missionaries and his own officials. The Rokos and Commissioners were asked to bring kerekere up for discussion in the district and provincial councils, so long as resolutions on the subject were 'spontaneous and not "deferential"'. Resolutions duly came forward - in Cakaudrove every tikina had abolished it in 1898 and when other provinces followed suit the Governor really believed that he had achieved a lasting reform. He told the Legislative Council that where efforts had been made to educate the people on the evils of kerekere, they were

1 ibid.
2 See O'Brien to Vidal, 10 Nov. 1898, Roman Catholic Missions, Suva, microfilm, Canberra, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, 455.
3 W.L. Allardyce to the Commissioner Colo North, 31 Jan. 1899, CSO 99/567.
4 Roko Tui Cakaudrove to O'Brien, 16 Sept. 1898, CSO 98/4056.
tending not to hide their utensils, lamps, plates and fine mats.¹

The practice did not surrender so easily. Kerekere was not merely begging, although it was (and is) described as such by Europeans. Granting a favour conferred status on the giver and the right to make a return request in his own moment of need or whimsy. 'It is as clear as daylight', explained a Fijian in a letter to Na Mata, 'that one cannot kerekere indiscriminately. If you come and ask for my lantern because you are short, by and by I will be short of clothes and I will ask you for some. It will be in return for my lamp.' Kerekere was a common man's lala (na nodra lala na kaisi) and could only be done without if the chiefs eased their demands on the people and all transactions in Fijian society were put on a cash basis.² The problem with kerekere, replied a dissenting correspondent, was that 'The lazy man goes to kerekere the hardworking man, but the latter has no need to ask anything of the former... Fiji-style they are both reduced to the same state'.³ The practice remained in force - an effective levelling or distributive mechanism that inhibited the accumulation of capital and bound individuals closely to their kindred.

The organization of communal labour was O'Brien's second target for reform. There was no question of its abolition. As the chiefs had said immediately after Cession

1 O'Brien, Legislative Council address, 27 Sept. 1899, CP 29/00.
2 'Ko Yakatudaliga' to Na Mata, July 1905, pp.111-12.
3 'Ko Vulagi' to Na Mata, Aug. 1905, pp.118-21.
no man could build a house by himself to the generous Fijian proportions requiring raised foundations, heavy timber posts and crossbeams, and a thatched roof. Nor could an individual drag timber for a canoe. Men had always worked in groups under the direction of their chief for the needs of each other and of the community.¹ The Native Regulations took communal labour a stage further by requiring it for roads, provincial office building, hospitals, tax gardens or any other project approved by the provincial councils. The self-reliance of this system appealed greatly to a penny-pinching government, but it led to many allegations and some instances of chiefly oppression - just how much, O'Brien wanted to know. It appalled him, for instance, to find that the European Tax Inspector could not provide 'even the faintest approximation to an estimate' of the work involved in tax operations.² It had always been left to the chiefs to call out as much labour as was needed for a particular operation, and at any time they saw fit.

Part of the solution, decided the Governor, was for the provincial councils to draw up a more specific annual programme of work and allocate definite times not only for tax work but also housebuilding, planting, road-clearing and especially the labour requirements of officials and chiefs. At least a month was to be set aside for 'individual betterment' - generally December. (Ironically it was to become the contemporary Christmas-New Year 'happy

¹ See Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1875, and Scarr, Viceroy of the Pacific, Chapter One.
² O'Brien, minute, 9 Dec. 1898, CSO 98/4850.
time'.) The first programmes drawn up for 1900 did not reassure the Governor that Fijians saw things as he did: 'Lala to be left to the chiefs to exact when the people are free' (Bua); 'whenever a chief may really require it', coconuts 'to be planted at all times' (Tailevu). In time the programme of work became formally more specific but, when enforced, tied the people so much to particular activities that it came to be regarded itself as one of the major obstacles to the individual betterment O'Brien had hoped to encourage.

(vi) 'a most heartbreaking business'

The native taxation scheme was the one area of past Fijian policy which O'Brien endorsed for its 'necessitating a certain though very limited amount of exertion'. Its abolition would make Fijians 'even idler and more indolent than they are at present'. At the turn of the century the scheme was working fairly well. The average cash refund to the producers between 1892 and 1902 was over £12,000, or 60% of the total assessment; the cost of collection was only 6%. Sugar cane was grown for tax in the Rewa river area, on the Navua River (Serua), Ba, Ra and Macuata. Although the average village tax-field was only about two acres, requiring around 30 days work a year, Fijians produced 15,447 tons of cane in 1900 worth £7,432 at the five mills. In the copra provinces (Cakaudrove, Bua, Kadavu, Lau, Lomaiviti, Yasawas) the

1 See CSO 99/1483, 99/5426.
2 O'Brien to CO, 31 Dec. 1897.
3 Fiji Colonial Annual Report 1900.
work varied greatly with the fluctuations in price. With copra around £9 a ton in 1902 a man needed to contribute about three hundredweight or 900 nuts towards the assessment, three days work at the most if the nuts were easily accessible in a clean plantation. Where tobacco was the allocated crop, each man might tend 200-300 plants.¹ Though cotton and rice had been tried, as well as coffee, the only other significant crops now were yagona (kava) and maize. Fifteen tons of yagona were sold in 1901 at 9.1/2d per pound, and 28,000 bushles of maize at 2s 1d per bushel. The only villagers exempt from payment in kind were 270 men who lived close to Suva and Levuka and were accustomed to selling their produce at the markets for cash, providing a useful service to the townspeople.

It was left to the chiefs to make the actual division of labour - the point that most worried O'Brien. European Magistrates sometimes acted as Tax Inspectors to co-ordinate the work between villages and especially to supervise the heavier aspects of cane harvesting in the sugar areas. Cane always gave the most problems. Fijians found its cultivation alien to their subsistence techniques and resented the distances they often had to travel to reach the canefields - over 20 miles in some areas. They shirked the work whenever possible: 'Growing cane is a nightmare to the natives and to the Inspectors', wrote McOwan from Navua, 'until absenteeism can be quashed'.²

1 See Allardyce's memorandum on native taxation, 6 Dec. 1902, CSO 02/5457, from which these figures are taken - they may well be optimistic as regards the work involved.

2 McOwan to the Receiver General, 3 June 1901, CSO 01/2522.
Another magistrate had to hold special monthly courts to deal with offenders. It needed a tough brand of personal leadership to make the scheme work. The Colonial Secretary W.L. Allardyce recalled how he once had the whole of Serua province out cutting cane, several hundred people, and kept the Deuba mill supplied unaided. Ten days' work was enough to meet the provincial assessment, but only because he slept with them in the rough shelters on the field, roused them at daylight, and worked with them till dusk. After the death of Thurston, who expected this kind of leadership of his subordinates and gave it himself, there were few men of Allardyce's calibre really prepared to make the scheme work. Their fellow countrymen had always been loud in its condemnation and now the Fijians themselves, unaware of the consequences, were tempted by what seemed the easier alternative of paying taxes in cash.

From Macuata came the most detailed account of how the system was breaking down under less able men - or if the opinion of Nathaniel Chalmers the magistrate is preferred, it was 'entirely owing from first to last to the utter carelessness and indifference of the Bulis and the people'. CSR company officers prepared the Labasa tax-field and provided £60 worth of first-class cane tops for planting. Chalmers himself, an old sugar hand and a notoriously bad

1 S. Smith to the Receiver General, 3 June 1901, CSO 01/2398.
2 Allardyce, memorandum on native taxation, 6 Dec. 1902, CSO 02/5457.
3 N. Chalmers to the Receiver General, 1 June 1898, CSO 98/525.
manager of men, laid them out on the field and gave the Buli and his men a demonstration of the way to cut the tops, lay them in sets, and space them in the rows. The weather was exceptionally dry, so he instructed them to tread down about six inches of soil over each set. With the planting under way he left the Buli in charge and returned to his office. The next day he heard that all 48 acres had been completed. Gratified, he rode out to inspect. The men had already gone home. To his disgust he found that the cane-tops had been thrown anywhere into the furrows, uncut, and with a foot or two exposed to the scorching sun. He galloped to the house of the Buli and demanded that the entire field be replanted immediately. This time he supervised the work for a few hours, but the moment he was on his way back to Labasa to hold a court the cane was 'shoved in anyhow' with the result that not one set in 500 vegetated. And CSR had no more tops to spare. The field was planted a third time with tops from other districts and finally yielded a miserable eight tons per acre: 'I respectfully submit that it is utterly hopeless and a most heart-breaking business to cultivate cane under the present system.'\(^1\) Would it not be more efficient, Chalmers suggested, to have one large plantation for several districts combined and work it systematically with teams of good workers drawn in rotation from each tikina? O'Brien gladly approved in the hope that the more regular work would also teach 'habits of continuous industry'.\(^2\)

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1 ibid.

2 O'Brien, minute, 13 May 1898, ibid.
The experiment, like most experiments in Fiji, began well. The conscripts lived in the field in temporary huts and grew their own food crops on the side. Then a drought in 1900 destroyed the crop and discouragement tailed into indifference. Although 1901 was a better year and the crop was expected to realise £1,200 (2,400 tons from 191 acres), the Provincial Council of Macuata unanimously requested permission to abandon cane-growing for the more leisurely routine of copra-cutting. The reaction of the Receiver-General expressed the newly ambivalent attitude of the government towards the taxation scheme. How far should the wishes of the people be allowed to undermine 'their own good'? 

Macuata is a very backward province and unless the Govt. made it a duty for them to do something more than work up their nuts they are not likely to show any enterprise, I therefore think for their own good they should fish beche de mer or grow a crop of maize so as to get money to increase their comfort.¹

But what if the people felt they were comfortable enough? It was not a question the colonial administrator could ask.

Macuata was allowed to relinquish cane, and other provinces were anxious to follow. The Roko-Buli of Serua, who had never interested himself in tax work except to exaggerate the grievances of his people, complained that workers had little to eat, the cane-fields were too far from the villages, and women and children were left alone for days on end.² That cane had done well in Serua was no

¹ W. Sutherland, minute, 19 June 1901, CSO 01/2740.
² Ratu Isikeli Tubailagi to NC, 15 Nov. 1901, CSO 00/3795.
consideration. The neighbouring chiefs of Namosi, on a similar theme, showed awareness of the new orthodoxies when they suggested that if they abandoned cane they would have 'so much more time for individual betterment'.

No one in Suva believed them - though they had their way in the end. The only 'terrible waste of labour', Allardyce had often argued, was the time they would spend in their villages, 'sitting, sleeping, malingering, loitering, gossiping, smoking and laughing'.

The copra areas had their own sets of problems. For months before the assessment date a tabu on gathering nuts deprived the people, especially newly weaned infants, of a valuable food and oil. Copra productivity was low. The villagers could not be persuaded that it was worthwhile to thin out their plantations (cut down good trees?), tend the young saplings or plant for the future. Fijian plantations could be identified by their dense tangle of undergrowth, as if the palms were growing wild and their fruit a gratuitous windfall. To meet a small quota was often difficult, and yams were substituted at 50s or 60s a ton or logs at about 1s each. Another solution was for one district to proceed en masse to another and kerekere for all their wants. The Matuku islanders sailed one year to Nakasaleka in Kavavu and requested food. After several days of lavish hospitality they sailed away with 10,400 dalo (£50), 14 large yagona roots (£2.16s) and one bullock (£5). Some time later the Kadavu people made a return visit

1 R. Booth to the Assistant CS, 20 Oct. 1900, CSO 00/3795.

2 Allardyce, minute, 9 Dec. 1898, CSO 98/4850.
to Matuku where they presented 27 tabua (whales teeth). On the way their cutter nearly came to grief on a reef and later cost £27 to repair. They were reimbursed with 1,000 coconuts, enough for only £11 worth of copra: 1 a typically Fijian transaction in which the social context was far more important than the economic disparity revealed in these (irrelevant) figures. Wherever possible Fijians were trying to subvert, so to speak, the economic goals of the colony by subsuming them into more congenial and traditional ways of meeting their needs. Where in the 19th century the government valued the stability this state of affairs gave to the colony and recognized the satisfactions of Fijian social life as good in themselves, in the 20th century the proponents of more material progress were to become impatient with a society that showed such disrespect for individual profit. These people had to be educated out of their 'malaise' and learn the values of honest work for private advantage: the common good would look after itself.

To foster this desired growth of individualism in Fijian society, O'Brien instructed the magistrates and Buli in 1900 to apportion the cash refund according to the contribution of each individual. Where it was enforced, the order had unexpected consequences, at least in the case of copra. Whereas previously a district had met its quota by pooling the resources of its land-owners - those who had no land in production cut their neighbours' copra - now the owners began to demand payment in pigs or mats or cash to compensate for the diminution of their share in the refund.

1 W.A. Scott to NC, 21 Aug. 1904, CSO 04/4229.
Some districts went a step further and began to sub-assess individuals from the start for a fixed quantity of copra. For the first time taxes became a problem for the landless. The Roko Tui of Lau, the province most affected, pleaded for individuals to be allowed to pay in cash. The absurd situation had arisen in his and other provinces where individuals were selling produce to storekeepers to raise cash to buy the particular produce required for taxation in kind. The Council of Chiefs in 1902 asked therefore that it be left to the provinces to decide in what form they should pay their taxes.

O'Brien had rightly feared that to grant exceptions would bring down the scheme altogether. In 1900 when the tobacco crop failed in Colo West he allowed the people to go to the coast and work for a few weeks, but 'strictly as an exceptional case & not to form a precedent'. But under his successor Sir Henry Jackson several exceptions were made, even more by Governor Sir Everard Im Thurn (1904-10) who saw individualism as the only salvation for Fijians. By 1906 Namosi, Serua and the interior Colo provinces had abandoned their tax fields. Almost alone of the provinces Ba — or rather its energetic Roko, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi — resisted the trend to cash payments. He allowed the people to have individual gardens and kept a strict tally of each man's contribution. In 1908 the people despatched produce that realized £2,500 in excess of the assessment of £647 19s.

1 Ratu A. Finau to NC, 10 Feb. 1903, CSO 03/1877.
2 O'Brien, minute, 23 June 1900, CSO 00/2215.
Some individuals received a refund of up to £10.  

Ratu Joni had been trained by Thurston and like his old friend and chief he must have feared the social consequences of the taxation scheme's imminent destruction. By 1912 there were so few districts paying in kind that it was decided to make cash payments obligatory from the following year. 'I look upon the change as final', wrote the Native Commissioner, adding no regrets. The mood of government had changed. They knew well that Fijians would mortgage their coconut groves to the nearest trader who would himself have the nuts collected and the copra cut, with the net result that the owners would receive less than half the value of their produce. They also knew that the loss of the central marketing organization provided by the old scheme would relegate Fijians to the edges of an ever more alien-dominated colonial economy. They hardly bargained perhaps on the enormous amount of petty prosecution in the courts that would be necessary to hound villagers into exercising their new-found individuality and so extract cash taxes that were scarcely more than would have been given back to them under the Gordon system by way of refund. The changes were seen as the inevitable price of an ill-defined concept of general progress through the 'time of transition' to a more western way of life.

Sir George O'Brien had loosened the skewers, his successors began to pull them out. Would the whole Gordon
system disintegrate with the native taxation scheme, would Fijian society destroy itself and the colony become a proper British dominion run in the European interest? The next assault on the legacy of the 19th century was led by an able and well-meaning governor who enjoyed a reputation in the Colonial Office as one 'whose whole interest wherever he has been has rested in and through the natives...'.

1 Cox, minute on im Thurn to CO, 26 Oct. 1906, CO 83/83.
HAS OUR GOVERNOR CEASED TO BE OUR HIGH CHIEF?

On 11 October 1904, the day after he arrived in Fiji, Everard im Thurn was installed as Supreme Chief of the Fijians in a ceremony he found 'extraordinarily interesting'.¹ He had no previous knowledge of the colony and had yet to read the rather forbidding volumes of privately printed correspondence which Lord Stanmore (Sir Arthur Gordon) had been careful to send him.² On the evening of the same day he was sitting, tired, in his office when he noticed

something that seemed a great dog creeping up and licking my boots. It was a magnificent Fijian, an officer of the Armed Native Constabulary, who had crept up on all fours vaka Viti to take the earliest opportunity to prefer some request. I was startled - and... gave him to understand that he was never to do such a thing again.³

Vakaviti, Fiji-style, is a word im Thurn was to use often in the following six years. Applied to individuals it never

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¹ Im Thurn, diary, 11 Oct. 1904, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, microfilm, Research School of Pacific Studies, Canberra.

² Im Thurn mentions in an entry 12 Feb. 1905 that he spent the Sunday reading Stanmore's 'most extraordinarily indiscreet privately printed book on his Fiji administration', i.e., Gordon's correspondence, Fiji: records of private and of public life 1875-1880, printed in Edinburgh as follows: Vol.I - 1897; Vol.II - 1901; Vol.III - 1904; Vol.IV - 1912. Unfortunately it was the last volume leading up to the passing of the Native Lands Ordinance XXI of 1880 that was more relevant for im Thurn's understanding of his predecessor.

³ Im Thurn, diary, 11 Oct. 1904.
lost the connotations it had here of unmanly behaviour that ill became the dignity of full British subjects. From his diaries it seems that im Thurn came to his views on the state of Fijian society after talking to the Chief Justice Sir Charles Major, the Attorney General Albert Erdhardt, and lesser government officials such as Dr Charles Brough, the District Medical Officer on Kadavu. ¹ These men were agreed with the long-held view of the European settlers that the Gordon-Thurston system had outlived whatever usefulness it might have possessed in the early years. It was now hampering the natural development of the colony and destroying the moral fibre of the Fijians themselves. Thus six weeks after his arrival im Thurn noted in his diary that 'The communal system seems to me not a communal system';² it worked entirely in the interests of a decadent élite, one of whom, the Roko Tui Tailevu (Ratu Epeli Nailatikau's son Kadavulevu) he had recently upbraided for 'his selfishness, i.e. his tendency to use the natives merely for his own benefit...'.³ The new governor was easily persuaded to the popular view that the Fijians had lost the will to live and were doomed to extinction. By April 1905 im Thurn was confident enough to speak to the Council of Chiefs in the bluntest language they had ever heard. The chiefs were 'killing' the people who

¹ ibid., 14-16 Nov. 1904. Before meeting the Native Lands Commissioner David Wilkinson, the only survivor of the Gordon administration, im Thurn had decided on his compulsory retirement - ibid., 4 Dec. 1904.

² ibid., 16 Nov. 1904,

³ ibid., 26 Oct. 1904.
do not even care for the trouble of living and of raising children for a race which is dying out so fast that unless a change comes soon, there will not be one of you left in forty years... The Fijian people are perishing chiefly because they are not allowed any liberty to think and act for themselves.¹

He appealed to the chiefs to help their people become 'more like real men...fit and willing to do men's work' so that with the gradual substitution of British laws for the backward Native Regulations the people would eventually be on the same level 'as white British subjects are'. As a grand but in the context ludicrous gesture he announced that he was abandoning forthwith his personal rights as Supreme Chief to sevu, first fruits: 'In future I do not want anyone of you Fijians to offer me anything for which you will not let me pay.'²

Having prepared the chiefs for change, Im Thurn set about laying the foundations for a future whose prosperity rested on a large European population with the capital and skills to bring into production the vast tracts of fertile land a dying and indolent race could never hope to use. His vision of building a strong outpost of the British Empire in the South Seas moved the Fiji Times to hail him, quite accurately, as

the first Governor of Fiji to make any public recognition of the fact that the colony may have a British future: that the lands of the

¹ Im Thurn, address to the Council of Chiefs, April 1905 encl. ibid.

² ibid. The Governor's sevu were voluntary tokens of goodwill from the provinces, a pleasant reminder also of Fijian expectations that the Governor would act towards them as a true chief.
colony are necessary to that future; and that the present conditions of land tenure are untenable.¹

Whereas Gordon had argued that the alienation of land had already gone to the 'very verge' of what should be permitted if the Fijians were not to be lorded over by white settlers,² im Thurn saw the European development of the lands of the colony as his first priority. It was then he confronted the implications of the well-established Fijian myth concerning the events of Cession, namely that Fiji had not been 'ceded in anger to her late Majesty Queen Victoria; it was ceded with love.'³ This pleasant reduction of the tumultuous politics of that period to a personal covenant between the chiefs and their Queen reflected their retrospective satisfaction with the way Gordon had represented in his person British respect for their rights and privileges. Had he not outraged the European community by enthusiastically treating with them as Supreme Chief to brother chiefs, even to the details of Fijian ceremonial etiquette? The proof of the wisdom of Cession was that the people had been given a secure legal title to the lands remaining to them. Alienation was halted. From Allardyce's compendium of Native Regulations they could invoke Commodore Goodenough's response to the offer of Cession made on 21 March 1874: 'It is clear to me that you

¹ Fiji Times, 20 Mar. 1909.
³ E sega ni soli ko Viti e na cudru sa soli ko Viti e na loloma vua na Marama ko Kuini Vikatoria sa bale - Ratu Peni Tanoa and others to NC, 5 Mar. 1908, CSO 08/1174.
are not ceding the land itself or your people. That is good.'^1 In the Fijian mind the lands had been given by the chiefs to the Queen vakaturaga, that is, by way of a chiefly presentation which entitled them to expect that the Queen in her reciprocal generosity would return the lands to be shared and used by the people. Gordon did nothing to disabuse them of this notion; he encouraged the myth to secure their loyalty - despite the plain provisions of article IV of the Deed of Cession vesting in the Crown all lands not actually used by a tribe or chief nor needed for their 'probable future support'. Ordinance XXI of 1880 established a Native Lands Commission to give legal recognition to Fijian ownership of all lands not already alienated, and to implement Gordon's assurance that what Fijians then held would be confirmed to them. In 1908 Stanmore explained to Lord Elgin: 'I do not only think, I know, that I must have repeated the assurance at least 30 times.'^2

Im Thurn made a determined attack on the Gordon-Fijian viewpoint, suspecting a cosy conspiracy to defraud the Crown of its legitimate assets. He saw the history of Fijian land transactions as 'one great blunder from the beginning...from 1875 we have again and again failed to claim the lands but even ostentatiously pretended to recognize...the natives' imaginary rights as real'.^3 On historical grounds im Thurn argued that pre-Cession Fijians had lived in a constant state of petty war and that

[^1]: Quoted F. Spence to im Thurn, 31 Jan. 1909, CSO F37/93.
[^2]: Stanmore to CO, 29 Aug. 1908, CO 83/86.
[^3]: Im Thurn, minute, 6 Dec. 1907, CSO 06/3236.
their boundaries shifted frequently: it was pure invention to speak of ancestral rights to pieces of land or to say, as Gordon and others did, that every inch of Fiji had its owner. There were large tracts of land unoccupied at Cession which should have been marked off immediately as Crown land and kept for future European settlement.¹

To Im Thurn the NLC was conceived on false premises. It was attempting to codify customary situations that varied from one district to another, situations that were of their essence uncodifiable. In his first year of office he also observed that the NLC hearings in Tailevu province seemed themselves to bring to a head or even cause serious disputes. He suspected the ageing David Wilkinson was mentally incapable of effecting reasonable settlements,² but in any case he wanted the 'impenetrable obscurity' of Fijian custom eventually to give way to 'the clear light of the Real Property Ordinance'.³

The only move towards rational management of the Fijian estate had been the unanimous approval of the Council of Chiefs in 1903 to Governor Jackson's suggestion that the government should have the entire control of the leasing of 'waste' lands or those lying idle.⁴ By March 1905 some 400 vaguely described blocks had been nominated

¹ Im Thurn to CO, 2 Nov. 1907, CO 83/86, and 18 Mar. 1908, CO 83/87.
² See CSO 05/4029; 05/4556.
³ Im Thurn, minute, 11 Jan. 1906, CSO 05/4118.
⁴ Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs, 1903, Resolution VI: '...we hail with pleasure his suggestion, and it is our unanimous wish that the Government have the entire control of leasing such land, fixing the terms and the rents for it.'
for leasing by the provincial councils, most so truly waste or inaccessible as to be useless for settlement. Im Thurn suggested to his subordinates that alienation would have to be made easier. The Chief Justice said the time had come for the government to take unused lands 'say the owners yea or nay'. The Native Commissioner Francis Baxendale 'as representing the natives' assured the Governor that drastic reforms would be 'welcomed with pleasure' by Fijians. In May 1905 the Native Lands Ordinance (IV of 1905) was passed. Fijian lands became alienable with the consent of the Governor in Council, the 21-year limit to leases no longer applied, the Native Lands Commission was restricted to the hearing of actual disputes. Over the next three years 104,142 acres of Fijian land were sold and became freehold.

These sales attracted little attention until a former governor, Sir William des Voeux, sent the Colonial Office a cutting from the Fiji Times of 27 June 1906 describing the purchase of 830 acres of land on the lower Rewa ('Navuso') for £1,500. Under a lease that still had seven years to run the owners had received an annual rental of £415. The purchaser, prominent Suva lawyer H.M. Scott, had made quite a bargain. The Governor defended the transaction, which had only been approved in Executive Council by his own casting vote, on the grounds that the land was exhausted, the real rental value was only £200,

1 Major, minute, 24 Jan. 1905, CSO 05/1206.
2 Baxendale, minute, 15 Mar. 1905, ibid.
3 Des Voeux to CO, 15 Aug. 1906, CO 83/84.
and that even if the deal was a bit dubious then 'a few experiences of such a character are likely to teach more self-reliance than years of leading strings'. He put his dilemma in terms that should have alerted the Colonial Office to a fundamental shift in the position of the Fijians:

The social and political status of the Fijian native in this British colony is so extraordinary and anomalous that it is a matter of very great difficulty to hold the scales evenly when the interests of the natives and Europeans are weighed against each other...

By the same mail Im Thurn forwarded for approval ordinance XVI of 1906 'to amend the law relating to the Acquisition of Land by the Crown'. It was now possible for the government to resume land for 'any undertaking proposal or policy which may appear to the Governor in Council desirable as directly benefiting the Colony'. One of the situations Im Thurn mentioned to justify these powers was the possibility that Fijians at some future date would refuse to accept in the remote districts prices lower than they were demanding and receiving in the sugar centres. Although Sir Everard never admitted to the connection, this ordinance came after months of frustrating negotiations by CSR and government officers to obtain about 10,500 acres of unused swamp lands lying between Nausori and Wainibokasi on the Rewa river. The proposals involved moving five villages or 352 people. Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, now Roko Tui Ra,

1 Im Thurn to CO, 22 Mar. 1907, CO 83/85.
2 Im Thurn to CO, 26 Oct. 1906, CO 83/84.
3 ibid. The ordinance was approved with the proviso that the Colonial Office's approval be obtained prior to the resumption of land.
was called in to gain their support. The chief was foiled by the agents of two Suva lawyers who encouraged the owners, the Nakelo people, to hold out for the high rentals they were used to receiving from Indians for small blocks.

'The real trouble', said Ratu Joni in a moment of exasperation, 'is that they have never had anything to decide before and it's only in the time of the Government that they are allowed to have any'. Im Thurn could not have agreed more. David Wilkinson had another view of the matter and wrote a strong letter of protest, with a copy to Lord Stanmore, alleging that the Nakelo people had been bullied and insulted and had a

deep-seated dread...that in some way or another they [were] to be deprived of their ancestral lands... A native said to me the other day 'has our Governor ceased to be our High Chief?'

Im Thurn dismissed Wilkinson's views as 'hysterical' but on the whole the old man had better reason for his fears than did the Governor for holding optimistically to a contrary opinion. Sure of the rightness of his cause, and encouraged by the enthusiasm of the European community and the apparent acquiescence of the Fijians, im Thurn introduced in June 1907 a third ordinance (IX of 1907) providing for the sale or lease of native land to Fijians and its conversion thereby to freehold title. It also allowed for the devolution of the powers of the NLC to magistrates or others so that they could settle disputes

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1 Madraiwiwi to NC, Aug. 1906, CSO 06/2854.

2 Wilkinson to NC, 13 Aug. 1906, Methodist Mission Collection (hereinafter MM) L/14, and copy at CSO F37/93.

3 Im Thurn, minute, 30 Aug. 1906, CSO 06/2854.
on the spot, with appeals against their decisions lying to the Supreme Court rather than the Governor in Council.\textsuperscript{1} Thus was another safeguard of Fijian interests quietly removed. The Colonial Office, by now thoroughly alerted to im Thurn's real intentions, inquired whether the Ordinance was 'merely a device under which land held individually by a native Fijian may be disposed to a non-native' and whether Fijian opinion had been sought on the matter through the Council of Chiefs.\textsuperscript{2} In his reply the Governor ignored the last suggestion and confirmed that there would be no restrictions on individuals selling their land, but that it was not likely to happen very often. In a long review of the whole land situation he included a suggestion that the time had come for a special Commission to assess the position of Fijian natives as affected by special legislation and by that legally recognised, but yet formless, law of 'Fijian custom' ('vaka viti') and their consequent partial exclusion from the rights and obligations of ordinary British subjects.\textsuperscript{3} Nothing came of the suggestion. The land question so dominated the business of government that the Fijian Administration in all other respects continued along its familiar lines. The report of a committee to revise the Native Regulations was presented in April 1905 and shelved until after im Thurn had retired.

\textbf{Meanwhile government officers and one or two}

\textsuperscript{1} See im Thurn to CO, 12 June 1907, CO 83/85.
\textsuperscript{2} CO to im Thurn, 26 Oct. 1907, CO 83/86.
\textsuperscript{3} Im Thurn to CO, 18 Mar. 1908, CO 83/87.
Fijian Rokos were attempting to obtain large tracts of land for leasing. Resistance was strong in provinces where the best lands had already been alienated, as in Ba and Cakaudrove. The 15 inhabitants of Nanuca in the latter province, for instance, had 3,000-4,000 acres of land but regarded none of it as surplus, even though 30 acres would have sufficed for their subsistence planting. Land in the Rewa delta was also hard to obtain as the owners could get quite high rents from Indians and saw no reason why they should subsidise either CSO or the government. In the province of Bua, however, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi spent 10 weeks in 1906 inspecting surplus lands and obtained for the government 51,000 acres for 99 years at the rate of £10 per 1,000 acres. In 1907 he obtained another 12,000 acres. The Macuata people surrendered 50,000 acres at £1 per 100 acres from 1 January 1908 (the site of the new Seaqaqa development scheme). About the same time six tikina of Colo West handed over 60,000 acres of good grazing land.

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1 J.W. Philpott, minute, 23 June 1906, CSO 06/3236. Nevertheless 18,800 acres in nine blocks were obtained for leasing in Cakaudrove - ibid.

2 CSO 06/3651. By June 1908 only 9,700 acres of this land had been taken up.

3 CSO 06/3602. The Naitasiri people offered 12,000 acres at 10s per acre but the offer was considered exorbitant - CSO 06/5588.

4 CSO 07/4816. The District Councils were Nasikawa, Namataku, Bemana, Qalimare, Mavua and Conua. The price accepted was £10 per 1,000 acres payable only when occupied. In the same area a European obtained a lease of 10,000 acres for £10 per 1,000 for 50 years and £20 for the next 49.
In July 1909 there remained in Fijian control only one large area of first-class flat land, the Waidalici and Sawakasa flats in northern Tailevu, some 50 miles north of Suva. In the course of a routine inspection by Ratu Kadavulevu and the Assistant Native Commissioner W.A. Scott, the proposal was put before the District Councils of Namalata and Sawakasa that the government should assume the entire control of these lands. The signatures of the owners were obtained without difficulty on the understanding that planting reserves would be set aside and none of the lands would be leased to Indians, who, the people claimed, 'taught them bad customs and polluted their water courses'.

The land surrendered included 5,000 acres immediately suitable for cane, bananas or tobacco and a further 2,000 acres that needed draining. There were 30,000 acres suitable for grazing. The people repented before the end of the year. The old Komai Sawakasa, Ratu Kamenieli Bituvatu, with all the original signatories alleged duress and tried to repudiate the agreement. Im Thurn, of course, had little sympathy and made an ill-conceived appeal to precedent:

\[\text{Vakaviti, Cakobau would, if he had known that there were people [Europeans] ready to use and pay for this land, have given over this land to those people. I quite as much } \text{vakaviti... am prepared to lease to those people.}\]

1 Scott to NC, 30 July 1909, CSO 09/6393.
2 Komai Sawakasa and others to NC, 1 Nov. 1909, CSO 09/9295: 'we did not hand over our lands, you spoke of it first. We did not ask for this.'
3 Text of letter read by Scott to Tailevu Provincial Council, Nov. 1909, ibid.
With varying degrees of grace, then, Fijians did hand over considerable areas of land to the government, far more than could be taken up by prospective settlers. Refusals to lease, even if applications were totally unreasonable and required, say, the removal of a whole village, were blown up by the Europeans as further evidence of Fijian intransigence, while the generous concessions just noted received scant publicity. It did not suit the *Fiji Times* to attack the European speculators who were tying up 8,000 acres on the Dreketi and Sigatoka rivers, or to admit that there were greater problems than the availability of land for the colony's agricultural development. In January 1908 the Planters Association commissioned the Suva lawyer R. Crompton to prepare a long petition to the Secretary of State demanding that the 'Crown should take such [unused] lands and open up the same for cultivation by planters'.

The petition was based on the rights of the Crown under article IV of the Deed of Cession and its interpretation of the events since Cession closely followed that of im Thurn whom the planters saw as their champion. In his supporting arguments to the Colonial Office im Thurn was careful to avoid the appearance of sectional bias and to profess great

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1 Petition of the Planters Association of Fiji to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 Jan. 1908 (Suva, 1908), article 117. Ironically, Crompton was one of the lawyers who had prevented the CSR obtaining the Wainibokasi lands.
interest in the welfare of 'these interesting natives'. But he agreed with the planters that Fijian landlords were objectionable; they could perform none of the duties of the position. They had neither knowledge nor capital; they received rents and appropriated improvements. Europeans with freehold titles would at once ensure that the property did not deteriorate, and usually they were able to raise capital for development. Believing that the Crown had a clear right to surplus lands in any case, he was resigned 'as a matter of grace' to allowing Fijians a price for their lands but insisted that the first aim of the government was that the lands be developed and 'the exorbitant demands of the Natives for their more or less imaginary rights' should be firmly resisted.  

The Planters Petition, and the knowledge that it had the support of the Supreme Chief, sent waves of distrust deep into the Fijian community. The chiefs within reach of Suva met one evening at the home of their would-be champion and lawyer Mr Humphrey Berkeley. The Chairman of the Methodist Church was present, and he reported that the chiefs were convinced a supreme effort was being made secretly by the Europeans to deprive them of their lands.

1 The phrase occurs in Im Thurn to CO, 26 Oct. 1906, CO 83/83: 'I am most anxious for the welfare of these interesting natives, and...if I ever do anything which may seem like relaxing the former protection it is only in order to leave greater freedom to them now that they are adolescent - or would be but for the protection of recent years - and entitled to claim their position, in the near future, as full British subjects.'

2 Im Thurn to CO, 22 Mar. 1907.

3 A.J. Small to the Governor, 14 Mar. 1908, CSO 08/1174.
Ratu Peni Tanoa, Qaranivalu of Naitasiri, and several others said in a letter to the Native Commissioner that they feared a terrible reversal 'as happened in New Zealand - and like the Maoris we too could be reduced to slavery'.

They asked that the full petition be translated so that they could study it themselves. Im Thurn was willing: 'It seems at least fair to put it into the power of Fijians to understand what is going on.' However he allowed himself to be overruled by the nervous Native Commissioner, William Sutherland, who feared that the translation of a petition so 'unreal, unnecessary and unjust' would arouse the wrath of the people and lead to grave unrest: 'The desire apparently is that the natives be cooped up in reserves and not permitted any further voice in connection with their lands.' The government reassured the chiefs in vague terms that the present arrangements would not be disturbed 'without full consideration' but rebuked them for their ignorance of the value of the land - 'you often ask an exorbitant price' - and for their unwillingness to use their lands more productively.

The Colonial Office rejected the Planters Petition and im Thurn's arguments in favour of Lord Stanmore's view, powerfully advanced in the House of Lords in July 1908, that no distinction could be drawn between waste lands and occupied lands - what im Thurn called 'true Crown'

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1 Tanoa and others to NC, 5 Mar. 1908, ibid.
2 Im Thurn, minute, 16 Mar. 1908, ibid.
3 Sutherland, memorandum, 10 Mar. 1908, CSO 08/1242.
4 ibid.
and 'true native' respectively. All lands were to be regarded as Fijian property and not to be leased or sold without the consent of the owners.

The defeat of im Thurn's reforms has been persuasively explained by Peter France as 'the victory of the orthodoxy', a return to the misleading dogmas about Fijian society proclaimed by Gordon to justify his policy. In another sense, though, it was a victory for Fijians, the defeat of a vision of the colony's future which identified 'the real interests of the natives' with the denigration of everything in Fijian society that offended current British ideas of progress, democracy, manliness or self-respect. Sir Everard's personal intentions were not sinister. Some of his progressive moves such as the establishment of the Queen Victoria School and the appointment of an English master (A.M. Hocart) to the Lau Provincial School, or the reduction in the government use of communal labour for road construction were certainly appreciated by Fijians. But what would have happened if his land reforms had gone through? Individualization of land tenure in New Zealand had been the legal means for achieving a rapid transfer of Maori land to European settlers. Could there be any doubt that if Fiji had been able to attract several thousand more settlers from New Zealand and Australia they would in time have gained self-government, abolished the Fijian Administration, and built on im Thurn's

1 Stanmore to CO, 29 Aug. 1908, CO 83/86; im Thurn to CO, 15 Apr. 1908, CO 83/87.

2 CO to im Thurn, 15 July 1908, CO 83/88.

arguments and his legal precedents to justify easier ways of giving the best lands to those better equipped to profit from them? Im Thurn's Fiji of the future was a more prosperous Fiji, perhaps, but it offered no hope for Fijian autonomy and success only for those Fijians with whom the Europeans chose to share their skills. Equal British citizens in theory, they would have become fringe-dwellers in fact; at best a picturesque background, at worst a broken society of migratory labourers and leaderless peasant farmers devoid of influence at the national level.

(ii) 'the land and the people are one'

Again secure in their separate institutions and their customary title to their lands, Fijians were free in practice to follow many flexible systems of land tenure and use devised in response to the ecology of the particular area, or the requirements of their kinship systems, and, later, the nature of induced economic change. Each community developed its own set of principles or precedents to bring to bear on any decision about a piece of land, especially non-planting land where rights were vague or subsidiary. There was much scope for political activity and compromise.\(^1\) As Wilkinson himself once said, 'a Fijian has an innate objection to finality on land questions'.\(^2\)

Finality nevertheless in customary titles was an urgent administrative necessity if Fijian lands could no longer be alienated and individual land-owning units were

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2 Wilkinson to NC, 6 Oct. 1905, CSO 05/4556.
to be able to lease their lands. In 1912 the Native Lands Commission was reconstituted to complete the immense task of deciding the boundaries and ownership of all Fijian land. How else could land disputes be prevented from holding up lease applications and European and Indian lease applicants be furnished with authoritative lists of boundaries and owners for each block of the land in the colony? The NLC classification of communal units received formal ratification of the provincial councils at the completion of a painstaking process of investigation and consultation in which all landowners could appeal against decisions made at the first hearings. The Commission operated in the Fijian idiom; it was formal but not awe-inspiring; indeed at times it had to invoke legal sanctions to achieve due decorum. Its sessions were generally attended by a large, keenly aware audience from surrounding districts who could intervene if their own rights were threatened.

There were some Fijians who appreciated the enormous difficulty of achieving arbitrary settlements through the NLC, yet defended it as work of social reconstruction and reconciliation, repairing some of the dislocations caused by the imposition of the colonial system:

The good of this is apparent as formerly there were many disputes, but since then the people have been free and live well, having the land laws to guide and safeguard them. It has also enabled much land to be leased to whites and Indians, the rent of which enables the people to live easily and happily, thus fulfilling the wishes of our good Government.¹

¹ Niko Rabuku and others to the Governor, 24 Oct. 1905, CSO 05/5133.
The highly intelligent Bauan chief who worked with Wilkinson and his successors, Ratu Savenaca Seniloli, explained that before Cession Fijians used faithfully to follow their respective paths of kinship (sala vakaveiwekani) 'whether they led to those we were staying with or to people far distant'. These paths were visible, so to speak, in the pattern of ceremonial exchanges of wealth (solevu), or the extensive trade-routes of Fijian manufactures (iyau), or the channels of tribute and political alliance in time of war. He might have mentioned also the superimposed criss-crossing of veitauvu relationships, where two or more communities recognized a common ancestor vu and claimed the occasional right to plunder one another with impunity. The village of Sawaieke on Gau, Lomaiviti, for instance, was veitauvu with Somosomo in Cakaudrove, Dama in Bua and Lingaulevu in Macuata. Many of these relationships were becoming a memory of the old. Just as the exercise of veitauvu was proscribed by the Native Regulations, so in many ways the former patterns of ceremonial life were disrupted. Complex paths of allegiance were trimmed to accommodate the new administrative boundaries so that many people were cut off from their natural leaders and the privileges or protection of their own tribes, accentuating their dependent status if they were using the lands of others - even were it for generations. Villages were wracked by minor disputes over status and land.

1 Ratu Savenaca Seniloli to NC, 19 Nov. 1914, CSO 14/4904.
3 Cf. discussion of the tikina in Chapter Five.
The coming of the NLC was hailed as an opportunity to settle age-long feuds and secure perpetual ownership of planting land or an equitable division between rival claimants.

The weakness of certain procedures followed by the NLC, a separate question to that of its general value to Fijians, is not the discovery of modern studies but was keenly perceived from the turn of the century. The decision of the 1878 Council of Chiefs to make the mataqali the proprietary unit - even though it was the smaller family group known in Bau as the tokatoka that normally occupied a definite piece of land - was probably made because the ruling chiefs were familiar with dealing with the heads of the mataqali for governmental purposes and preferred to designate them as owners rather than 'a small and unknown unit of ownership countless in number'.

Ordinance XI of 1892 recognized individual and family group ownership also, but for reasons of time and expense the NLC was never able to meet the real wishes of the people in this matter. Wilkinson reported in 1897 the urgent desire of the Nadi people to have their lands registered by kete or luve, the local variant of tokatoka which he described as 'the bed rock of the people's land system & polity'. Similarly in Rewa, where land was hopelessly mixed up, he wanted to give 'a fixed tenure to the actual holder of each piece of land recorded...it is the one request which the people now urge wherever the Commission go'.

1 Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna to CS, 16 Apr. 1940, CSO F15/1.
3 Wilkinson, minute, 23 Jan. 1905, CSO 05/387.
Ownership by mataqali has bedevilled Fijian land transactions to the present day and a great variety of informal and formal arrangements has been tried to surmount the problem of giving adequate tenure to an individual wanting to develop a piece of mataqali land commercially, or, alternatively, to incorporate mataqali holdings and form a development company.

(iii) 'reason weighs more than legal technicalities'

France's criticisms of the operations of the NLC depends in part on carefully selected evidence of its unpopularity with Fijians themselves immediately after its re-establishment in 1912 under the management of G.V. Maxwell. The hostility to the NLC in these years was in no small part personal hostility to Maxwell. He was of a new generation of colonial careerists whose veneer of professional competence veiled the sneer of racial superiority. He learned as much of the culture and people as would evince his diligence and eligibility for promotion: no 19th century sense of mission or ordinary human affections softened his exercise of power. As Native Lands Commissioner, Maxwell at first seized on the rights of the Crown as ultimus haeres of extinct mataqali to conduct searching inquisitions into the classification of social groups with the aim of exposing the inevitable attempts of landowners to pool small proprietary units as a kind of mutual insurance against extinction. Or zealous for the rights of the Crown to land unoccupied at the date of Cession, Maxwell declared whole groups of people landless. The Naloto people in the hill districts of Ba suffered this verdict in 1913 despite the fact that there were no other claimants to the land in question. They have been seeking to reverse the verdict
ever since.\textsuperscript{1}

It is not clear from France's account that some of these temporary difficulties were removed by instructions from the Colonial Office in 1916 that the NLC was in future to admit the unopposed claims of a matagali to lands even if the customary title had been created since the date of Cession (as in Naloto). Furthermore the profits from the disposal of lands of extinct matagali (Crown Lands Schedule A) and those lands unoccupied at Cession and still unoccupied (Crown Lands Schedule B) were directed to be applied for the benefit of Fijians or to projects approved by them.\textsuperscript{2}

Maxwell himself welcomed the change with some relief, observing that the work of the NLC would be much less contentious. If the Crown had given up its latent claims to Fijian lands, there was not the same need for precise historical investigations and for volumes of oral history of which a great proportion was 'manifestly and absurdly untrue'. The Commission could now devote its energies to achieving a settlement of the lands 'reasonable in itself and acceptable to native occupiers'. He suggested that the people devise their own lists and that once considered by all and accepted as reasonable they should be recorded as 'an unalterable basis for all future dealings with native lands'.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{enumerate}
\item See one of many appeals from Naloto and a summary dismissal at CSO 14/4674.
\item CO to Escott, 11 June 1916, CO 83/131.
\item Maxwell, minute, 25 Apr. 1916, CSO 16/6275.
\end{enumerate}
It did not prove quite so simple. When the Ra people were left to their own devices, Maxwell found the lists 'absurdly fictitious' and refused to accept them. And France has shown how Maxwell insisted that all communities were to fit themselves into a grossly simplified three-tiered framework of ranked co-operating units, all patrilineal descent groups: yavusa, matagali and tokatoka. In places like Ra where the people had perhaps never before organized their society into formalized descent groups according to the official model, or where principles other than kinship were just as important in decision-making about land (e.g. rights acquired by uxorilocal residence), the Commission had to send in beforehand its own clerks to help the people to examine their traditions, establish a rank order for each social unit, and then to adapt the local grouping as best they could to the accepted model. The Commissioners did their best nevertheless to achieve a settlement that had the approval of most landowners and the chiefs, and was equitable. When the final classifications and boundaries were promulgated it was then up to the community itself as to how far or in what respects the official version of their society displaced the pre-existing social organization. To the confusion of some anthropologists and later generations of the people themselves, the one interacted with the other. Decisions on the use of land may have continued at one level to be made in the old way, but then if a dispute came to litigation, the official records were there to achieve a finality of decision not previously available.

It is not clear whether the swindling and land-grabbing which retarded the progress of the NLC in its

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1 Maxwell, minute, 7 Apr. 1919, CSO 19/197.
early history, unfairly emphasized perhaps by France, was a feature of its work in the 1920s and 1930s under the saner and more acceptable leadership of Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi's famous son, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna. The records of the NLC are closed to scholars (at the time of writing) and any judgment of the quality of the work done and its usefulness to particular communities must be suspended. The few available reports of Ratu Sukuna's work indicate that the NLC reverted to the grand chiefly ceremonial affair it had been under Wilkinson prior to 1905. In 1928 for example, the province of Bua spent close to £1,000 entertaining the Commissioners. Ratu Sukuna was asked to explain why he had accepted 480 mats and 80 tabua at Votua, 220 mats and 40 tabua at Nawaido, 300 mats and 30 tabua at Dama. He had to say it was against his will, but to the people and doubtless to himself the presentations matched the rank of the visitors and the importance of his work.¹

From the few appeals made against his decisions, it is interesting to see how carefully he applied the criteria of both equity and custom to oral evidence. He was prepared on occasion to ignore the arrangements put up by the people and impose his own. In the case Alipate Nagoneroqo v. Yavusa Dewala, he set aside the classificatory statements of both parties: 'for we conceive it a higher duty to make a reasonable settlement of your lands than to accept any division agreed to by you which is obviously inequitable'.² In an interesting case from the chiefly

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¹ See Secretariat of Native Affairs (hereinafter SNA), 28/208.

² Sukuna, memorandum on the appeal, 21 May 1932, CSO F50/27/3.
family of Cakaudrove, Ratu Sukuna rejected in summary fashion an attempt by the highest chief to enlarge his personal holding at the expense of the other members of the chiefly mataqali. For both custom and equity required that the chief who already owned 1,500 acres should not receive any part of the 1,000 acres shared by the other 180 members of his mataqali. In another case from Taveuni, Ratu Sukuna took the unusual step of reopening the inquiry into the lands at Vuna when it came to his notice that the chiefly mataqali had wronged the subordinate mataqali — whose lands the chiefs had sold before Cession — by not mentioning to the Commissioners that the subordinate mataqali had been given by way of compensation planting rights on the chief’s land. These rights were registered by Ratu Sukuna as encumbrances on the title. He remarked that the Vuna people being courteous and courtly in the presence of their chief would not consider it proper to press their claims... Though there is an estoppel I am of the opinion that the equity must from the administrative side be more seriously considered. Surely the Commission is not a court: so, that in dealing with natives reason weighs more than legal technicalities.2

1 In 1903 Ratu Josefa Lala, then Tui Cakau, subdivided the holdings of the mataqali Valelevu into individual holdings retaining five blocks and five dowry portions for his own use. On his death a commission settled these lands to his immediate heirs and they passed to his son Ratu G.W. Lala who was eventually, after a long dispute with a rival claimant, installed as Tui Cakau (1936). See CSO F50/27/1.

2 Sukuna to CS, 8 Aug. 1930, SNA 29/1564.
Ratu Sukuna's work was well done, in the Fijian view. There seems no reason to doubt his own reported statement that there would be few or no appeals at all were it not that he always suggested appeal if there was any dissatisfaction. Some appeals seem more a record of disappointment than a serious attempt to reverse decisions. Sukuna believed that the critics of the NLC would be hard pressed to find any lasting sense of grievance against its decisions. That may have been so at the time - if there were grievances they were kept 'in the family' and did not embroil the Administration. But there was no guarantee that the heirs to the parties who made certain 'deals' at the time of the NLC - e.g. that the chiefly title would alternate between two lineages - would endorse the decisions of their fathers. Thus the original legal settlement could itself become a source of dispute in later years.

Moreover because the NLC settlements ignore the whole range of subsidiary rights recognized at custom (e.g. those acquired by new periods of long co-residence) there

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1 As reported by A.A. Wright, minute, 29 Mar. 1934, CSO F50/27/9. Governor Sir Murchison Fletcher observed however that in effect there could be no appeal against Sukuna's judgments because there was no one qualified to review the evidence - minute, 21 Mar. 1934, ibid.

2 Examples of serious land disputes are now rare. In 1974 there was a prolonged dispute over the succession to the title of Vunivalu in Natewa in which, amongst other things, it was alleged that Ratu Sukuna had interfered with the true succession to favour the chief who had been with him in France in 1917. After a period of the wildest recriminations such disputes seem to succumb to chiefly mediation from traditional leaders and/or the NLC.
has been some loss in the ability of the community to meet future needs, especially those created by new arrivals. For the migratory habits of Fijians did not cease at Cession. And after 1912 there was no legal penalty for absenteeism so that it was again easy for a Fijian to exploit a political and social relationship and move to another district or province. There was no longer any way the newcomer could acquire proprietary rights except to lease from the true owners or live on sufferance as a second-class vulagi, strangers. In contemporary Fiji a third to half of Fijians live away from their own lands. Another loss of flexibility is that the official lists do not allow for the ongoing process of segmentation and amalgamation as kinship groups increase or decrease. The inherent fluidity of Fijian kinship structure could not be accommodated. Not that these kinds of academic observations are of much point unless a practical way could be suggested for achieving a periodic redistribution of land resources while maintaining the finality and clear procedures that would seem indispensable to preserving peace.

The relative satisfaction of Fijians with the state of their landed affairs, sometimes misread as myopic conservatism, would seem the envy of some other Pacific peoples. The work of the NLC in Fiji might be contrasted with the operations of the Maori Land Court in New Zealand. There every effort was made to facilitate the conversion of communal titles to 'progressive' individual ones. The object was so to 'manage' the Maoris that the expansion of European settlers onto Maori lands would be bloodless.¹ A system

¹ See Alan Ward, A Show of Justice (Canberra, 1974), p.263.
of 'legalized land grabbing' it has been called, the logical development of the system in Thurn had nearly introduced to Fiji. Was though the consequence of Fijian security of tenure indifference to the growing needs of the Indians or Europeans? To preserve a Fijian life-style was it necessary to deny an economic future on the land to others?

(iv) 'tied up in the hands of idle natives'

Prior to Cession the Fijian people or rather their chiefs had sold large blocks of prime land for cash, trades goods and guns. The owners of the splendid estate where the Korolevu hotel now stands received four guns and a quantity of powder, lead and caps. Further east at Deuba 500 acres were bought in November 1866 for $145 in trade. The whole island of Katafaga was bought in 1863 from the Tui Cakau by Gustavus Hennings for $150. Several hundred transactions like these were ratified by the Lands Claims Commission in the 1880s and freehold titles given to the European occupants. After the 1905-1908 sales there were 393,000 acres in European hands of which 254,000 were

1 John A. Williams, Politics of the New Zealand Maori (Seattle, 1969), p.16.

2 A District Commissioner of Ba wrote in 1917 that it was 'difficult to believe that anywhere in the world there would be found worse land monopolists than the Fijians or any whose privileges are so securely entrenched' - H.E. Snell to CS, 25 Mar. 1917, CSO 17/3093.

3 These examples are chosen at random from the records of the Lands Claims Commission.
lying idle. These lands were of course among the best in Fiji and had a commercial potential of more significance than the fact that they represented only about one-tenth of the total area of land suitable for agriculture or grazing.

In 1887 when the first Indians were coming to the end of their indenture the government began to seek out Fijian land where the Indians might settle as free citizens. Most Indians however had little trouble picking themselves the eyes of the land and coming to a direct arrangement with the owners. 'Considerable irregularity prevails', noted W.L. Allardyce in 1889, 'as natives are seldom loath to give any one a piece of land to live on for a small pecuniary consideration on a verbal understanding between lessor and lessee'. Under the native regulation governing leases, applications were to be approved by the District Council and forwarded through the Roko to the Governor-in-Council. In 1909 it was reported from Labasa that Indians blithely disregarded the proper channels, bribed the owners directly and came to all kinds of loose arrangements. A mutual contempt for time-consuming legal processes has been a constant feature of Fijian-Indian land transactions. (Even today, when the Native Lands Trust

1 Im Thurn, address to Legislative Council, 14 May 1908, Legislative Council Proceedings, 1908, pp.1-9.

2 See, for instance, Thurston's negotiations with Tui Namosi for 500 acres, 12 Nov. 1887, CSO 88/1804 encl. 96/1333.

3 Allardyce, minute, 21 May 1889, CSO 89/416.

4 See CSO 09/7249.
Board would seem all powerful, Indians grow rice on small patches of non-leaseable Fijian reserve lands - it suits both parties.) The problem is how to estimate the extent to which these undocumented transactions tempered the rigidity of the legal situation.

From the beginning and especially after 1910 government policy was to increase the number of Indian settlements and to induce, if not to force, free Indians to settle on these 'rather than scatter themselves indiscriminately throughout the Colony'.¹ Leases were granted for a maximum of 21 years and generally limited to five acres of agricultural land or 10 acres of pastoral lands.² In 1911 the Fijian lands position was tabulated as follows:

1. Native lands actually under lease at 30 April 1911: 140,974 acres (rental £23,500) - includes approximately 1,700 acres leased to 1,800 Indians.

2. Lands held by Crown for leasing for which the Crown pays rent to the Fijian owners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Annual Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bua</td>
<td>51,972</td>
<td>£520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo North</td>
<td>15,446</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macuata</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadroga</td>
<td>43,190</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>160,608</strong></td>
<td><strong>£643</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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¹ CS to the Stipendiary Magistrate, circular 13 Aug. 1910, CSO 10/6561.

² In 1918 it was 10 acres of agricultural land and 20 of grazing lands. See Rodwell to CO, 15 Aug. 1923, and Principal Regulations, Fiji Royal Gazette, 1918, p.521.
3. Lands handed over to the control of the government unconditionally for which no rent is paid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Approximate Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bua (Wainunu)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo West</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailevu</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taveuni (Ravilevu)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>160,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Legislative Council Paper 14/11

These figures put in doubt the propaganda of the Planters Association that the Fijian land monopoly was the main reason the Colony was slow to progress. The elected members of the Legislative Council were constantly urging, in the words of one, that 'the native owners should not be allowed to defeat the best interests of the community and themselves owing to mental inability...tradition, superstition or sentiment'. ¹ Many government officers were in quiet agreement. After five years in Lau a magistrate wrote in 1914 that it was 'a most retarding influence on its development that most of the coconut land is tied up in the hands of idle natives, who will not lease it and will not use it themselves'. He estimated that where the Fijians were earning about £40,000 a year from their nuts, Europeans on the same lands would make £400,000, 'and one of the biggest assets of the Colony would not be lost'. ² The notion that Fijian land was an asset of the Colony, of the whole

¹ McCrae, Legislative Council Proceedings, 14 Oct. 1907, pp.30-35.
² R. St Johnstone to CS, 9 Jan. 1914, CSO 14/1349.
multi-racial community, an asset wasted in the hands of the idle natives, underlies most of the non-Fijian political rhetoric or administrative comment on Fijian lands in the course of this century;¹ and it had some effect, it will be seen, on the people themselves.

Im Thurn's successor, Sir F. Henry May, was instructed not to allow the sale of Fijian land. The surrender of control sought (legitimately) by the government was to be voluntary on the part of the owners and equitable in its terms.² May resumed Governor Jackson's approach of 1903. 'No wise landlord', he lectured the Council of Chiefs in 1911, 'lets good agricultural land lie idle and unproductive', especially if there were tenants offering 'good hard gold' as rent.³ Six provinces (Tailevu, Cakaudrove, Ra, Rewa, Colo North and Colo East) admitted to having more lands they could lease. The Council resolved to hand over to the government the control of unused lands and lands under lease when such leases expired - the government to fix the terms of the leases as it saw fit. 'It is our wish that all future applications...be made direct to the Government. We fully trust the Government

¹ E.g. 'the Fijians own most of the land, use little of it, and are reluctant to see it used by other races, even if the users are prepared to pay an economic rent' - A. Peacock, 'Economic Problems of a Multi-racial Society - The Fiji Case', University of London seminar paper, 1960, typescript in National Archives of Fiji.

² CO to May, 31 May 1911, CO 83/100.

will safeguard our interests in dealing with our lands.'

It was also agreed that the government deduct 5% of rents by way of agency fees - increased to 10% in 1912.

It was soon revealed that the Fijian interpretation of 'waste and unused' and that of the government were widely divergent. Land was used in Fijian eyes if it yielded the occasional wild yam for his pot or timber for his house. Practically no good land was handed over in the desirable areas. In June 1915 the government decreed that from 1 January 1916 no further leasing of Fijian land would be allowed unless it had first been handed over.

Fijians were thus asked to forego valuable rights without compensation, and not surprisingly, there was some opposition from those who saw what was happening. A chief of Rewa and others protested that the disposal of their lands was their 'prerogative and that of our descendants until the end of the world'. Then in 1916 the government legislated a new deal for the tenants of Fijian lands. If the owners refused to hand over their leases to the government, the lessee desiring an extension could demand compensation to the value of his permanent and unexhausted improvements to the land. The government hoped to prevent

1 Resolution XIV, ibid.
3 Regulations made by the Governor-in-Council, 25 June 1915, effective 1 Jan. 1916.
4 L.B. Tuisawau and others to the Governor, 6 Dec. 1915, Na Mata, Jan. 1916, pp.8-9.
5 The Native Lands (Leases) Ordinance, XXIII of 1916. See CSO 16/9016.
Fijians ejecting lessees unfairly - often at the instance of another Indian coveting the lease and offering a bigger bribe. All transactions in Fijian land were declared invalid unless approved in writing by the Governor-in-Council.

Opposition to government control was strongest in Ba. A letter signed by 240 men of the Bulu and Nailaga districts put their objection none too politely: 'If we were to approve, what would happen to us in the future? Where would we live? Or are our wives and children to live in caves with the goats?'\(^1\) In 1916 only eight of the 70 land-owning matagali in Ba, controlling some 150,000 acres, offered land for leasing, 130 acres in all. Not that much of this land was good for sugar cane. The best had been alienated or leased already and some villages were short of land for their own needs.

One of the objects of the new legislation was to avoid corrupt contacts between the Fijian owners and would-be Indian tenants - land applications had long been regarded by Fijians as heaven-sent opportunities for easy spoil. However in the absence of complete surveys it was usually necessary for an applicant to describe the boundaries with the help of the owners, and there was no way of preventing bribes being offered to these owners to surrender their land to the government in the first place. The owners could adjust the level of the bribe to compensate for the

\(^1\) Ruveni Naisua and 241 others to the Native Commissioner, 8 Oct. 1915, CSO 15/9101. There was some resistance also in the Nausori area. See Buli Nausori to NC, 22 Dec. 1915, CSO 15/10912.
anticipated amount of rent to be decided by the government. This 'undoubted burlesque of the situation', as the Provincial Commissioner of Ba saw it, was not calculated to appeal to the Indian applicants the government was trying to help.  

On the other hand it would be difficult to prove that the surrender of control to the government or the availability of land on easy terms led to the energetic development of the Colony. There was some consternation at the Council of Chiefs in 1920 as to what the government really desired in regard to unused lands whether Fijian or Crown. The Vunivalu of Bau, Kadavulevu's cousin Ratu Pope Seniloli, had a motion passed that the government should 'bring from England men to occupy our lands and to develop them and so to assist in the prosperity of the natives'.  

If Fiji offered such potential why had the settlers not come? The government also disappointed Fijians in its agency role. In the early 1920s rents were tremendously in arrears. In 1923 outstanding rents in Nadi were £3,691 of the total rent roll of £5,442 (68%). In Suva it was 65%. Rents in Tailevu were in some cases unpaid for seven or eight years. Landowners were kept waiting for days at the offices of the Provincial Commissioners only to come away with nothing.

If Fijians had reason to be disillusioned, the European colonists were still far from satisfied. In a memorandum to the Secretary of State in 1924 Sir Maynard

1 H.E. Snell to CS, 25 Mar. 1917, CSO 17/3093.
3 See figures at CSO 23/4018.
Hedstrom acknowledged the difficulty of securing markets for crops - Australia had closed its door to Fijian bananas, for instance - but there were encouraging prospects for dairying, cotton and pineapple, he argued, which made it desirable that the Colonial Office reconsider its policy and allow native lands to be made 'more easily available' for settlement. The Fijians were 'a primitive and underdeveloped people' who should not be allowed 'through caprice or through lack of knowledge, to hinder and obstruct the natural development of the Colony'.

Fortunately for Fijians the government of the day refuted the charge that they were obstructing the 'natural development' of the colony. The acting Governor, T.E. Fell, could cite the example of the Ra people who had surrendered 76,000 acres during the previous six years - the Tova Estate - while the Provincial Councils of Macuata, Cakaudrove and Bua in 1923 had reiterated their willingness to hand over surplus lands. Finally Fell predicted that a time would come when Fijians themselves would be able to develop their lands commercially: 'future generations may have surprises in store'.

About 1930 when a large number of Indian sugar leases were up for renewal, some Fijians in those provinces expressed interest in working the land themselves. CSR started to train a few Fijians on its own estates (see Chapter Six). The influential Methodist minister at Ba,

1 J. Maynard Hedstrom, memorandum, 4 Aug. 1924, encl. CO to Fell, 5 Nov. 1924.

2 Fell to CO, 20 Feb. 1925. See also CSO 23/4117, 25/53.
the Rev. A.D. Lelean, had taught Fijians canegrowing on his mission lands since 1925 and was a militant preacher of individualism. Landowners began to query the wisdom of leasing, say, 10 acres of matagali land for £5 a year and watching a single tenant make £150 from his cane. Although few Fijians were in a position to redeem their lands and compensate the tenants, the Indians were made uneasy by extremist propaganda and the atmosphere of resentment. Representatives of Indian planters were able to cite instances where some of their fellows had been made homeless by eviction. They pressed for longer leases of up to 99 years arguing that they had severed their connection from India in every way and had made Fiji their permanent home.  

In 1930 the Council of Chiefs approved the principle of longer leases to Indians if Fijian needs were safeguarded, and in 1933 new leasing regulations increased the usual lease period from 21 to 30 years with provision for 99 years in special cases - such as where the applicant was a European with the right connections. The Provincial Commissioners had already been instructed to ensure that adequate planting lands were available to a village by demarcating non-leaseable reserves. In memoranda to the government, CSR said it was deeply

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1 Patwari and other leaseholders to General Secretary of the Moslem League, 21 Apr. 1933, CSO F37/42.
2 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1930, Resolutions XIII and XX.
concerned, in 1933, by the reluctance of Fijians to renew leases and the insecurity of its 4,000 Indian sub-tenants. The Council of Chiefs was prevailed upon to approve legislation compelling Fijians re-occupying land to keep it under efficient cultivation or have it leased again. CSR argued that the measure was not sufficient: continuity of cultivation was still broken. In their opinion no successful Indian canefarmer should be refused renewal. The company despaired of ever being able to rely on Fijians for a regular cane supply as it once had in Thurston's day.

Fijian refusals to renew leases were most frequent in the Nausori area where 90% of the mill's requirements were supplied by some 2,000 small growers. Of 34 renewal applications in 1932, 16 were refused, the Fijians usually stating as their reason that they wanted to plant the land themselves. The Department of Agriculture was eager to help Fijians farm individually and was prepared to market their produce. In most cases, however, the Fijians re-employed Indians to do all their work, and signed promissory notes to be honoured by the sale of the crops.

On the western side there was much less trouble with the renewal of leases - 'no trouble at all' in Lautoka during 1935, reported the District Commissioner: 'Only one renewal was refused...and the Indian lessee had two other

1 Resolution VI of 1933 Council of Chiefs encl. CSO F37/42/2. The chiefs were congratulated by the Governor for their 'wise and statesmanlike attitude'.

2 H.C. Monckton to CS, 10 Mar. 1933, CSO F23/7. The notes were signed for amounts less than £20 to render inapplicable the Native Dealings Ordinance of 1904.
leases'. In 1936 only four renewals were refused and again in 1938 the Fijians were adjudged most reasonable. The situation varied from year to year, from province to province. The accompanying table for Lautoka, Nadi and Macuata would seem to confirm the impression that the problem was not generally acute. It is regrettable that prior to 1937 accurate statistics of Fijian refusals to lease were not kept, nor any analysis made of the reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Applications Refused</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautoka</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macuata</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadi</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual reports of the Provincial Commissioners, CSO

Nevertheless the CSR Company continued to press for absolute security for the tenants of Fijian lands against the threat of a possible change in Fijian goodwill. Reading the signs of the times, Ratu Sukuna took it on himself to put the Fijian house in order, choosing as his forum the 1936 Council of Chiefs. In a speech lasting over an hour the emergent statesman reviewed the history of Fijian lands since Cession and paid tribute to the disinterestedness of the British Government. Fijians were now faced with a new situation, he said, where they had to accept that they owed a moral obligation to the State to use their land. They all knew the parable of the talents. Did they also know that in other countries governments used death duties and taxes to redistribute the land more equitably? Better for the chiefs to propose their own scheme for the

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1 R.N. Caldwell to CS, 31 Mar. 1936, CSO F16/2.
2 A.E. Howard to CS, 6 Aug. 1939, ibid.
productive use of land than have forced on them something less congenial. The current system of leasing was wasteful — only the eyes of the land were taken — and corrupt:

We can, surely, come to no other decision but to abolish a system that is capable of producing so much evil...gradually destroying our sense of purity and honesty of dealing and respect for others, qualities that are cherished ornaments of our civilization. I maintain that native lands can only be leased fairly if the Government has control...

Only two men spoke against the motion, the Tui Cakau and his fellow member from Cakaudrove.

The real test of the resolution came with its referral to the 19 Provincial Councils. Ratu Sukuna's speech was printed and distributed widely, and broadcast over the new weekly Fijian session on the radio. The chief addressed one or two councils personally. The final results were an extraordinary achievement for a viewpoint that had never before been put by a Fijian to his own people: 12 councils agreed unanimously and four by a large majority that after the determination of the amount of land needed for their 'proper development', the surplus, including existing leases, should be handed over to the government for leasing to others. Only Cakaudrove was opposed, and two councils were undecided.

1 A Vosa nei Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna, Bosevakaturaga 1936, (Suva, 1936). Translation encl. Barton to CO, 17 Nov. 1936.

2 Cakaudrove Provincial Council was opposed because its chief was. See Cakaudrove Provincial Council Book 1935-1938, pp.14-15.
On the eve of his departure from Fiji in July 1938, Governor Sir Arthur Richards proposed a Native Lands Trust Ordinance to give effect to Ratu Sukuna's motion and empower the government to deal with all the Fijian lands in the colony without reference to the owners - the reserve lands having been first set aside for exclusive Fijian use. The Council of Chiefs approved Richard's proposals in 1938 and the final bill for the establishment of the Native Lands Trust Board was approved by the Legislative Council on 22 February 1940. The Indian members acknowledged that Fijian owners had 'undoubtedly adopted a broad and generous attitude to their lessees', but pressed for leases to be as long as possible and even perpetual. Ratu Sukuna hailed the legislation as a 'monument of trust in British rule, of confidence in its honesty, and of hopes...that Europeans, Indians and Fijians will settle down to labour, sacrificing if need be community interests for the benefit of the whole'.

It is a truism of recent history that the creation of a centralized government agency often brings as many new problems as it solves old ones, as well as opening up new avenues for individual corruption. Judged in the context

1 Farewell address of Sir Arthur Richards, 21 July 1938, CP 53/38. Richards suggested leases of free lands would probably be for 99 years. Most leases today are for 10 years, a cause of much 'resentment and ill-will' in the view of a recent government committee - Fiji Times, 3 Oct. 1975.

2 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1938, Resolution XL. The motion was carried 38 - 3.


4 Sukuna, ibid., p.108.
of the late 1930s, however, it is difficult to suggest what other course than government control would have been acceptable to all the parties concerned. Certainly it was the Fijians who appeared to have the most to lose. Fijian control over the government itself and its statutory bodies, such as the Native Lands Trust Board, was not entertained as even a remote possibility at a time when the chiefs were struggling to keep their place within the Fijian Administration itself.
CHAPTER THREE

THEY DO NOT HAVE CHARMS TO MAKE YAMS GROW BY, BECAUSE THEY HAVE A CHIEF (A.M. Hocart)¹

The chiefs in ancient Fijian societies, according to the interesting speculations of the pioneer anthropologist A.M. Hocart, were at the centre of an agricultural cycle of services and offerings. First fruits were taken to the chief in whom the gods came forth to ensure the fertility of the land and the prosperity of the people: 'It is the worship of the king that brings abundance, and at his consecration they pray that the princes may continue in life, that the fish may keep coming landwards, etc.'²

How far these beliefs were consciously held at the turn of the century is impossible to say. They at least remained implicit in Fijian ritual - a subject deserving specialist study. Wilkinson noted in 1904 that there was no ceremonial custom in which there was such diversity of practice as the ai sevu, the presentation of first fruits, originally 'an integral part of the peoples' mythology and in the vast majority of cases the presentation was made in the first instance to the gods, who were legion... It was the Annual Crops Festival (Harvest Home).³ He doubted that ai sevu bore 'even inferential connection with [chiefly] rights in the soil'

² ibid., p.20.
³ Wilkinson, minute, 15 Feb. 1904, CSO 04/446.
and questioned whether the chief's legislated share of rent monies should be justified as compensation for the loss of *ai sevu* from lands leased.\(^1\) Apparently there was a process akin to secularization, not to say debasement, of chiefly observances that became tangled with the administrative order - so that, in the case of *ai sevu*, presentations called by that name were made several times a year not only to the chiefs of the land but to the government officers who now exercised some of the functions of the former. A *turaga ni koro* might receive two or three yams from each village; a Buli five to 10 yams from the whole *tikina* - if he were a stranger then another presentation would be made to the hereditary chief of the *vanua*; finally the Roko Tui might demand 10 yams from each man. It is hardly likely that such *ai sevu* retained all the ritual significance of the old agricultural cycle: rather they were accepted simply as a form of remuneration. 'The decay of custom' here is better seen as a process of acculturation where it affects those institutions of Fijian society which were enmeshed with the Fijian Administration and the exercise of power.

The most important of these institutions was the chiefly order itself. As Thurston had once lectured a Catholic priest who laid a complaint against the Roko of Serua, 'the premier fact of native polity' was that the community had precedence over the individual and at the head of the community was the chief whose patriarchal influence extended to 'the extremest minutiae of native

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1 See Jackson, minute, 1 Feb. 1904, *ibid.*
life'.\footnote{Thurston to Bishop Vidal, draft, July 1890, CSO 90/1860.} It was government policy in the 19th century to interfere as little as possible with the exercise of that influence which it was 'their heritage to exert'.\footnote{Ibid.} As Roko Tuis of provinces whose boundaries were largely decided by the configurations of political alliances existing prior to Cession, the high chiefs enjoyed a real measure of personal independence, while the Native Regulations and courts ensured their ability to marshall men and resources to meet the needs of government as well as maintaining the prosperity and prestige of the province as a whole.

As Dr Rusiate Nayacakalou observed of the Fijian Administration even in the late 1950s, it was heavily interdependent with the structure of traditional leadership arising from the basic corporate groups of Fijian society. The primary unit of local organization was the village whose households looked for leadership to the senior chief of a dominant lineage. Except in parts of the interior of Viti Levu, a village was ranked with other villages in a vanua. Sometimes translated 'state', its literal meaning, a 'land' or 'place', better conveys the elemental nature of the vanua in the Fijian polity as the largest workable unit of close co-operation under one chief, namely, the senior chief of the highest ranking village. Often styled Tui followed by the name given to the area or the people, the head of the vanua had a 'definite right, subject to certain conditions, to make decisions on all matters

\footnotetext[1]{Thurston to Bishop Vidal, draft, July 1890, CSO 90/1860.}
\footnotetext[2]{Ibid.}
affecting the group as a group'\(^1\) - and there were few matters whether it be planting, fishing, housebuilding, entertaining or ceremonial festivities that were not in some sense group matters or 'things of the land' (\textit{ka vakavanua}). The life of the \textit{vanua} was sustained by the government unit of district administration, the \textit{tikina}, and is treated separately in the fifth chapter as the most important single cohesive factor in maintaining a distinctively Fijian design for living in the 20th century.

Whether at district level or that of the province, Fijians had certain expectations of the chiefly order and a uniform model of chiefly leadership well-expressed by a Fijian contributor to \textit{Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu} in 1932:

\begin{quote}
The Ratu or Tui or Rokotui: it is his heavy burden to rule the land. Not just to rule but to rule well. The \textit{yavusa} allied with him and the installing chiefs entrust the land to him because they rely on him to be their source of life, prosperity and increase. The things given him to rule are these: the name of the land, and with the land the people, and with the people their lands and everything else. This role or dignity is not of man's devising; it comes from Almighty God.\(^2\)
\end{quote}

The person of the chief was hedged with elaborate ceremonial, deferential modes of indirect and plural address, courtly euphemisms, crouching low when he passed, the \textit{tabu} attached to his clothing and food, and above all the dread fear of incurring his ancestors' curse by even unwitting breaches

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{1} \textit{ibid.}, p.115.
  \item \textit{Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu}, Mar. 1932, pp.10-11.
\end{itemize}
of his sacredness. Even today when customary modes of respect are said to be breaking down, there is no more common story as folklore and personal reminiscence than the evils that befell a man who went against his chief.

It is a mistake though to conceive Fijian chieftainship in the 20th century as a despotic system when so much of the chief's style and dignity, his income and power depended on the practical goodwill of a people in no way dependent on him for their land or physical security. They gave food, property and labour to the chief with the clear understanding that he represented the honour of their group in its dealings with other groups and that he would bear the main burden of hospitality to visitors. He was helped then to maintain a certain 'state' but expected to exercise liberality to all. Chiefs in government positions were expected to use the perquisites of office to maintain a greater state and incur greater liabilities. There is little evidence to suggest that Fijian chiefs amassed fortunes in office, but much to show that they lived beyond their means to meet the reciprocal obligations attached to their privileges. (See individual careers below.)

After 1897 the Fijian Administration began to evolve a more bureaucratic set of expectations for chiefs subsidized by government appointments and salaries, especially for chiefs in charge of provinces as Roko Tui. O'Brien and his successors were particularly concerned about the extent to which the Native Regulations protected the lala rights of chiefs to make levies on the people for their personal needs: house-building, garden-planting, supplying visitors with food, cutting and building canoes, supplying turtle, and making mats, masi cloth and other
articles. Jackson's committee to revise the Native Regulations insisted on a dubious distinction between 'personal' lala and 'communal' lala with the intention of isolating a set of chiefly privileges that could be circumscribed by regulation and gradually whittled down as obstacles to achieving a more egalitarian society. If exactly the same levies were made, as they had to be made, to achieve objects that were clearly for the welfare of the community, then it was regarded as 'communal' lala of a different order and its exercise thought more defensible.

Without lala, the Council of Chiefs had declared in 1892, their social organization would be destroyed. In one form or another lala entered into all relationships between the people and their chiefs. In 1875 David Wilkinson echoed chiefly experience when he wrote: 'in fact it is the keystone of the Chief's government and authority over his people, the channel through which comes his "sinews of war" in times of trouble; and his "ways and means" in times of peace.' In 1898 he reaffirmed that there was 'nothing so natural familiar or so effective to keepe up the peoples industry', but he deplored that lala had been brought into disrepute by 'young bumptious, covetious, impecunious, indolent chiefs who impose upon the people

1 The distinction became law in the Native Regulations of 1912: 6 of 1912 'relating to personal services to chiefs' and 7 of 1912 'to provide for the performance of services for common benefit'.

2 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1892, Resolution III.

3 Wilkinson, memorandum, 'Lala or Fijian Service Tenures', 18 Dec. 1875, encl. CSO 00/3434.
simply because they are of the family who have the... fudule right over many tribes or peoples'.

O'Brien accepted the argument of Allardyce that

so long as the communal system exists certain kinds of 'lala' must be practised... There is no getting away from the fact that certain chiefs have a hereditary right to lala and it would be a gross injustice to deprive them of those rights.

'We must proceed by degrees', O'Brien replied with characteristic caution,

and recognise the force of immemorial customs and the difficulty of suddenly introducing wholesale innovation...it is easier to improve the housing of the people...than to alter their customs & habits. We must be content at first with repressing any new exactions and moderating old ones where excessive, and gradually work up to our standard.

His aim was to get 'all lala whatever' registered on the programme of work, seeing the unregulated lala of the 19th century as 'an evil of wide spreading importance'.

The Provincial Inspectors kept an eagle eye on the flow of property and tended to see lala in every exchange. The Roko Tui Tailevu in 1901 had to explain to his Inspector

1 Wilkinson to CS, 6 Jan. 1898, CSO 98/215. His singular speaking is no reflection on the quality of his observations.

2 Allardyce, minute, 25 Sept. 1900, CSO 00/3434.

3 O'Brien, minute, 25 Sept. 1900, ibid.

4 O'Brien, minute, 8 Feb. 1899, CSO 99/683.
that one presentation to a Bauan lady at Rewa was not lala but a requegu consoling her on a bereavement.¹ Buli Namena was dismissed by the same Inspector for increasing by 10 an authorised levy of 100 dalo tops from each village needed for the NSMs garden, that is, for daring to confuse personal lala with communal or official lala.² The Roko Tui Rewa was severely reprimanded for sending a tabua to Vatulele island (Nadroga) asking for masi cloth. The Vatulele District Council had obliged by ordering 10 fathoms of masi from every woman. The Roko ungallantly said his wife was to blame, and promised not to do such a thing again.³

The assault on chiefly lala gathered momentum under Sir Everard im Thurn. He was particularly worried by detailed reports he received in 1904 from Kadavu, where the chiefs seemed to retain more power over their people than in any other province, or had to exercise it more openly because their people were so turbulent. 'Of course the custom of lala is objectionable in our eyes', confided Francis Baxendale of the Native Office to im Thurn, marking well his listener's prejudices, 'especially as the chiefs have for some time, in many places, given up doing their part of custom, but vested rights cannot be disposed of off hand'.⁴ He was commenting on a report from Assistant Native Commissioner W. Scott supporting the complaint of

1 CSO 99/949.
2 CSO 00/2896.
3 CSO 01/3134.
4 Baxendale, minute, 21 Oct. 1904, CSO 04/4229.
a Kadavu man:

The chiefs lala is our trouble - our taxes
a mere bagatelle...Never a day passes
without some exaction - 10 yams here -
10 there, a root of grog, a fowl, a pig.
We work and produce copra - the Chief sells
it for money - we get nothing: he levies
yams which he sells for money.¹

At the time of Scott's inspection, the Roko Tui Kadavu
had levied 5,000 yams on Nabukelevu and sent the Sanima
people to cut buabua and vesi trees for his new house.
It was not of course registered on the programme of work.
The Methodist Mission in Kadavu - as in every province -
asked for contributions in kind, say, 12 yams for each
man, woman and child every three months, and arranged a
highly successful annual vakamisioneri collection along
the competitive lines of customary exchange, with district
vying against district to keep a continuous procession
of contributors taking coins to swell the collection
plate by which their district's honour would be measured.²

These facts built up in im Thurn's mind the
impression of a people continually being discouraged and
impoverished by greedy chiefs and missionaries. 'The
"Communal System"', he decided, was 'not a communal system
in that practically all the rights are to the chiefs and not
to the "commoners"'. It might have been a truly communal
system in 1875 when Gordon 'bound it down, as far as was

¹ Scott to NC, 21 Sept. 1904, ibid.
² In 1905 vakamisioneri collections totalled over £5,000.
in his power, forever in the form in which it then was [but] he overlooked the fact that, in substituting the power of the British Sovereign for "club-law", he was ipso facto destroying the one power which the Commoner had of enforcing his rights against the chief. To the chiefs themselves he said:

some of you think only, or chiefly, of yourselves, of your lala, and your sevu, and your other exactions from your people. These of you are unpatriotic; and it is these of you who are killing your people. You may think that is a hard saying, but it is true...^2

The whole speech was published in Na Mata and some commoners wrote thanking im Thurn for launching a new era: 'We will be free to give our attention to other things for the benefit of our wives and children.'^3

Im Thurn undoubtedly believed he had a vast silent majority behind him. He was encouraged in June 1905 to make the

1 Im Thurn, note, 16 Nov. 1904, Im Thurn Papers, ms2, 10. Im Thurn's view has been persuasive in the literature of Fiji and has been elaborated by anthropologists anxious to contrast the flexibility and reciprocity of pre-Cession Fijian societies with the stifling authoritarianism they see in the Fijian Administration. It tends to overlook the fact that the club had been more often used by chiefs than commoners. See especially C.S. Belshaw, 'The Effects of Limited Anthropological Theory on Problems of Fijian Administration' in R.W. Force (ed.), Induced Political Change in the Pacific (Honolulu, 1965), pp.63-73.

2 Im Thurn, opening address, 10 Apr. 1905, Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1905.

3 J. Baleiricau and others of Nabitu and Vanuadina to im Thurn, 7 Apr. 1904, CSO 05/1971.
death of the Tui Cakau an opportunity to ban 'these burdensome funeral ceremonies' and begin lightening the load on the people - though this particular decision to ban the burua or mourning ceremonies was more likely to have shocked the people and robbed them of one of the great occasions in Fijian life. And it was only spectacular inter-provincial gatherings such as this that the government had a chance of regulating. A letter to Na Mata in September 1906 referred to im Thurn's speech to the Council of Chiefs, then described a small exchange (solevu) that had just taken place between some of the ladies of Bau and Vuci village, Tokatoka. The ladies brought only three snakes and their traditional meke clothes, the writer claimed, and exchanged them for 60 mats. They received three days of hospitality during which were consumed 30 pigs (two were bought for £11 subscribed by the village), a cow, 910 puddings, 800 yams, 20,000 dalo and £2 worth of tea. The ladies then returned to Bau with 133 mats, 80 tins of biscuits, and piles of yams and dalo for their chiefs.

If it offended the government that these kinds of exchanges absorbed so much of the productive energies of the people, it concerned Fijians more when they did not take place with the customary sense of proportion and reciprocity, or when the Bauan chiefs (the main culprits) and others failed in their return obligations. Another writer in Na Mata added a further dimension to the lala

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1 Im Thurn, minute, 29 June 1905, CSO 05/2720.
2 'Progressive' to the editor, Na Mata, Sept. 1906, pp.138-9.
question: 'At this time it seems to me that our chiefs are ruining or perverting the custom of lala for they exercise lala on the whole province according to their government appointments.' Although this complaint was answered by others who pointed out how much greater lala exactions were in the old days, the real question seems not to have been the actual extent of lala but the ease with which chiefly Roko Tuis and Bulis dispensed with the customary ways of making requests and treated lala as a form of remuneration.

The problem can be best illustrated in Tailevu. From before Cession and until Thurston called a halt in 1894, the Bauan chiefs exercised wholesale lala rights on those communities of Lomaiviti known as galivakabau, subject-to-Bau, and also on certain towns in Tailevu known as the kai vale, household servants of the Bauans. In the rest of Tailevu and Lomaiviti the lala rights of the Bauan chiefs were more circumscribed. Levies were contributed either voluntarily or were requested through properly appointed mata, envoys. According to Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, who grew up in Cakobau's household, there were resident on Bau island mata from the nearby districts of Namata, Namara, Dravo, Buretu, and Kiuva. The mata would on occasion be sent to their towns with some request to be made vakaveiwekani, 'as if from relatives', for all these people were counted as true Bauans (kai Bau dina). Then in the north of the province there were the towns of the kai Waimaro Dri (the tikina of Namalata, Sawakasa, Wailotua

1 'Ko Namatua' to the editor, Na Mata, Sept. 1908, pp.136-37.
and Naloto) who were the allies or borderers (bati) required to send aid in time of war. Other districts still further north, Namena, Dawasama, and Nakorotubu in Ra, took part in Bauan solevu - as did certain parts of Naitasiri and Suva. First fruits, ai sevu, were not presented to the Vunivalu of Bau but to the temple Navatanitawake. In a good year offerings (roverove) of yams might be made from the bati towns and others, but they were, claimed Ratu Joni, voluntary tokens of friendship.

Given the military might of Bau before Cession, the voluntary nature of tribute from Tailevu seems unlikely. Ratu Joni's more important observation was that the bureaucratic operations of the Fijian Administration had effectively levelled away these nice distinctions between the status of each vanua and of particular villages. Ranking was only preserved in seating arrangements and the details of etiquette and oratory within the procedures of the councils. No village or district could claim a special exemption in meeting the needs of the province on the grounds that Bau had first to approach them in the proper way. It was a simple matter for the Roko Tui Tailevu to decide that every man in the province was to bring, say, 10 yams to Bau as the Roko's official lala - it was no longer relevant to inquire what was the Vunivalu's customary entitlement. As NLC inquiries showed in 1917 to an embarrassing degree, the Bauan chiefs were losing

1 Ratu Joni Madraiwiiwi to the Governor, 26 Oct. 1813, CSO 14/1745.
2 But see conflict between Bau and Verata on this very point in Chapter Five, p.274.
touch with the old order and were confused about their exact relationships with particular communities and their rights and privileges at custom.¹

To deal with the Fijian Administration, then, is to deal with an ambiguous amalgam of old and new. The imposition of colonial rule and appointments deriving from the Crown intruded radically new principles of organization with accountability to the top, yet in many ways the chiefs were leading their people as they had always done, felt much the same obligation to ensure their prosperity, and arrived at decisions through a process of consultation with traditional leaders in councils that operated in the customary style and really bore little resemblance to western institutions of local government.

¹ See G.V. Maxwell to CS, 11 July 1917, CSO 17/5947. A list drawn up by the Bauans gave the following list of towns as 'kai vale and subject to direct lala' to the Vunivalu of Tuikaba matagali of Bau: Vatoa, Waicoka, Kaba, Ovea, Namuka, Nakoroivau, Daku, Tubalevu and Kumi in Tailevu; Uluibau and Savuna on Moturiki; Tokou on Ovalau; Mudu, Nasau and Nabuna on Koro; Vanuaso, Nacavanadi, Malawai on Gau; and Waitoga, Vatana and Namatana on Nairai. The Vusaradave matagali claimed Natila (Tailevu), Nasinu (Ovalau), Tovualailai (Nairai) and Navukailagi (Gau) and several villages on Moturiki.

Since the appointment of Ratu Sir George Cakobau, the Vunivalu of Bau, as Governor General of Fiji (1 Jan.1973) there has been a remarkable revival of some of these old 'paths of the land'. To Government House in Suva, as once to Bau, comes voluntary tribute from every part of the Bau dominions - and elsewhere. Ancient ties such as those between Moala and Bau, well developed in the early 19th century, but later eclipsed by Tongan intervention, become highly 'relevant' again when they enable remote villages to participate in the great occasions of state.
Then again the further their official duties such as tax-collecting and road-making deviated from the customary ways of using men and resources (to satisfy the minimum demands of colonial rule), the more need they had of the apparatus of a developed state, especially the system of courts and punishments. Conflicts of loyalty and confusion of rules were built into the Fijian Administration, and yet these same conflicts and ambiguities were its fundamental strength in that they arose from the interlocking of bureaucratic and customary processes giving to one the advantages of the other. Allegiance to chiefly officials was total: 'there was no situation where a chief was not a chief'.

Some of the younger Rokos were sensitive to the government's preoccupation with lala and moved of their own accord to restrict it. Thus Ratu A. Finau, Roko Tui Lau, who had unsuccessfully tried to levy property in 1901 to take to Bau in honour of the deceased Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, announced at the end of 1905 that he had abolished lala except for housebuilding and plantations, for which he was much praised. In 1909 the new Roko of notorious Kadavu, Ratu Ifereimi Qasevakatini, suggested that all 'official' lala attached to the office of Buli and his own be abolished and that each chief limit the exercise of lala to his own people and adhere strictly to local custom. The response was unexpected. The Bulis protested that their people were

1 Nayacakalou, 'Fijian Leadership...', p.316.
2 CSO 01/1058.
3 Finau to CS, 21 Oct. 1905, CSO 05/4533.
not prepared to let the Roko of their province be entirely dependent on his own matagali for his lala:

They desired to do their share, in fact they objected to be left out, especially as oco [a feast] was to be provided. They desired to assist the Roko of the Province as had always been the custom in Kadavu.

Buli Sanima sd. 'We are Fijians - not Indians, let us act always as Fijians in accordance with the customs of our lands'.

Whereupon it was resolved that each man of five districts would give the Roko 10 yams and four districts would plant his gardens as desired. The Bulis' lala was set as two days work in July, August and September. It is a nice glimpse of the tendency of Fijians to come to rapid terms with congenial aspects of the Fijian Administration and defend them as chiefly customs.

In 1911 the Council of Chiefs finally resolved at the request of the Governor, to forego the Rokos'

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1 W. Scott, Nov. 1909, Kadavu Provincial Council Book.

2 Similarly the chiefs protested in 1932 when the government removed from the Communal Services Regulation three items that seemed to offend the Geneva Convention on forced labour effective 3 June 1932 viz. the transport of mail and government officials, the conveyance of the sick and the assistance of NLC surveyors. The chiefs said that by the abolition of free transport 'a chiefly custom of our land would be done away with' - Ratu Pope Seniloli, Ratu Deve Toganivalu and Ratu Joni Maitatini to Secretary for Native Affairs, 21 Jan. 1932, encl. Fletcher to CO, 9 Nov. 1932. The government was glad to allow the provincial councils separately to re-enact these 'forced labour' provisions.
official lala. Lala exercised on behalf of other officials, usually the NSMs, Provincial Scribes and Native Medical Practitioners (NMPs) was also abolished. These officials were given a small increase in their salaries and told to rely on them. Only the Bulis retained lala rights attached to their government position. Usually the men of a district worked a day or two each month in the Buli's garden. Communal lala of course remained, and the programme of work. Personal lala continued to be exercised on a smaller scale by hereditary chiefs and was confined to close adherents. In 1912 Ratu Joni Maitatini of Rewa complained that the position of chiefs had become a pitiable one indeed. The privileges of the chiefs have been gradually withdrawn and to put it plainly in the English language he has become the 'laughing stock' of the community. Surely those high chiefs need protection and support at the hands of the Government.

Later instances of old-time personal lala are rare. On 7 April 1919 Ro Tuisawau of Rewa arrived in true chiefly style at Vabea in Kadavu and blew the conch shell (davui) for the Ono people to come together. He demanded that they give him 4 1/2 tons of copra for which he had obligingly brought 70 empty bags. Lala vakavanua, Tuisawau called it - 'stealing', translated the Provincial Commissioner of Rewa, although he added that the chief would undoubtedly have been within his rights in years now gone.

1 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1911, Resolution XVIII. The Roko Tuis of Tailevu and Rewa held out unsuccessfully for compensation.
3 D.R. Stewart, minute, 22 Apr. 1919, SNA 19/1095.
(ii) 'like a lot of drifting people'

Ro Tuisawau was representative of many individual chiefs whose stars were in the descendant, whose lives did not fuse conveniently with the colonial ethos, who for lack of education, or inclination or a certain kind of personality, did not seize on the new possibilities for advancement and power in the Fijian Administration. Foremost amongst these chiefs were the 'dissidents of Bau', as they were known in government circles, a large group comprising the unemployed members of the four chiefly mataqali on the island. They were led by Ratu Etuate Wainiu, eldest but low-born son of Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, thus a grandson of Cakobau. Wainiu had made a short career in the Armed Native Constabulary; likewise some of the others, including Ratu Joni Colata, Ratu Tevita Raivalita and Ratu Tevita Wilikinisoni Tuivanuavou, had held and lost government appointments.

These men were the sons of chiefs who had lived a life of violence and abundance, and who even after Cession had sailed their great canoes to collect tribute from most of the Lomaiviti group and many parts of Viti Levu - exactly which parts was already a matter of dispute. Wholesale abuse of their lala rights led Thurston to bar access to Lomaiviti by Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and the Bauan chiefs in 1894, and although for several years tribute continued to come on a voluntary basis, the Bauan chiefs found themselves chronically short of food. They had little

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1 Thurston to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, 30 July 1894, CSO 94/2049. The following year Bau was so short of food that relief supplies of rice were sent to the island - CSO 95/2579.
land of their own, having at best indirect or secondary rights to lands occupied by their traditional vassals and allies. None of these rights was upheld by the Native Lands Commission. The Bauan chiefs were particularly embittered by their failure to gain part of the Namata lands directly opposite the island - a decision made in 1894.\(^1\) The Namata people, originally from Namalata further north, occupied their lands at the pleasure of the Bauans, the chiefs argued, as did most of their neighbours in southern Tailevu. When some of these lands were sold between 1905 and 1907 the Bauans received nothing.

Ratu Joni Colata led a large delegation to the Native Commissioner in 1907 to put their grievances:

At the present day we see very many commoners coming to Suva to receive the rents of lands. We receive no portion of this money... Our position at Bau is an impossible one. At present nothing is brought to us with which to clothe ourselves or to provide oil for our lamps... Wherever we go we are the laughing stock of the people who receive money. They say, 'They are Chiefs - they have no lands'.\(^2\)

1 Similarly, disputes over land near the Nausori mill broke out whenever CSR required further leases. In 1885 there was an unpleasant confrontation at Nausori between the Chief of Namata with his men and the Bauans under Ratu Epeli. The Namata chief feared that some of the Bauans were bent on armed violence and on depriving him of all his lands - Ratu Marika Toroca to Lt Governor, 6 Dec. 1886, CSO 93/3676. A further dispute over 'Nokonoko', some 70 acres on the Bau-Namata boundary, was resolved in favour of Namata by Allardyce in 1894 - ibid.

2 As spoken by Ratu Busa, 26 Oct. 1907, CSO 05/3764. Im Thurn commented: 'The Bau chiefs seem always to have played at young blackbirds in their nest doing nothing but opening their mouths' - Marginal, 28 Oct. 1907, ibid.
The chiefs were told that if they had particular claims to lands not yet registered by the NLC they would be heard at the appropriate time but that past decisions were absolutely final. In 1908 the chiefs sent three strong letters in Ratu Etuate Wainiu's handwriting direct to im Thurn and advanced their general claims further: the disposal of the lands and of the commoners themselves was in the hands of the chiefs and the Bauans had inviolable rights particularly to lands in Tailevu and Lomaiviti.¹ The present occupiers, they said, were not the true owners but tenants-at-will, 'squatting on the lands of us Bauans... visitors on our soil'.²

On 14 May 1909 the chiefs set out these claims at great length in the first of several memorials to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, detailing the migration histories of the various 'squatters' of Tailevu to prove that their true lands lay elsewhere, and alleging a gross miscarriage of justice in the early hearings of the NLC. They made great play of the fact that their arch-enemy Ratu Marika Toroca, the hereditary Roko Tui Namata, had been a Native Lands Commissioner and a favourite of white officials. Had they realized at the time that Cession would bring an end to their rights and impoverish them, they would never have consented so readily. They had been misled, robbed of legitimate privileges.³

¹ See May to CO, 25 Oct. 1911, for a longer summary.
² The chiefs of Bau to CO, 14 May 1909, CO 83/99.
If the details of their case were weak, the general thrust of the argument was strong enough for the government and the Colonial Office to consider privately the possibility of some compensation. A Downing Street official commented:

there can be no doubt that at the time of Cession, neither the chiefs of Bau (including Thakombau) nor the British Govt had any intention of impoverishing the chiefs or of allowing the people to omit their customary payments.¹

The chiefs sensed this chink in the defensive armour and pursued the question with a persistence and bluntness that exasperated the government:

these people will clutch at any straw to gain their ends and a little sympathy. Ratu Wainiu told me yesterday he would never stop agitating the question and that he had many more bullets to fire!²

The chiefs were doubtless aware that it was unlikely their literal claims would be accepted, but they hoped to secure a 5% share of lease monies in all the Bauan dominions, which Wainiu maintained were the whole of Fiji. In 1912 the government appointed a committee to discuss the distribution of rents. It was decided that the Bauans undoubtedly had rights of a general character over whole communities and districts such as the galivakabau, 'vassals to Bau' on Ovalau, Koro and Moturiki, but that these were sovereign rights and did not proceed from proprietorship of the soil, rights that had

¹ Green, minute, 1 Jan. 1916, CO 83/127.
² Sutherland, minute, 2 Mar. 1911, CSO 10/7259.
become meaningless when the colonial government assumed the protective role the chiefs had once played.¹ No change was recommended in the formula governing the distribution of rents by which the 'turaga i taukei', who received 1s in the £, was defined as the chief of a vanua, not, as the high chiefs had hoped, the turaga levu or chief of a larger federation (matanitu).² However several witnesses from Lomaiviti were prepared to give the Vunivalu of Bau some share in the rents. 'We are related by blood to the Bau people' said the Buli Nairai, 'I would give 2s to the Vunivalu'³ - likewise the Buli Nasinu (Ovalau), who acknowledged that the Vunivalu had the right to order them 'to do anything he wished'.⁴

The ownership of Lomaiviti lands was finally decided by the NLC in 1915.⁵ The chiefs made strenuous but unsuccessful attempts to salvage their rights by seeking

¹ A. Erdhardt (Attorney General), minute, 16 Oct. 1912, CSO 12/6371.

² See CP 17/06. Prior to 1906 the 'turaga i taukei' received 8s in the £, but was expected to distribute it according to custom to the lesser chiefs - few did. In 1906, therefore, 2s was given to the 'chief of the gali' (yavusa), 3s to the chief of the matagali, and 1s each to the Roko and the Buli. After 1912 the government deducted 2s leaving 10s to the matagali.

³ Wilisoni Tuisawau, evidence, 30 Aug. 1912, CSO 12/6371. Inoke Nawa, ex-Buli Bureta (Ovalau) stated that the reason they had not sent sevu to the Vunivalu for some years was due to orders from the Commissioner of Lomaiviti.

⁴ Sorita Batei, evidence, ibid.

⁵ Report of the NLC proceedings in Lomaiviti, 16 Nov. 1916, CP 14/17.
co-ownership of the galivakabau lands. (See below, p.133)

Finally in February 1917 a commission was appointed comprising Maxwell as chairman, K.J. Allardyce and Ratu Veli of Macuata to ascertain which Bauan chiefs could properly require personal service and from which people, and whether it was 'possible to arrange for the commutation of such personal services by a lump sum payment or by an annuity'. A notice in Na Mata, January 1917, required Bauan chiefs with claims for personal services to fill in a written claim form. This was done by Ratu Pope Seniloli, E. Wainiu, S.O. Tui Savura, O. Ravuso, Aisea Komaitai, Bolabasaga and Savenaca Radomodomo. The latter did not appear to support his claim. All but Ratu Pope Seniloli belonged to Wainiu's party. The commission gathered some interesting evidence on past Bauan relationships but never completed its work. Wainiu predictably made claim to 'vakatadumata to the whole of Fiji', that is, to send envoys with requests to those parts of the group Bau was unable to rule directly.¹

The question of compensation remained unresolved until a further memorial from the Bauan chiefs to the Secretary of State in 1921 provoked Governor Sir Cecil Rodwell to suggest that the issues be shelved for all time by a 'final and more or less arbitrary settlement by the Governor'.² Several hundred acres of Crown land on Koro - valued at about £4,000 - was the pay-off, 'our final

¹ CSO 16/7067.
² Wainiu, evidence, ibid.
³ Rodwell to CO, 31 Aug. 1922.
gift to the Bauans', formally given over by Rodwell at Bau on 13 November 1922. At a meeting with the chiefs on Koro in January 1923, A.L. Armstrong on behalf of the government felt the need to remind them that the Governor had the whole of Fiji to control and could not devote his time exclusively to Bau. The Secretary of State had under his control many millions of people and territories so vast that they could not even imagine them. To think that he would reconsider a question already settled concerning a tiny island which could not even be found on a map...showed a very false conception of the relative importance of the Bauans.2

The chiefs agreed that in accepting the lands they relinquished all claims to compensation for the loss of rights or privileges formerly enjoyed. Three chiefs declined to accept the agreement: Ratu Wainiu, defiant to the end, Ratu Tuisavura and Ratu Rusiate Busa. Wainiu lived to a great age and on the death of Ratu Pope Seniloli in 1936 he was chosen to act as Vunivalu, a position he held for nearly twenty years. In 1937 he made a further appeal to the new Governor Sir Arthur Richards suggesting he receive 5s in the £ from all the lands leased in Fiji.

I am Edward Wainiu a direct descendant of Ratu Cakobau...I pray that you will have pity on me and do your utmost to see that a just and fair portion of the Fiji Government money will be given to me annually that I may rightfully enjoy the

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1 J.S. Neill, minute, 20 Nov. 1925, CSO 23/2888.
2 Armstrong, report, 19 June 1923, CSO 22/4936.
rest of my days as befitting a grandson of Ratu Cakobau.¹

The Bauans, he said, had been 'left in poverty like a lot of drifting people' but it was only true of those Bauans and other chiefs who could not turn the colonial situation to their own advantage.

(iii) Remember that you cannot be saved by the strength and renown of your fathers²

'The flood of civilization is sweeping down upon us', Ratu Sukuna lectured the Bauan chiefs in 1928, 'We cannot divert it, nor can we fly from it'.³ The Fijian Administration provided chiefs with the best opportunity of coming to terms with colonial civilization. The Fijian government was never able to ignore the strong personal loyalty that many chiefs still commanded from their people, and it was generally anxious to capitalise on traditional strengths within the Fijian community. Even Im Thurn recognized the lessons of experience. He did try to terminate chiefly rule in Cakaudrove on the death of Ratu Lala, the Tui Cakau, in 1905 by appointing a European Commissioner, Captain Langdale, to take charge of the province instead of Ratu Lala's brother and successor in the Tui Cakau title, Ratu J.A. Rabici. Im Thurn ignored a petition from the Bulis of Cakaudrove, only three days after Ratu Lala's death, that Ratu Rabici should be appointed

¹ Wainiu to Sir Arthur Richards, 20 Aug. 1937, CSO F50/68. In 1940 and in 1942 the Council of Chiefs unsuccessfully asked that the Vunivalu receive a salary.

² Sukuna, address to the Chiefs of Bau, 9 Feb. 1928, CSO 28/1062.

³ Ibid.
The chief had already had a chequered career following his appointment as a Native Tax Inspector in 1888. He was gaol for two months with hard labour on a charge of assault in 1892 and in 1897 lost his post and was deported to Serua for 12 months. Needless to say he was keen to be made Roko; he promised the Colonial Secretary in June 1905 that his recent bout of drinking at the funeral of his brother would not recur, and swore that he deserved a chance. It is significant that at his installation ceremony as Tui Cakau at Somosomo in 1906 none of the mainland half of Cakaudrove province took part. The Native Commissioner remarked: 'His influence away from Taviuni is of little account, and had he been made Roko, it would have been looked upon as a calamity down Savusavu and Wailevu way.'

Nonetheless, Captain Langdale was soon complaining that whereas a Roko had the personal prestige of his status as a high chief, he himself was without rank in the eyes of the people 'being a mere kai papalagi and the native makes little distinction between one kai papalagi and another, unless one is backed by Government authority, then he respects the authority, not the man'. Reluctantly, then, Ratu Rabici was made Roko Tui in 1908 and he held

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1 CSO 05/2591.
2 CSO 05/2611.
3 Rabici to CS, 28 June 1905, CSO 05/2881.
4 Sutherland, minute, n.d. (Nov. 1906), Cakaudrove Provincial Council Book.
5 Langdale, minute, 28 Sept. 1907, CSO 07/4137.
the post until his death in 1925.

Similarly in the first decade of this century there were another five appointments of Roko Tuis whose main claim to the office derived from hereditary status - although it was true that none of them was without some training in civil service procedures:

- Ratu Kadavulevu, Roko Tui Tailevu 1901
- Ratu Alifereti Finau, Roko Tui Lau 1901
- Ratu Joni Maitatini, Roko Tui Rewa 1904
- Ratu Tevita Makutu, Roko Tui Nadroga 1905
- Ratu Aseri Latianara, Roko Tui Serua 1909.

Possibly the appointment of Ratu Benijamini Veli as Roko Tui Macuata in 1909 should be added to the list because of his high status in that province as vasu to the dominant lineage (Caumatalevu). He first came to the notice of the government because of his success as a Native Sub-Inspector of Constabulary at Nadarivatu 'where he gained the entire confidence and regard of his immediate superior Mr Joske'.

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1 Ratu Joni Maitatini was the Vunivalu of Rewa, not the highest chief - the Roko Tui Dreketi was Ratu Rabici, then a very old man. His son Ro Tuisawau was dismissed as Roko in May 1903. See Deve Toganivalu to NC, 24 Feb. 1903, CSO 03/1089 putting Tuisawau in for sleeping with a Tongan woman in the house of the Governor's washerwoman. Jackson said, 'The matter is scandalous... It is (to say the least of it) disrespectful of the Roko Tui Rewa to carry on his intrigues in the Govt. village' - minute, 27 Feb. 1903, ibid. See also Tuisawau's letter asking for reinstatement - to NC, 24 July 1913, CSO 13/6185, and his involvement with the Apolosi movement in the next chapter. The Rewa people felt that the honour of the province demanded that one or other of the chiefly lines fill the post of Roko irrespective of the qualities of the men themselves.

2 Im Thurn to CO, 16 Oct. 1908, CO 83/88.
It is interesting to note that there was no installed Tui Macuata at the time and that Ratu Veli seems to have quietly assumed the place of high chief in Macuata, resolving in his person a potential conflict of leadership. 'He was a tactful aristocrat who...knew how to get the best out of his people', wrote Ratu Sukuna after the Roko's death in 1938, and at no stage did he lose the confidence of the government.\(^1\) In 1935 he was the only Roko still entrusted with the control of provincial funds.

With other appointments made in this first decade it seems the government was trying to develop a new class of purely civil-servant Rokos who would be more attuned to the general ethos of benevolent colonialism and take the problems of economic progress and better living standards seriously. Of unusual interest is the appointment to Kadavu of another police officer, Ratu Ifereimi Qasevakatini, described by the Inspector-General of Constabulary as 'the most trustworthy native official with whom I have had to deal'.\(^2\) He had done 20 years in the Armed Native Constabulary (the Constabulary, after im Thurn amalgamated the forces in 1906), had served in New Guinea with Sir William MacGregor and been overseas on two other occasions. By 1908 Ratu Ifereimi was restless in the service and discontented with his annual salary of £60. He let it be known to the Governor that he wanted a Rokoship.\(^3\) On the very day in November 1908 that he

\(^1\) Sukuna, diary, 29 Aug. 1938, CSO F15/5.
\(^2\) Cyril Francis, minute, 19 Oct. 1912, CSO 12/5197.
\(^3\) See I. McOwan, minute, 3 July 1908, CSO 08/3045.
heard of the death of Ratu Kiniviliame Narokete, the Roko Tui of his home province of Kadavu, he penned an application to be considered for the Rokoship ahead of the ex-Roko Ratu Asesala Robarobalavu who had long been seeking reinstatement. The latter was chief of Tavuki, one of seven vanua of Kadavu but with some claim for a primacy of honour - Tavuki had always provided the Roko Tui Kadavu. And Ratu Ifereimi was only a chief of Yale.

The Tavuki chiefs lost no time in rallying to Ratu Asesala's cause. They regarded the Rokoship as their private possession, the means by which they had been able to dominate the province since Cession:

Tavuki, Your Excellency, is the foundation of law; here was established the entire work of British Government in the province of Kadavu and it was the great chiefs of Tavuki who began, established, promoted and guaranteed this work.

At the funeral of the deceased Roko, Buli Naceva urged the appointment of Ratu Asesala on behalf of his fellow chiefs. The eight Bulis of Kadavu petitioned the Governor in writing on the same day. Four of them were Tavuki chiefs. Ratu Ifereimi had anticipated this appeal in his letter of application:

I truly believe that you know and the government knows my long, faithful and diligent service. It is true perhaps

1 Qasevakatini to Francis, 25 Nov. 1908, ibid.
2 See CSO 08/6325.
3 Vuama Vakabati and others to the Governor, 11 Oct. 1911, CSO 11/8814.
4 Sutherland, minute, 26 Nov. 1908, CSO 08/6325.
that some of the Kadavu people will want Ratu Aseala Robarobalavu to be Roko again but that, I believe, is only true of the chiefly yavusa itself and does not represent the real desires of the bulk of the people [na lewe ni vanua]. For the [Tavuki] chiefs fear that an outsider will be appointed who will abolish or suppress their long-established exactions on the people, and it is as clear as the noon day sun to me that they have no regard at all for the real welfare of the people, their country and the needs of the modern day.¹

The letter reveals a calculated appeal to European sensibilities and won him the appointment. A protest delegation that came to Suva in December 1908 was firmly turned away. The jubilant people of Yale set to and built their long lost chief-turned-Roko a splendid house at Gasele where he and his highborn wife Adi Seinimili Rokolewasau (a sister of the Qaranivalu of Naitasiri, Ratu Peni Tanoa) entertained on a lavish scale. In a thinly disguised slight to Tavuki, the usurper arranged for the meeting of the Provincial Council to be held at Yale in 1910.² In a more direct attack he arranged with Suva to have the large tikina of Tavuki cut in half. The newly created tikina of Ravitaki had been the main source of labour and food for the Tavuki chiefs' lala, and Ratu Ifereimi

¹ Qasevakatini to Francis, 25 Nov. 1908, ibid.
² The presiding officer of the 1909 Provincial Council, W.A. Scott, gave as the reason for the move that 'The Roko wishes Councils to be held at different places each year so as to lend impetus to planting'. - n.d. (Nov. 1909), Kadavu Provincial Council Book. But the Council did not move from Yale in 1911. Few Tavuki chiefs came to these meetings. Ratu Aseala was conspicuously absent in 1910.
forbade them to make any demands *vakavanua* on the district. The chiefs began to feel as bitter as the 'dissidents of Bau' did when their flow of goods and services had been similarly interrupted:

Ratu Ifereimi ignores us and brings us into disrepute... It seems as though he is trying to wipe out the true chiefly seat of Kadavu, to destroy the foundation of law in Kadavu and the true chiefly line still living in Tavuki today.¹

The Roko was a tough, impetuous man who brooked no opposition. On one occasion he wrote to Buli Tavuki with measured insolence:

*I am the Roko Tui. I am the only chief in Kadavu... I do not know any man in Kadavu who counts for more than the Roko Tui. I am the only man who decides things for you.*²

The outraged Tavuki chiefs drew up a list of charges to present to the Native Commissioner William Sutherland at the Provincial Council of 1911. They are worth summarising as a glimpse of a well-established process in Fijian politics, trying to discredit a man in the eyes of the government as a means of resolving a *vakavanua* status dispute. Ratu Ifereimi, they alleged, had tried to prevent Ratu Asesala getting a special share of property distributed at the Council of Chiefs; he had ordered the highranking chief and Buli of Tavuki, Ratu Nanovo, to move from Tavuki to Namalata some miles away and to let the old capital rot; he had enslaved his own people and stolen their land, threatened to shoot his own sister, excused his wife and

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¹ Chiefs of Tavuki to the Governor, 11 Oct. 1911, CSO 11/8814.

² Qasevakatini to Buli Tavaki, 24 Aug. 1911, CSO 11/404.
children from attending hospital when everyone else was ordered to; he exercised the proscribed custom of vasu to claim property from his maternal relatives; commandeered a share of a magiti, feast, that belonged to the Rarama people; he ordered the people to pay £30 towards the cost of sending home a body of Tongan visitors; forbade the men to row the NSM on his rounds ('it was though he was the enemy of the government officials'); opposed the provision of a mail boat ('We were amazed that the Roko Tui Kadavu could be the enemy even of the Government'); forbade the Tavuki chiefs their legitimate lala on Ravitaki; disobeyed the Marine Board regulations by putting an irregular crew on his boat; failed to feed the Yale people; and gave arisi wisiki, Irish whisky, to the Yale chiefs on Christmas Day.  

'I acted as a European gentleman would', said Ratu Ifereimi to Sutherland on the last charge, 'little expecting that what I did privately in my house would be told outside'. Most of the charges were so trivial and personal that the complainants began to be embarrassed by having to read them aloud, especially when it came to charges that he had maltreated the people 'as, from a Native point of view, he is chiefly in all his acts'. When they were half way through, Ratu Asesala said the whole thing hinged on Ravitaki. If it were restored to Tavuki all would be well; if not, there would never be peace. Another chief, Aisea of Namalata, interrupted later and 

1 Vuama Vakabati and others to the Governor, 11 Oct. 1911.
2 Sutherland, minute, 15 Nov. 1911, ibid.
said bluntly that the charges were not really meant to be taken in detail, but as general complaint against the Roko: 'The Roko treats his own people very generously and is greatly liked by them', Aisea added.¹

Shortly after this confrontation Ratu Ifereimi fell ill with pulmonary tuberculosis and was soon too sick to work. Ratu Asesala acted as Roko from June 1912 until Ratu Ifereimi was forced to resign office in November. He died in the hospital at Vunisea on 25 March 1913. His last request to the government was that his two young sons at the Queen Victoria School, Ratu William MacGregor and Ratu Henry Berkeley, should be found 'a chiefly work'.² One became a police officer, the other a doctor. There was certainly no chance of their continuing their father's challenge to hereditary authority on Kadavu. The Tavuki chiefs retained the Rokoship from 1912 to 1960. Thus this interlude was regarded in Tavuki as an aberration; Ratu Ifereimi's fate is a reminder that presumption (viavialevu) in the Fijian cosmos has all the connotation of hubris in the Greek; overweening pride brings a fell stroke from heaven.

The remaining four appointments of Roko made in the first decade were of Bauan chiefs. Deve Toganivalu of the matanivanua (spokesmen for the chiefs) division known on Bau as Masau, began his career as a boy clerk in the Provincial Office at Levuka in 1880 and after several minor posting in the provinces returned to Suva as a clerk in the Native Office until in 1908 he asked for and

¹ ibid.
² Qasevakatini to Sutherland, 8 Dec. 1912, CSO 12/7932.
obtained the post of Roko Tui Bua. At his installation ceremony in January 1909 he said to the people:

> It is clear to you I am not of your chiefly family as in some provinces...
> I have been appointed because of my zeal for the welfare of the people...
> But now I am installed as your Roko and also as your chief.

Civil servant he may have been, but to gain legitimacy in Bua he interpreted the ceremony of installation almost as if it were a **vakavanua** seal of approval. The Governor's title Supreme Chief was no mere honorific; his ritual acts were binding. Deve could demand to be treated with full chiefly honours, and he always was. The title Ratu began to appear before his name, and passed to his sons. No sharp distinction needed to be made between his traditional rank **vakavanua** and his government rank **vakamatanitu** provided he gave the leadership required of him and could enforce the people's respect. Under his rule, and that of his son Ratu George who succeeded him in 1928, Bua had a name as the best-run province in Fiji.

A fellow Bauan, but of chiefly rank, Ratu Saimone Dobui, also began his career as a clerk in the Provincial Office (1878), and held 14 appointments as a scribe or NSM in eight provinces before he was appointed to replace Ratu Aseri Latianara (see below, p.146-50) as Roko Tui Serua in 1909. He too in his installation speech, closely modelled

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1  Toganivalu to NC, 26 June 1908, CSO 07/4137.
on Deve Toganivalu's, presented himself as both Roko and chief (nomuni turaga talega). He was however transferred to Ra in 1910 and his place taken by a nephew of Cakobau, Ratu Tevita Wilikinisoni Tuivanuavou.  

This new Roko Tui Serua had made his reputation as Buli Nakelo in the wake of a serious assault by the Nakelo people on a party of NLC surveyors. He was wrongfully dismissed in 1903 on the complaint of his cousin Ratu Kadavulevu (Roko Tui Tailevu), then reappointed to the difficult Namosi tikina of Veivatuloa in 1907. Finally he took charge of the tikina of Waidina in Naitasiri to bring peace between European banana buyers and the local Fijian growers. He seemed therefore the ideal trouble-shooter to take in hand the strong ex-Roko of Serua and his people. It was not easy. Ratu Aseri made life as uncomfortable as possible for the Bauan usurper. Reports were sent frequently to Suva that Ratu Tevita was an oppressor - just as the Tavuki chiefs were complaining of Ratu Ifereimi.

Oral tradition has it that the Bauan Roko retaliated by interfering to prevent the completion of the installation ceremonies of Ratu Aseri as Vunivalu of Serua in 1912. Several men of the installing matagali (Qaloqalo) died in rapid succession shortly afterwards. Then in 1913 the

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1 _Na Mata_, Aug. 1909, pp.125-7. Ratu Saimone Dobui was a chief of the Vusaradave matagali on Bau.

2 At CSO 23/2888. Ratu Tevita Wilikinisoni is listed as head of the family Naulivou in the Vunivalu tokatoka of the Tui Kaba matagali.
Serua chiefs stirred up such opposition that an enquiry was held into the Roko's conduct and he was found guilty of charges which, had he been true chief of the province, no Fijian would have thought of taking seriously: injudicious company with a nurse and minor financial irregularities. Sutherland gave in to the people¹ and Tuivanuavou returned to Bau to join forces with Ratu Etuate Wainiu and those chiefs who bore a strong grudge against the government and against those of their peers who had made good in the Fijian Administration.

Of the latter the career of Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi best exemplifies the opportunities and constraints of the pursuit of power in the mixed situation emerging at the century's turn, where the minds of the protagonists were at once trained in the arts of bureaucratic administration yet still steeped in a world that goes 'deep down to Bulu', as one chiefly informant insisted - to the world of the vengeful ancestral spirits who do battle for their stock (kawa) and are gratified to come forth from the seats of honour in the assemblies of the land. Ratu Joni was just 10 days old when his father Ratu Mara Kapaiwai was hanged by Seru Cakobau for rebellion on 6 August 1859.² There is a legend in Fiji that before he died Ratu Mara pleaded for the safety of his infant son, promising Cakobau that

¹ 'The antagonistic feeling against him is too strong... and it would not be advisable in my opinion to support him' - Sutherland, minute, 28 June 1913, CSO 13/3800.

one day the child's descendants would 'bear Fiji up'.
And that night Cakobau dreamed that he himself was falling
with the noose around his neck when from the sea flew a
huge flying-fish - the fish named in Mara's battle cry -
and swept up between his legs to take his weight and
prevent the noose from tightening. Then the fish flew on
and looked back and there was the head of Mara Kapaiwai;
whereupon Cakobau resolved to take good care of the infant.

It is certain that Ratu Joni grew up in Cakobau's
household; in later years he liked to claim to speak on
Bauan affairs with special authority. After the death of
Ratu Epeli Nailatikau in 1901 he was the senior of his
generation and vigorously opposed the claim of Epeli's
son Ratu Kadavulevu to the title of Vunivalu of Bau.
'I am wholly of the clan Vunivalu', Ratu Joni claimed in
1913, 'the highest chief by birth in this town'. According
to his own version of his genealogy (a matter of considerable
dispute) his claims were strongest on the maternal side.
His mother was Adi Lolokubou, the daughter and first born
child of Tanoa Visawaqa (Vunivalu of Bau, father of Cakobau)
by his highest-ranking wife Adi Talatoka (herself the
sister of the Tui Cakau of Cakaudrove but installed on
Bau, so Ratu Joni claimed, as Radi Levuka, the title of
the Vunivalu's senior wife or consort).

1 Madraiwiwi to the Governor, 26 Oct. 1913, CSO 14/1745.
He also claimed that before Cakobau died the old chief appointed him to follow Ratu Epeli Nailatikau - but not in the title of Vunivalu:

None of you will drink the cup of installation as Vunivalu when I die as I gave Fiji to the Great Queen Victoria and her heirs forever, together with the right to be consecrated and installed as Vunivalu - that is why I offered yagona to the Governor, that he might drink the installation cup, for he is the representative of the Queen in Fiji for all time.\(^1\)

Cakobau bequeathed one of his cutters, the Victoria, to Ratu Epeli and the schooner Lurline to Ratu Joni. On another occasion Ratu Joseva Celua, youngest son of Cakobau and father of Ratu Pope Seniloli, and Ratu Joni had approached Governor Gordon to ask what would happen to Cakobau's pension of £1,500 after his death. They were told his widow would receive half until she died and then

\(^{1}\) ibid.
the money would cease along with the title, but that 'If
the Vunivalu's children or relations were well behaved
and loyal they would get government appointments and
emoluments - otherwise nothing'.

At any rate Ratu Joni threw in his lot with
colonial government. After some years schooling at the
central Methodist training college at Navuloa, he took a
job in the Audit Office where he first earned his reputation
for competence, reliability and hard work. Thurston chose
Ratu Joni to be his deputy (vakatawa) in Ra in 1889. His
regular Monday reports to the Governor revealed his thorough
grasp of the aims and procedures of government. Authority
came naturally to him. At the same time he had a shrewd
eye to his own advancement, of the considerable opportunities
his government office gave him to consolidate his vakavanua
hereditary standing and the position of his descendants -
as well as a clear perception of what the Governor did not
need to know. Determined to give his children the best
possible education, he used prisoners to maintain extensive
food gardens and raise cattle to sell to the sugar mill
at Penang. For his eldest son Ratu Sukuna he retained
as a member of his household at Nanukuloa an Anglican
priest and science graduate from Melbourne, the Reverend
Mr Andrews. Ratu Sukuna was proficient in English and
mathematics even before he went on to secondary schooling
in New Zealand to become the first Fijian to matriculate
to university. A daughter, Adi Vasemaca, was sent to the
Seventh Day Adventist School at Cooranbong, NSW, and

1 Madraiwiwi to NC, 19 Apr. 1907, CSO 07/1452.
2 See CSO 07/5549.
another son, Ratu Tiale W.T. Vuiyasawa, went to Wesley College in Melbourne in 1911.

Ratu Joni's reputation as Roko Tui Ra was such that in 1904 he was given Bua to rule conjointly and held it for four years. He was then in a better position geographically to exploit his maternal Cakaudrove connections and somehow secured from the Somosomo chiefs in 1907 a native grant of over 2,000 acres at Nalovo in Cakaudrove on the Vanua Levu side. ¹ By 1912 he had spent £2,000 improving the land and converted it to a Crown Grant that year. The adroit official's security was threatened however on another flank. Ratu Kadavulevu, who succeeded his father Ratu Epeli Nailatikau as Roko Tui Tailevu in 1901, was pressing his claims to be regarded as Vunivalu of Bau.

Kadavulevu had been educated in Sydney and was greatly popular with Suva's European community as a fine cricketer and bon vivant. As Roko he aroused rather less enthusiasm, at least with the Native Commissioner:

So long as his wants are provided for he has no thought or consideration for the common people. It would pay the Province to allow him his full salary to stay away and play cricket all the time. ²

On 1 March 1907 before any of the preliminary consultations had taken place, and without summoning from Kaba, Lakeba and Koro the people who were traditionally involved in the installation ceremony of the Vunivalu of Bau, Ratu

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¹ See CSO 07/5286. There were 300 acres already under nuts.

² Sutherland, minute, 31 Mar. 1908, CSO 07/5624.
Kadavulevu was offered *yaqona* by his hereditary spokesman or *matanivanua*, Ratu Aisea Komaitai, with the intention of 'drinking him in' to Cakobau's chiefly title.\(^1\) Im Thurn saw the ceremony as 'pure farce, probably due to the drinking of liquor other than yaqona',\(^2\) and Sutherland wrote to tell Kadavulevu that the so-called installation was 'a childish thing' and could never be recognised by the government.\(^3\) Kadavulevu protested that it was an old Bauan custom, nothing to do with the government.\(^4\) Ratu Joni disagreed. Normally he had preferred to keep his *vakavanua* affairs apart from government, but clearly in this case his defence rested as much on Cakobau's bequest of his title to the Sovereign as it did on the breach of custom. Furthermore he argued that if the title of Vunivalu was to be restored, then his own claims were better than those of Kadavulevu whose aping of western ways and ignorance of custom Ratu Joni despised.

The ill-feeling between these two chiefs was not widely known until Ratu Kadavulevu was forced to retire on half salary in 1912 because of some £300 he had taken

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1 The Vunivalu of Bau is installed first as Tui Kaba and his wife as Ranadi Kaba. Some time later the original inhabitants of Bau now living at Namaciu on Koro (the *kai Butoni*) instal him as Vunivalu, and several months after that the *kai* Levuka of Lakeba, who once lived on Bau also, instal the Vunivalu and his wife as Tui and Ranadi Levuka. See Niko Rabuku to NC, 9 Apr. 1907, CSO 07/1452, explaining the irregularity of the previous month's proceedings.

2 Im Thurn, minute, 24 Apr. 1907, CSO 07/1452.

3 Sutherland to Kadavulevu, 24 Apr. 1907, *ibid*.

4 Kadavulevu to Sutherland, 4 May 1907, *ibid*. 
from the Tailevu provincial funds. Ratu Joni, who had been Roko Tui Ba since 1910, was transferred to take his cousin's place. Bau was not big enough for both of them and the island was soon split into two factions. For reasons that are not clear from the records, but probably out of jealousy of his higher born brother, Ratu Etuate Wainiu and his followers weighed in behind the new Roko. The Rokos of the other provinces feared the effects of a public humiliation of Kadavulevu and successfully appealed against his prosecution. The Bulis of Tailevu begged for his reinstatement, as did a delegation of his European friends. Ratu Joni's claims, then, were far from being universally admitted. Many Bauans would have held against him the taint of his father's rebellion and have regarded him as a usurper.

Ratu Joni's first moves on Bau were characteristically practical. The island was chronically short of food. The new Roko imported vurai yams from his gardens in Ba and led the planting himself. He expected the Bauans to become self-supporting for the first time. Wainiu tried to make sure that ai sevu came to the Roko, not to his predecessor:

It is right that all customary presentations should be made to Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, the Roko Tui Tailevu, since he has taken up his chiefly place in Bau, that is to say, sevu of yams or dalo or the fruits of the land:

1 Wainiu had long been trying to discredit Kadavulevu. For instance in August 1911 he charged Kadavulevu with supplying liquor to Pita Raori, brother of Deve Toganivalu, and with beating one Loga 20 times with a stick until the man bled - Wainiu to the Governor, 9 Aug. 1911, CSO 11/6509.
he is the eldest in our chiefly rank...when people brings things today they are not ordered to do so, but come voluntarily and give generously...he loves all the people and feeds them...his kindness would break a man's heart.¹

Wainiu, the supporter of lost causes, was perhaps not the best advocate Ratu Joni might have employed to answer the accusations of his enemies that he was oppressing the people and overbearing to his fellow chiefs.

Governor Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott visited Bau in October 1913 expressly to support Ratu Joni's authority. The districts of Dravo and Tokatoka brought their contributions for the welcoming ceremonies directly to Kadavulevu - probably, as Sutherland suggested, relishing the opportunity 'to fly one off against the other'.² When the Roko's welcoming ceremonies for Escott were under way, Kadavulevu strolled nonchalantly across the rara, the open space where the various contingents were sitting respectfully in their hundreds not daring to lift their heads above those of the Roko and the Supreme Chief. In his remarks Escott referred once again to Kadavulevu's claims to be Vunivalu:

You old chiefs know full well that there can be no successor to Cakobau...no pretensions in that direction will be recognised. The Roko is my deputy in this Province...³

The Council of Chiefs discussed the feud at their meeting in May 1914 and prevailed on the two men to bury their

¹ Wainiu to the Governor, 18 Aug. 1913, CSO 14/1686.
² Sutherland, minute, 14 Oct. 1913, CSO 13/8213.
³ Fiji Times, 7 Oct. 1913, encl. ibid.
differences. Both signed a solemn covenant, prepared by Ratu Rabici, that henceforward they would be of one mind and live in friendship and love. Both kept their promises until Kadavulevu died on 12 December 1914.

Ratu Joni's preoccupations with vakavanua affairs were by no means over. Wainiu (presumably) persuaded him to lend his name to the campaign for the restoration of Bauan privileges. The Roko had always believed that as high chief he should at least receive a share in the rents of lands leased in the old Bau dominions. In 1906 when rent monies were allocated on the new formula, he had strongly disagreed with the Government's definition of the 'turaga i taukei' as the head of a vanua, and the 'turaga ni qali' as head of a yavusa. Rather, he said, the 'turaga ni qali' were the heads of the vanua that were subject to, qali to, a high chief - in the case of Bau, himself. If he was still of this opinion in 1915 and believed with Wainiu's party that the Bauan chiefs had been deprived of just privileges; it would go some way to explaining his extraordinary decision that year to lend his name to an elaborate plot to deceive the NLC in its investigations of land ownership in Lomaiviti.

1 Rabici to NC, 30 May 1914, CSO 14/5063.

2 Madraiwiwi, memorandum, n.d., CSO 06/3843. A similar claim was made by the Roko Tui Dreketi for Rewa and in 1928 by the Ka Levu of Nadroga - see SNA 28/1867. Accepting the new definition of 'turaga i taukei', Ratu Pope Seniloli revived the argument at the 1928 Council of Chiefs which resolved that a higher category should be introduced, that of the turaga levu or the head of the matanitu, who should receive 1s in the £. Only Serua, Namosi and Tailevu Provincial Councils accepted the motion. See Seniloli to SNA, 7 Jan. 1929, SNA 29/62.
A group of Bauan chiefs obtained the signatures of the occupants of the lands of the galivakabau towns of Ovalau to a document purporting to be the history of their origins. It was naively symmetrical. The villagers of Tokou and Gavo were said to be the descendants of members of the Tuikaba mataqali of Bau despatched by the 18th century Vunivalu, Rokodurucoko; Nasinu and Naikorokoro villagers were descendants of the Vusaratu mataqali; Natokalau of the Vusaradave, and Draiba of the Matanivanua. And now over a century later the respective offshoots of the Bauan mataqali desired to be reunited with their chiefly kinsmen and registered as joint owners of all the galivakabau lands. At Maxwell's inquiry in August 1915 the document was exposed by the galivakabau as a fraud. They said they had signed it under duress. Maxwell gave the Bauans chiefs a humiliating dressing-down, after which Ratu Joni signed a letter asking whether it was the intention of the government to snatch the very food from their mouths and reduce the Bauan chiefs to slaves.¹

The commission did find there were parcels of land on the islands of Lomaiviti that were indisputably the property of the 'Vunivalu of Bau'. Maxwell decided that in view of his power under the NLC Ordinance (III of 1912) to ascertain and record any customary title or office in respect to land' it was incumbent on him to determine the holder of the Vunivalu's position. At a preliminary sitting in Bau 'it was shown beyond any doubt that the successor to this position is Ratu Pope Seniloli, and to

¹ The details of the plot were omitted from the published version of Maxwell's report on Lomaiviti, 16 Nov. 1916, CP 14/17. See original at CSO 16/8918.
This the assembled chiefs agreed'. Ratu Pope was a son of Ratu Joseva Celua and nephew of Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. Did Ratu Joni oppose the claim?

His friends Ratu Etuate Wainiu and Ratu T.W. Tuivanuavou later sent to the Governor a long account of these preliminary proceedings on Bau and claimed they had been deceitfully and astutely out-maneuvered by the Fijian Native Lands Commissioner, Ratu Savenaca Seniloli, himself a member of the Tui Kaba matagali but no friend of Ratu Joni's. Prevailed on to avoid the unseemly wrangling that had given the Bauans such a bad name, and no doubt mindful also of his covenant with Ratu Kadavulevu, Ratu Joni had agreed not to press his personal claims but to allow Ratu Pope Seniloli's name to lead the list of the Tui Kaba matagali in the official records. And Ratu Pope, who had a better relationship with Maxwell, was to be their agent or secretary (kena vunivola vei keitou) in safeguarding the Bauan interests in Lomaiviti which 'it was clear from our discussions were those of the whole [Vunivalu's] tokatoka' - not of Ratu Pope personally. Ratu Savenaca Seniloli advised his peers to sign, as an interim measure, a document making over the Bauan lands 'to him who will be installed as Vunivalu' lest the lands suffer the fate of those attached to the other defunct chiefly title in Bau, the Roko Tui Bau, and be awarded to their current occupants. There was no doubt in anyone's mind, emphasized the petitioners, that the proper vakavanua procedures for electing and installing a Vunivalu would be carried out at a later date.

1 ibid. Ratu Pope signed the false qalivakabau document also but wisely withdrew his signature when he sensed the outcome.
Maxwell had seen the matter differently. When the Moturiki land boundaries were being proclaimed, he called Ratu Pope to take the oath for the Bauan lands and said to him afterwards, 'You are the successor of Ratu Kadavulevu, you are the holder of the dignity of Vunivalu' - to which Ratu Pope replied, 'Yes, maybe' (Io beka). Maxwell came back, 'Do you doubt it?' 'Yes', confirmed Ratu Pope:

Now the thing he doubted was this: he knew that not once had we all consulted together and agreed as to whom we should install to lead us as Vunivalu... Now can a foreigner intervene like this and decide a wholly Fijian matter regarding our customary status?¹

The quick answer to the last question was that yes, Maxwell was perfectly within his legal rights. Here again is an illustration of the interdependence of the legal, administrative order with the customary; and if half of what Wainiu wrote was correct, Fijian politicians like Ratu Savenaca adroitly manipulated the ambiguities of the situation to achieve their traditional-type objectives.

After these set-backs Ratu Joni's relationship with Maxwell deteriorated further. In 1917 and again in 1919 Maxwell produced a list of charges against Ratu Joni and pushed so strongly for his retirement that personal malice would not seem to have been absent. Several instances of neglect of duty were cited, especially his unwillingness to pursue mounting arrears in the provincial rates. Maxwell observed that the Roko associated with 'such notoriously disloyal persons' as Wainiu and Tuivanuavou and was 'conspicuous by his absence in patriotic

¹ Tuivanuavou and Wainiu to the Governor, 1 June 1916, CSO 16/8354.
movements during the War'. Governor Sir Cecil Rodwell was unwilling to force a bitter end to a distinguished career and apart from issuing Ratu Joni with a severe warning in private, procrastinated until at the end of 1920 he was relieved of the problem by the old chief's death. The career of Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi was soured towards the close by the absence of a man like Thurston who would have understood the difficulties a Roko faced in reconciling government objectives with the realities of Fijian politics.

(iv) 'Impatience at the ignorance and levity, if not misconduct, too frequently displayed by Natives in authority, leads to their services being set aside'. (Sir Arthur Gordon)²

Maxwell's irritation with Ratu Joni and his hope of replacing him with a European Commissioner in Tailevu was representative of the colonialist attitudes that Gordon had accurately described in 1879 and had been determined to modify in Fiji. They reasserted themselves strongly after 1899 in the efforts firstly of the Provincial Inspectors (see above, Chapter One) then of the European Stipendiary Magistrates to increase their executive powers in the Fijian Administration at the expense of the Roko

1 Maxwell to CS, 4 Dec. 1917, CSO 17/201 and memorandum, 10 Nov. 1919, CSO 19/31.

Tuis and Bulis, whose considerable independence they had long resented. For years a most ridiculous fear of speaking strongly and plainly to the Fijians'.

For his part he made a point of telling those 'very useless officials', the Bulis, whenever they came to 'squat' in his office and 'crawl about' and waste his time that they were an avaricious lot, greedy and grasping for Indian rents while deservedly rotting as a result of 'their own thorough laziness'. He urged the abolition of Rokos and provincial councils and the decentralization of authority to the European magistrates. Maxwell urged that magistrates be styled District Commissioners (DCs) as in other colonies with power to administer their magisterial districts 'in every particular'. The Rokus could be kept on with reduced salaries as Native Assistants to the DC if they were men whose personal influence and hereditary status would be useful to government.

1 Even in the 19th century ESMs were not confined strictly to judicial duties. See Sir William des Voeux's circular to the ESMs, 8 Nov. 1881, instructing them to initiate prosecutions if necessary and not 'in any way allow justice to be defeated...', CSO 88/60.

2 Smith to CS, 29 Oct. 1912, CSO 12/7021.

3 *ibid.* See complaints of Bulis of Macuata to NC, 8 Oct. 1912, CSO 12/6342 - includes a list of Smith's vile Fijian epithets.

4 Smith to CS, 11 Nov. 1912, CSO 12/7022.

5 Maxwell, memorandum, n.d., CSO 13/3087. Similar arguments against centralised control were put by R. Rankine, memorandum, 24 Dec. 1912, CSO 12/6624.
Maxwell's proposals were the origin of the ordinance (27 of 1913) which gave all the magistrates the title of DC ('Provincial Commissioner' if there was no Roko) and the Governor power to assign them the duties of any government department, opening the way for full European control of Fijian provincial affairs. Governor Escott explained these changes to the 1914 Council of Chiefs saying that while he sympathised with their desire for a separate Native Department, the times had changed and it was necessary to bring native administration 'more closely into touch' with European administration.¹

The first Native Assistants were appointed in the same year (Ratu Pope Seniloli in Ra, Romano Voreyalewa Serua). Their cumbersome Fijian titles (Turaga ni Lewa Veivuke, later changed to Veivuke ni Liuliu ni Yasana) conveyed none of the mystique of Roko Tui. The chiefs on whom the title was inflicted felt the loss of status keenly and the government did not always insist on it. Ratu Pope Seniloli was upgraded to a full Roko Tui in July 1916. Ratu Epeli Ganilau, who replaced the former in Ra in 1920, was also conceded the full title. In Serua, though, Ratu Aseri Latianara was reduced to a Native Assistant on his reinstatement in 1916 while Aisea Vasutoga, a commoner, was made Native Assistant the same year in Nadroga. Then in 1921 Vasutoga was forced out of office by the chiefly family of Nadroga and the Ka Levu, Ratu Timoci Vosailagi, replaced him as Native Assistant. Ratu Timoci tried on several occasions to bolster his ailing prestige in Nadroga by securing the full title. Three Bulis

¹ Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1914.
and two chiefs petitioned the Provincial Commissioner of Nadroga and Colo West in 1930 that it was the people's wish to see their Ka Levu a full Roko as 'befitting his descent and rank in this our province of Nadroga according to the chiefly ways of Fiji'.

There was more at stake than an aristocratic quibble over style. The salary of a Native Assistant - usually about £150 per annum - was half that of a senior Roko and there was no share in rent monies. More importantly Native Assistants were deprived of their direct personal line of communication to the Secretary of Native Affairs, the Talai, and through him to the Supreme Chief. All correspondence had to pass through the DCs. In response to the persistent demands of the European elected members of the Legislative Council the old Native Department became subordinate to the Colonial Secretariat in 1915 and the DCs were given much greater discretion to make their own decisions on the spot in Fijian affairs - despite the fact that by the SNA's own statement many of them were 'completely ignorant of native customs and modes of thought, and in one case at least...unable to conduct an ordinary conversation in the language'.

To give such wide discretion to these men, many of them young English

1 Napolione Waqa and others to the Provincial Commissioner of Nadroga and Colo West, 7 Feb. 1930, SNA 30/506.

2 K.J. Allardyce to CS, 5 Feb. 1915, CSO 15/1166. For historians also the move to decentralize authority had unfortunate consequences. Central records began to lack the wealth of local detail and Fijian correspondence that 19th century governors had always required.
cadets who had failed to gain entry to the more élite colonial services in India or Africa, was an insult to chiefs like Ratu Aseri Latianara well able to command loyalty and obedience with or without government office. The chiefs further feared that the European elected members would be successful in abolishing the Native Department altogether so that there would be no section of the government bureaucracy exclusively dealing with Fijian affairs and safeguarding Fijian rights, no Talai whom the chiefs or any Fijian could approach personally on matters great or trivial and through him gain the ear of the Supreme Chief. In 1915 the Rokos of Tailevu, Bua and Cakaudrove appealed to the Colonial Secretary to understand what the old system meant to them. If destroyed, they said, 'it is plain to us that we Fijians will never be known again'.

Their worst fears were realized in 1921. The Native Secretariat was fully merged into the Colonial Secretariat, the post of Talai abolished and his work given to an Under-Secretary. In place of the official to whose familiar Suva quarters Fijians could always go in the assurance of a courteous hearing and a lively understanding of vakavanua affairs, they were referred back to their provincial headquarters to see the overworked and probably inexperienced DC. As the agent of every government department in addition to his magisterial rounds of the whole population, the DC had little time to attend to Fijian affairs even if he had the inclination. Nor was he bound by any clearer Fijian policy than the ad-hoc

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1 Ratu J. Madraiwili, J.A. Rabici and D. Toganivalu to the Governor, 2 Feb. 1915, CSO 15/1034.
decisions of the Colonial Secretary or the current platitudes of improvement. With the end of the Indian indenture system in 1920, the government was preoccupied with the problems of ensuring orderly Indian settlement and prosperity. Fijians were again taken seriously as a source of labour and the DCs turned a blind eye to the recruiters for CSR and copra plantations signing on hundreds of able-bodied men in the villages (see Chapter Five). A Wesleyan missionary observed in 1923 that what little time the DCs of north-western Viti Levu had for visiting villages they seemed to spend chasing up a few tax-defaulters to do the work needed on their stations:

They are extremely concerned with repressive legislation. More anxious to collect the taxes than develope the Fijian & his land...
I mourn to observe the decadence of the village and the Govt's neglect.¹

In a letter almost certainly drafted by Ratu Sukuna, three of the chiefs protested in 1921 against the abolition of the Native Secretariat as a separate department and the control of Fijian affairs by DCs.² Later they expanded their case at an informal meeting with D.R. Stewart, A.L. Armstrong and Ratu Sukuna of the Colonial Secretariat. They deplored the complete lack of co-ordination of Fijian policy and practice and defended the concept of a native department as a representative institution, a powerful and, in the past, successful

¹ Rev. Wesley Amos to Small, 12 Nov. 1923, MM F/L/1923.
² Ratu P. Seniloli, S. Seniloli, and J.A. Rabici to Under SNA, 16 Nov. 1921, CSO 21/6741.
advocate of the 'special conditions' for Fijian participation in the life of the colony - conditions which protected their autonomy and dignity. As an example of the low priority they felt Fijian affairs was allocated in the new order, Ratu Pope complained of young DCs who demanded full customary honours (veigaravi vakaturaga) that Fijians wanted to reserve for high chiefs and direct emissaries from Vale Levu, the house of the Supreme Chief. And few of the DCs who received the honours understood their significance or responded with the courtesy and warmth expected of a chiefly recipient.¹ For the people the ceremonies were becoming a degrading routine of cold and cynical gestures. It was the same with the feasts, mekes and songs that the DCs, harbingers of the promoters of tourism, demanded that the people put on for their private visitors. Yet if a chief was visiting the province and paid his respects to the Provincial Commissioner in lieu of a Roko, he was not accorded the same hospitality or facilities.

So seriously did the chiefs fear a declining voice in colonial affairs that Ratu Rabici proposed in the Legislative Council in December 1923 that a Talai be appointed and his salary paid from Fijian funds. In reply the Colonial Secretary admitted that Fijian affairs were beyond him. For a start he knew no Fijian. His principal assistant, D.R. Stewart, then spoke:

As the so-called supervisor of native affairs
I more or less resemble the head of a turtle
which, decapitated from the body, continues

¹ Minutes of the meeting, Jan. 1922, ibid.
to look as if it is alive. It is dead, but its eyes continue to wink, and winking at things is not much use. The body of the turtle...is gradually decomposing.¹

The celebrations for the Golden Jubilee of Cession at Levuka in 1924 gave little joy to the chiefs. They took the opportunity to appeal yet again 'to see firmly established the principle of government in accordance with the customs of the land'.² They felt that the partnership established by Gordon and Thurston had been betrayed by their successors and that the promises made at Cession were not being honoured. Their request for a Talai was renewed in 1925 and met the approval of the new Governor, Sir Eyre Hutson.³ Islay McOwan was appointed Secretary for Native Affairs in 1926, but the more important ambition of the chiefs to regain complete control of the leadership of the provinces was refused. Thus in 1928 the provinces of Ba, Lautoka, Nadi (the two latter were separated from Ba in 1920), Colo North, Colo East, Colo West, Naitasiri and Namosi had neither Roko Tui nor Native Assistant and only one, Lomaiviti, had so much as a Fijian clerk at provincial

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1 D.R. Stewart, 12 Dec. 1923, encl. CSO 23/4265.

2 F. Raiwalui and others to the Acting Governor, 10 Oct. 1924, CSO 24/4078.

3 Ratu P. Seniloli and others to the Governor, 25 Apr. 1925, CSO 25/1534. See also Hutson to CO, 6 May 1925 and CO to Hutson, 16 June 1925 approving the appointment.
headquarters to attend to Fijians. Villagers often came
and waited days for an interview with the DC or to collect
a small share of rental monies. The wretched native
could wait.... In late 1930 only four provinces - Cakaudrove,
Macuata, Ra and Kadavu - had Fijian officials in full
control of Fijian affairs, although Native Assistants
in seven more provinces had, it will be seen, more room
to manoeuvre in purely traditional politics than appeared
to their supervisors.

Finally in deference to the strong feelings of
the Council of Chiefs a few new appointments were made:
a Bauan Native Assistant for Lomaiviti in 1932, Ratu
Tiale W. T. Vuiyasawa; another Bauan, Filimone Kama,
for the Yasawas in 1933. On the death of the Roko Tui
Cakaudrove in 1932 he was replaced by two Native Assistants
of whom one, Ratu G.W. Lala, became Tui Cakau and Roko
Tui of the whole province in 1936. In the same year Rewa
regained a Roko in Ratu George Tuisawau, and Ratu Aseri
Latianara in Serua was at last styled Roko Tui. The new
Rokos were still subordinate to the DCs and (in 1935) only
one Roko, Ratu Veli of Macuata, had the entire control of
provincial funds. The government then was prepared to
concede a little as regards a title but looked to the
DCs, not the Rokos, to provide the 'drive' in all the
critical areas of colonial policy: the collection of taxes
and NLC survey fees, child welfare work, sanitary reforms
(especially the installation of concrete slab latrines),
education and the encouragement of new crops.

1 McOwan to CS, 17 Dec. 1928, CSO 28/5934. The Colonial
Secretary A.W. Seymour was unsympathetic, claiming
it was 'extremely hard to find Fijians qualified to
fill efficiently even the comparatively few appointments...
on the establishment' - minute, 21 Dec. 1928, ibid.
The force of chiefly leadership was still reluctantly acknowledged in the large proportion of these Rokos and Native Assistants who were hereditary chiefs of the provinces they administered. Similarly it was general policy to show a 'certain leniency' towards Fijian chiefs who misappropriated provincial funds. When Ratu Kadavulevu was found in 1912 to have borrowed £300 from the Tailevu provincial funds he was kept on half salary in the (vain) hope he would not work against his successor. Ratu Pope Seniloli, made Roko Tui Tailevu in 1920, was like his cousin Ratu Kadavulevu a sportsman and fond of the good life. He entertained Fijian and European visitors to Bau on a scale commensurate with his dignity but not his salary. In 1922 he began to draw occasionally on provincial funds, confident that his people would be understanding if he got into difficulties. As he told it:

Well months went by and one day a chap from the Government came in a launch - rather a blighter, I thought. We had a spot of whisky and a cigar and he said; 'Ratu, the tide's turning and I must be pushing on. I've called, you know, to take back that tax money.' I said, 'I'm rather afraid old boy that I can't lay my hands on it now.' He seemed a bit miffed...¹

An audit revealed a deficit of £764 16s 8d. Ratu Pope made no excuses other than his heavy commitments. On 7 February 1824 the Governor cabled the Secretary of State: 'In view of high chiefly position and for political reasons do not recommend criminal proceedings. Case can scarcely

¹ As regaled to S. Lambert, _A Doctor in Paradise_ (2nd Australian edn, Melbourne, 1942), p.166.
be viewed in light of European ethics... With London's approval the Vunivalu was dismissed as Roko Tui, asked to resign his seat in the Legislative Council, but not charged. Even so the Bulis and chiefs of Tailevu assembled in provincial council received the Governor's decision coldly and declined to acclaim it in the customary way. Later they had to apologise (soro) to the Governor at Vale Levu. The high chiefs, most of them connected with Bau by marriage, were unanimous that Ratu Pope should be reinstated, and they petitioned for his pardon on several occasions. Meanwhile Ratu Pope himself began repaying his debt and was finally reinstated on probation as Native Assistant in 1928. Ratu Pope died in office aged 54 on 13 October 1936. A shark visited Ratu Sukuna's cutter in the Koro sea on the same day and 'stayed over an hour alongside six or seven times allowing himself to be touched, patted and pulled'.

A similar misfortune to Ratu Pope's befell the Vunivalu of Rewa, Ratu Joni Maitatini, who had been reinstated in 1929 after a stormy career as Roko Tui Rewa. A snap audit of the provincial funds in May 1931 revealed

1 Fell to CO, 7 Feb. 1924.
2 Fell to CO, 15 Feb. 1924.
3 See F. Raiwalui and others to the Acting Governor, 10 Oct. 1924, CSO 24/4078.
4 In 1927 he changed his last name to Cakobau to avoid confusion with Ratu Savenaca Seniloli and his many sons who, following European custom, were also Seniloli - SNA 27/602.
5 Sukuna, diary, 13 Oct. 1936, CSO F15/5.
a deficiency of £63 18s 2d. Ratu Joni said he had drawn on the money to help flood victims.\(^1\) Despite the Colonial Secretary's recommendation that 'the time had arrived' for making an example of Fijian officers who did not adhere to the same moral standards as Indian and European ones,\(^2\) the chief was not prosecuted. The Governor defended his leniency to the Colonial Office:

> I think Ratu Joni would have no sense of moral guilt... His people would be behind him. They regard provincial funds as belonging jointly to their chief and themselves...they would...be profoundly shocked by any public humiliation.\(^3\)

In effect the government was deferring to the existence of different sets of expectations governing the behaviour of chiefs in office.

(v) *'he used to move freely among his people and knew them all by name.'*

In thus describing Ratu Alifereti Finau of Lau, Ratu Sukuna expressed 'the embodiment of the native idea of a chieftain...a big handsome man dignified of presence and eloquent in speech'.\(^4\) The same description would fit Ratu Aseri Latianara of Serua, although his speech was strong perhaps rather than eloquent. His career

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2. See extract from the minutes of the Executive Council meeting, 17 June 1931, encl. *ibid*.

3. Fletcher to CO, 1 Oct. 1931.

deserves examination for what it reveals of the priorities of the chiefs themselves, reflecting the preoccupations of their people and the continuities of Fijian political life. Noiseless battles were waged in the Administration's shadow - seen only by those European officials who had eyes to see beyond their stacks of forms.

Ratu Aseri was chief of the Noi Korolevu, a powerful tribe who had come originally from Korolevu on the Sigatoka, the centre of Viti Levu, then settled on the southern coast west of the boundaries of Serua province. In the early decades of the 19th century they began moving eastwards in three divisions, simplified in oral tradition as the descendants of three brothers, and fought with the Nabukebuke people (Namosi) for the control of the Serua coast. At Cession one division of the Korolevu was established at Vunibau, near Deuba, another on Serua island and a third half-way between the others at Culanuku. The rest of the coast and the reaches of the Navua river were inhabited by scattered fragments of diverse groups who sought protection from one or other of the Korolevu or Namosi chiefs. The Korolevu chief Nagagabokola was made 'Roko-Buli' when the province of Serua was established in 1877, his unique official title reflecting some doubt, perhaps, that he merited the full dignity of Roko Tui when his traditional standing was of such recent origin. He was succeeded in 1897 by Ratu Aseri's father, Ratu Isikeli Tubailagi, who was later given the full title of Roko Tui. Both men had trouble controlling their unruly province. The Korolevu position in Serua was strengthened by the arrival of the Native Lands Commission in 1899. Serua Island was given them as an outright gift and one of their subordinate clans (gali), the
Lutuya, were awarded extensive lands westwards from Somosomo Bay despite an adverse occupancy of part of them (in Komave tikina) for over 50 years. ¹ Ratu Aseri acted for his father from 1907 and was confirmed as Roko Tui in 1909. A few months later he was dismissed after an investigation of sensational charges brought by G.L. Barrow, a storekeeper in Komave, that he had thrown his wife overboard from his yacht and towed her along as sharkbait. Actually she had jumped into the sea to escape a beating for an infidelity she later admitted, and she bore her husband no grudge for his violence, ² but the government was sensitive to chiefly scandals and replaced Ratu Aseri with the Bauan Ratu Saimone Dobui, the first foreign Roko of Serua (see above, p.121).

After his reinstatement in 1916, as Native Assistant to the DC at Navua, Ratu Aseri held the province until his death in 1940. He is remembered in Serua as 'a strong chief, strong in the government, in the vanua and in his words'. ³ On his raikoro, village inspections, he would enter a house at random, call the family together and regale them with stories until they rocked with laughter. Starting at the topmost village on the Navua river he would progress slowly downstream staying overnight several times en route and at each stop swelling his entourage with chiefs and elders until he arrived back at Serua Island with a great crowd in festival mood.

² See May to CO, 3 May 1911, CO 83/101.
He fed the throng with fish and 'true food' for up to a week then sent them home with more fish for their families: 'And all the people said, "There's no doubt at all, Ratu Aseri is our greatest chief".'

Reading between the lines of the many stories exalting Ratu Aseri, it seems that he used the duties of his government position to create a new feeling of unity in the province. The high point of his political career was the reopening of the NLC hearings in Serua in 1932 by his friend Ratu Sukuna. With Ratu Aseri himself as one of the Assessors, the two friends had no difficulty in eliciting from the minor chiefs of the province the statement that they 'went to the Korolevu both according to the land and the government'. When the official NLC classification of communal units in Serua was published, some Fijians would have been surprised to see Serua described as a matanitu embracing two vanua (and another in Colo West) of which one, Ratu Aseri's own, now extended far beyond Wilkinson's limits of 1899 to take in not only the home tikina of Serua but almost the whole province in direct personal allegiance to Ratu Aseri as Vunivalu. There are also stories in Serua of how Ratu

1 Sa turaqa levu duadua qa vei keda o Ratu Aseri - ibid.
2 vakarorogo ki Korolevu e na vanua kei na matanitu taleqa - ibid. One chiefly informant regretted that he had given up his former independent status in the province and claimed that Ratu Aseri had entertained them so lavishly the night before that he was fuzzy in the head...the full implications of Ratu Aseri's coup were perhaps not realized at the time.
3 The Burenitu people at Naboutini and Nabukelevu rank as a separate but very small vanua and also the Noi Vuso people in Komave.
Aseri employed the NLC to settle a longstanding feud with a section of the Korolevu division at Vunibau who were interpreting their right to install the Vunivalu as a claim to be senior in the land. The NLC upheld the Vunivalu's division (Raralevu) as paramount.

Ratu Aseri's political achievements were not such as would impress colonial officials anxious to convert Fijians to the idea of economic progress. He belonged to a world where what mattered was the prestige of the province, the loyalty of his people, ceremonial celebrations of their corporate pride, and the functioning of his chiefly title to secure the peace and prosperity of the land. Yet it was also the world which formed the chief who was to become Fiji's greatest national leader.

(vi) Went to a public dinner given by Sir Henry Scott and then to a dance. Afterwards the Bau people looked in. Went to bed tired out by conforming to the demands of two entirely different social systems (Ratu Sukuna, diary, 7 August 1933).

The grandson of the rebel Ratu Mara Kapaiwai, his exact status on Bau a matter of keen anxiety to the descendants of Cakobau, Ratu Joseva Lalabalavu Vanaaliali Sukuna was fortunate to have in Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi a father so committed to both the colonial system and his own people. With the deterioration in Fijian-European personal relationships after Thurston's death, it became

1 The feud is a celebrated one and by no means dead. The documentary evidence for these events is not available to scholars; reliance on oral testimony is unavoidable.
a matter of pride to a man like Ratu Joni that the younger generation of chiefs should never have occasion to feel at a disadvantage in European company, and a matter of urgency that chiefs should have sufficient western education to contend with officials who showed less sympathy than their 19th century predecessors for Fijian culture. At his own expense, Ratu Joni sent the young Lala to the Wanganui Collegiate school in New Zealand. After matriculating in 1906, the 18-year old chief was employed as a fifth grade clerk in the Colonial Secretariat, where apart from two brief periods teaching at the Lau school in 1910 and 1912, he remained until February 1913. In April that year he went on leave to England and enrolled at Wadham College, Oxford, to read history and law, using funds subscribed by the provincial councils.

The outbreak of war in 1914 sent most of his fellow students into British regiments. The dark-skinned volunteer was denied that privilege, much to his chagrin, and without consulting anyone in Fiji he slipped over to France and joined the French Foreign Legion in December 1914. He had fought in the trenches at Champagne and Arras before the Fiji Government cabled his guardian in England that further money for his education was not forthcoming and that he was to return immediately. His recall was not secured until over a year had passed and he had been wounded in action - and decorated by the French with the Medaille Militaire. His success was now

1 See Escott to CO, 16 Jan. 1915 and enclosures, CO 83/124. The provinces had actually collected £339. 10s of the £450 required, but the government preferred to return the money rather than supplement it.
a source of embarrassment to the British, of immense pride to the Fijians. The government did at least make Ratu Sukuna a Lieutenant in the Fiji Defence Force in June 1916, but passed an ordinance to excuse European other ranks from saluting him. Governor Escott claimed to have consulted Ratu Sukuna beforehand. It was the kind of humiliating compromise the chief often had to make with a colonial ethos that both attracted and repelled him all his life. Again his feelings can only be surmised when he accompanied a Fijian labour contingent of 100 men to France in 1917 to find that their Camp Commandant, a Captain Whitely, had imagined he was to receive 'a batch of half-cannibals' and had built a large wired-in enclosure thinking it would be necessary to lock them up.

After the war Ratu Sukuna returned to the Secretariat of Native Affairs with the status of a cadet, then in June 1919 took leave to complete his studies in England. First he took time out to exercise his privileges as vasu levu to Lau, for he was the son of Tui Nayau's sister Adi Maopa. Official records, of their nature, have little to reveal of this important side to Ratu Sukuna's

1 The French military files have yet to be made available.

2 Escott to CO, 2 Nov. 1916, CO 83/133. Part-Europeans were also included in the ordinance.

3 Rev. Cyril Bavin to Small, 22 Sept. 1917, 1 Jan.1917, MM Fl/1917: 'I felt sorry for Sukuna having done the service he had, and with the education he has, he surely must feel his present position in which he principally looks after the cooking of food etc.'
political career. The missionary on Lakeba reported scathingly in October 1919 that the island had been 'going mad in their adulation of this young hero (?)'. The provincial boat had left 'well loaded with yams, food and this hero(?) with cash receipts valued at about £1200!!'\(^1\) - It augured ill for the next vakamisioneri collection. But it testified to the high hopes the people had for the chief, hopes fully realized when he was called to the bar two years later.

From the Middle Temple he returned to the civil service in Fiji and received his first major appointment, as Chief Assistant Native Lands Commissioner, in January 1922. This position enabled him to build up an encyclopedic knowledge of Fijian traditions and customs. His well-known views on Fijian society were already established and did not change significantly for the rest of his life.\(^2\) Ratu Sukuna saw the individual as feeling instinctively that

not only his services but also his life belonged to the family and ultimately to the tribe of which he was a part, and so he devoted himself to the will of custom and to the commands of the elders without so much as a thought for abstract rights.

In return a Fijian had a definite share in the life and well-being of the tribe. There was nothing in his experience to develop 'self-regarding qualities' or a sense of personal responsibility. Loyalty, obedience

\(^1\) Amos to Small, 3 Oct. 1919, MM F/1/1919.

and respect for authority were the keystone of the Fijian ethical sense - ideas which the communal services regulation had wisely kept functional. No Fijian would work for work's sake or to develop himself. 'The native mind' had not yet lost its dependence and inertia, and little had been done to broaden it. Fijians then would do best to remain within their fundamental groups, provided they were given strong and enlightened leadership by their chiefs.¹

By 1928 Ratu Sukuna had achieved sufficient status in both the colonial service and amongst his peers to be appointed to arbitrate an unpleasant dispute amongst the Bauan chiefs over the division of the Crown lands on Koro awarded them in 1923.² About this time he seems to have fallen out, however, with his Bauan relatives, for in the NLC records he registered his family not in the Tui Kaba matagali of his father but in the chiefly matagali (Vunirewa) of Lau - his mother's people who had received him so hospitably in 1919. Finally his appointment in 1932 to Lau as the first Fijian District Commissioner brought together two strands of his career, his ambition to rise in the colonial service on an equal basis with European officials and his anxiety to consolidate the vakavanua status of Ratu Mara Kapaiwai's descendants.

There were limits nevertheless to Ratu Sukuna's dynastic ambitions, for he married a lady of low rank,

¹ See Sukuna, memorandum, encl. Rodwell to CO, 23 July 1923, CO 83/165.
² See CSO 28/1062.
Maraia Vosawale, who bore him no heir. In Lau he had a prickly relationship with his cousin the Tui Nayau, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, a headstrong chief who was nominally Ratu Sukuna's assistant from 1932 until he was charged with financial irregularities in 1934.¹ Matters were made worse on Lakeba when a chief from a parallel line, Ratu Sowani Puamau, was brought in firstly as Native Assistant in 1935 then as full Roko Tui in 1936. To bolster his own position in the province Ratu Sukuna agreed to be installed by the Tongan community on Lomaloma (his official headquarters) as Tui Lau, Ma'afu's old title.² The success of his communal copra-cutting scheme after 1934 (described below in Chapter Six) suggests that despite the occasional defection of Lakeba, Ratu Sukuna's leadership was highly acceptable in Lau. He had a special bond with the people of Moala where his family was conceded a large land holding in recognition of an occasion when Ratu Mara Kapaiwai had lit a wall of flame around Maloku village and tricked an invading force of Bauans into believing that the battle was over.

These vakavanua aspects of Ratu Sukuna's career are of course only alluded to lightly in his official diaries or not at all. He projected himself on the official screen as a model civil servant. And he was. In a wretched

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¹ See Sukuna to CS, 23 Mar. 1935, CSO F15/1. He appealed for leniency for his cousin: 'the Service is not so rich of chiefs naturally obeyed and followed that it can long afford to do without his help'.

² The importance Sukuna attached to this title is one of the many things in his life that await definitive research by the appointee of the Ratu Sir Lala Biography Committee.
sailing cutter he tacked laboriously from island to island, inspecting villages, exhorting the people to accept higher standards of hygiene and child care, and to increase the productivity of their copra plantations. He wanted Fijians to contribute substantially to the colony's commercial economy but without prostituting themselves to alien employers or destroying the refined social system that had been bequeathed them by past generations. The dilemmas of his position have been fully discussed by many modern observers. Contemporary Fijian leaders emphasise Ratu Sukuna's tolerance for men of other races - amply documented in his diaries - and his statesmanlike appeal to Fijians to recognize the land problems of the Indians and accept them as permanent partners in a multiracial state (see above, Chapter Two). Here it must suffice to suggest that the prominence given to Ratu Sukuna's post-Second World War official career as Adviser on Fijian Affairs and first Speaker of the Legislative Council, and to his monumental work on the Native Lands Commission, should not conceal the fact that he was also interested and involved in the kind of classically Fijian chiefly power struggles that had dominated the lives of his forebears and still dominated the lives of most of his peers in the Fijian Administration and outside it. The conflicts these surely created in his own emotional life, given his overt commitment to the colonial system and his attraction to many aspects of western civilization (starting with Oxford), mirrored a developing conflict in Fiji as a colony: to what extent were Fijians occupying the centre of the stage so that to a Fijian audience the whole apparatus of British colonial rule and the economic
activities of the Indians and the Europeans were but the modern stage machinery for the enactment of Fijian dramas rooted deep in the past-ever-present world where the ancestral spirits of the great chiefly lines were keeping vigil?

(vii) **an element full of potency in the Native Administration**

If the careers of individual chiefs reveal a variety of compromises with the colonial order, some more successful than others, they point also to an essential continuity and independent vitality of Fijian political life. What of the chiefs collectively in the Bosevakaturaga, the Council of Chiefs? A comparison of the 19th century proceedings with those of the 20th bears out Ratu Sukuna's regretful observation in 1917 that 'Native policy...had rendered an element full of potency in the Native Administration...a superfluous absurdity devoid of authority and power'.

The earlier proceedings ring with the confidence of men firmly in control of their provinces and conscious of their power. 'It is the welfare of the land that we are seeking', Roko Tui Ba reminded his colleagues in 1879 when they were discussing - with the characteristic minuteness of the agenda - whether to place the Qaliyalatina people under Nadrau or Ba.\(^2\) An unsolved murder in Nadroga, an insolent chief in Ba, the boundaries of Ra, or the

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1 Sukuna, memorandum, 12 Mar. 1917, CSO 17/2286.
2 *Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1879*. 
broader problems of changing custom, the welfare of Fijian labourers, the decline in the population - no matters affecting Fijians escaped vigorous discussion and specific recommendations to the government. After 1896 the Council did not meet again until 1902, O'Brien being unwilling to subject his reforms to the comments of the chiefs or to continue the partnership his predecessors had taken for granted. It assembled only once (1905) while im Thurn was governor, and thus had no opportunity to discuss his land reforms. The chiefs lost their right to discuss collectively the individual problems of the people because the resolution of such issues was increasingly in the hands of Europeans. The government came to use the Council as a device to give the aura of chiefly approval to its policies. The records do not always state as much, but there is no doubt that many of the significant resolutions of the Council prior to 1944 were often fed in by European officials, such as the 1912 motion to increase the government levy on rents from 5% to 10%.

For the rest, the Council continued to have considerable say in the formulation of specific Native Regulations. The revised regulations that came into force on 5 September 1928 incorporated 20 resolutions of the Council of Chiefs - although the most important change, an annual tax of £3 on absentees, was at the last minute (by Regulation 2 of 1928) reduced to £1 because: the imposition of such a high rate might seriously affect the present policy of encouraging natives to break away from their communal system and to participate more freely in commercial occupations.

1 Hutson to CO, 15 Sept. 1928.
In countless resolutions, the Council pressed the government to upgrade the educational and medical facilities offered the people, and in the 1930s it encouraged the efforts of the Agriculture Department to teach Fijians modern farming techniques. While it was not opposed then to economic development, the Council reflected the anxieties of Fijian leaders about the effects of social change on the people and the breakdown of customary constraints on individual behaviour.

From 1928 it widened its representation to include one representative chosen by each Provincial Council, not to be democratic as such, but to enable more non-official Fijians to take part - men of stature in the provinces but not necessarily in the Administration now that such men were less likely to be recognized. Thus the Council remained a forum well able to articulate Fijian demands, if unable to enforce them. The Council of Chiefs should not be reviewed, still less evaluated, as if it were a parliamentary institution. Rather it was a lobby influencing the wider affairs of the colony as well as the Fijian Administration. It was of more than symbolic value to the people as one of the great assemblies of the land and as an expression of Fijian political unity. At times the Council reminded the government of its obligations to Fijians in blunt language: 'the immigrant Indian population should neither directly or indirectly have any part in the control or direction of matters
affecting the interests of the Fijian race.'\textsuperscript{1} Its institutional weakness was, obviously, that it could not assemble unless the Governor decided to summon it; had it met less often or never at all there were other, but less efficient, ways the government could have sought Fijian opinion.

After 1904 the Council also had the power to choose a panel of six names from which the Governor selected two and from 1929 three chiefs to sit in the Legislative Council. The privilege of attending that alien assembly was not one that appealed to the chiefs actually chosen, as they had little interest in the detailed affairs of colonial government and found parliamentary procedure irksome. Even Ratu Sukuna, who at first refused a seat in 1929 and again in 1932 but later accepted from a sense of duty, remarked in his official diary on the day he refused for the second time: 'Modern politics with its political institutions is not the most attractive side of civilisation.'\textsuperscript{2} The Council of Chiefs told Governor Rodwell in 1923 that it considered membership of the Legislative Council to be 'of little use to the Fijians' and that there were better ways of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1933, Resolution XVIII. Even second generation Indians born in Fiji were regarded as immigrants in terms of Fijian political rhetoric. The realization that the Indians would shortly outnumber the Fijians was just beginning to strike home.
\item Sukuna, diary, 19 Sept. 1932, CSO F15/5. On the first occasion he refused a seat he pleaded that it would embarras him to be chosen before Ratu Pope Seniloli.
\end{enumerate}
ensuring Fijian prosperity.\textsuperscript{1} Just as the four Maori members of the New Zealand parliament were powerless to protect the interests of Maoris, so the Fijian chiefs well realized that the real source of their power lay in the institutions they already had - in particular the institutions of local government at the provincial and district level. Had these been seriously threatened by the government, it is unlikely that the chiefs would have sought so clumsy an implement as a ballot box to enforce their demands on the colony. The war club that Cakobau had presented to Queen Victoria was returned by King George V in 1932 to lie quiescent as the mace of the Legislative Council, but a potent symbol, too, of the conditional nature of the Fijian acceptance of its deliberations.

\textsuperscript{1} Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1923. For a full discussion of Fijian participation in parliamentary procedures see Ahmed Ali, 'Fiji and the Franchise' (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1974). Where Dr Ali like others sees Fijians as very undeveloped in their political life and regards this as one of the serious weaknesses of the Fijian Administration, this chapter and Chapter Five argue for a flourishing Fijian political life but not played to the Westminster model.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE GREAT OCTOPUS
OF THE MODERN WORLD

The struggle of the chiefs to maintain their own position of leadership in the Fijian Administration went beyond the self-interest of the élite to a concern that Fijians should continue to be governed through familiar institutions and laws. At the same time the chiefs were acutely aware that their leadership was no longer so self-sufficient that it could provide all the rewards and satisfactions sought by a people in contact with a culture of overwhelming technological superiority and high prestige. So long as Fijians had autonomy in local government, so long as chiefs could pursue power and influence in some of the old ways and sustain a community life that satisfied the material and social needs of the people, then there could be no fundamental crisis of self-esteem or confusion of identity or collapse of community morale. On the other hand Fijians were not impervious to the allurements of materialism.

Contact with Europeans, reported Ratu Sukuna from Lau in 1934, had long before produced new tastes - 'for clothes and corned beef, for cereals and finery, for tin and iron roofing'. With the exception of 'clothes as the symbol of Christianity and light as the effulgence of Divine Grace', these articles of the whiteman's trade were 'still regarded as luxuries'.¹ Not that their

¹ Sukuna to CS, 29 Sept. 1934, CSO F15/1.
absence would go unmourned. The year 1932 was a good one for Lau. Crops were prolific, bananas went to waste, fish and turtles were plentiful, there were no hurricanes or storms - 'all the conditions, in fact, that only twenty or thirty years ago would have made the period a memorable one. The attitude now is the reverse!'. And the reason was that copra prices were fast falling on the depressed world market; the Lauans had less money to spend on non-essentials and had come to think of their agricultural existence as impoverished.

This psychological change had its corollary in the inordinate esteem developed by Fijians for occupations that brought less sweat to the brow. Concepts of status were not so much reversed by culture contact as expanded to accommodate new avenues for Fijian aspirations. The chiefly system was not eroded from within but some individuals now needed it less than others: they shifted ground from the village green and the assemblies of the land to the foreign institutions of the church, the civil service other than the Fijian Administration, and the business houses. They did not of course move completely out of one life into another, but they were certainly learning to be at least part-time operators in a world where the idiom was not that of custom - a world where they were likely to feel disadvantaged once they began to measure themselves by European standards. For the

1 Sukuna, report on the Lau Provincial Council [Nov. 1932] Lau Provincial Council Book. Copra fetched £21 in Suva in 1929, £15 10s in Dec. 1930; £8 in Dec. 1933. Local prices were much lower: £5 10s in 1932, £3 10s in 1933.
fifth-class clerk on £50 a year, for the Morris Hedstrom's messenger boy, for the assistant master at the Queen Victoria School it was not always pleasant to be on the bottom rung, however great the pride of the wife or mother who pressed the crisp white shirt.

The Christian churches first provided a new status-world for Fijians. Putting behind the first iconoclastic attacks on polygamy, cannibalism and customs intrinsically repugnant to Christianity, the Wesleyan or Methodist church operated more subtly and most effectively to siphon Fijian aspirations (and money) in new directions. In return for physical protection and assistance in expanding church membership the early missionaries rendered to Caesar what was his, and more. The political boundaries of the chiefdoms largely shaped the administrative boundaries of the church's 'circuits'. It was peculiar good fortune that the Methodist church organization suited the structures of Fijian society so well. A group of villages acknowledging one chief became a sub-circuit or section under a native Minister. When a whole circuit came together for the annual meeting and vakamisioneri collection, fierce district rivalries were lucratively sublimated in the determination of each section not to be outdone in generosity and display by the others. Groups vied with each other to keep up the longest line of contributors, who gave not once but several times of a large store of pennies hoarded months in advance. They were free-and-easy occasions with much laughter and applause. After what appeared to be the final coin had been flung on the table or mat, recalls the Rev. Robert Green, a man might rush up, search feverishly through his garments, find an old purse, inspect it
carefully, and triumphantly produce a halfpenny to toss on the heap. Then he might 'turn the old purse inside out, shake it over the table, to the delight of the crowd, and finally fling the purse itself on the pile of offerings, to deafening applause'.

Fun for the people, and a handsome income for the church - £5,260 in 1903 from vakamisioneri collections alone.

These festivals of the church were community celebrations which the chiefs themselves organized: 'They consider it purely a town matter, and the chiefs lewa [decree] the time for holding them, and take full charge of them.'

Precisely because the Wesleyans had been able to harness the dynamics of Fijian society, Fijians were also responsive to the rest of the package deal, so to speak - the new status system offered by the church within its own hierarchy. A range of church offices was wisely provided within easy reach of ordinary members. Each community was allowed a good number of prayer leaders, local preachers, catechists, and each section its own ordained Native Minister. Finally, though, there remained a holy of holies for which no Fijian was considered fit:

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1 Green, memoirs, typescript, Melbourne. I am grateful to Mr Green for permission to use his personal records.

2 Rev. A.J. Small to Rev. W. Brown, 23 Feb. 1904, MM F/1/1904. 'Our daily bread is assured - that is one of the blessings which we in Fiji enjoy... Praise the Lord.' - Small to Rev. H. Chambers, 2 Oct. 1917, MM F/1/1917.

3 Rev. R.O. Cook to Small, 29 July 1908, MM F/1/1908, writing of a collection at Lomaloma - 'I was completely ignored on the matter.'
the position of circuit Superintendent with its financial and administrative responsibilities and seat in the Annual Synod of the Fiji District. There the major decisions were made or proposed to the N.S.W. General Conference and Board of Missions of the Methodist Church in Australia.

Almost from the beginning the Native Ministers had been resolved to improve their position vis à vis the European ministers. Me da dua vata, 'let us be one' was a text to which they addressed themselves in the late 19th century with growing eloquence and apt appeal to the Johannine version of Christ's prayer for unity amongst his disciples - a unity, said the Fijian divines, which was better expressed in social equality now than pious acknowledgments that all would be judged equally in the day to come. 'They object to be told to wait on the verandah while we go to our meals', complained the Rev. C.O. Lelean to the Rev. A.J. Small in 1904; the Fijians felt they should be asked to eat at the same table as their European colleagues and not to have to endure 'the many little ways we treat them as inferiors'. An example of the discrimination the ministers resented, said Lelean derisively, was that if one of them asked for a drink at the Vale kau ('Wooden House' of the European missionary) it was given him in a bilo kapa, tin mug, and not a decent glass. His tactics on such occasions were to single out and ridicule one of them he had 'seen that very week spitting on the floor' and advise them collectively that 'they must trust to us to decide as to when and how improvement in their position was to take place'.

1 Lelean to Small, 14 July 1909 and 9 Dec. 1909, MM F/1/1904.
Improvement in the Fijian position took place as slowly as the European ministers could contrive, although they were under constant pressure from the N.S.W. authorities to develop a 'self-supporting, self-propagating and above all, indigenous Christianity'.\(^1\) The missionaries were strenuously opposed to a direction of the N.S.W. General Conference in 1906 that a layman be elected from each circuit to the Synod of the Fiji District. A resolution of the Kadavu annual circuit meeting of 1921 that a Native Minister be allowed to act in the place of a European missionary absent through sickness or on furlough received no support at all from the Synod and was not referred to the Sydney authorities. The European missionaries particularly feared Fijian control of mission finances. 'I am not convinced', wrote the Rev. H. Chambers in 1933, shortly after retrenchments of Europeans had forced the appointment of the first Fijian to be given charge of a whole circuit (Bua) 'that the Fijian conscience has been sufficiently educated, as yet, to the absolute sacredness of a financial trust'.\(^2\) There was something in that, though the real problem was that most of the Australian ministers adhered to the stereotyped racial and class views of the other Europeans in Fiji. The Indian indenture system was condoned; the Fijians were seen as perpetually in a state of transition: 'They will not be ready for [responsibility] 50 years yet. They must walk first, then increase their pace.'\(^3\)

\(^1\) Rev. J.W. Burton to Rev. R.L. McDonald, 5 Feb. 1923, MM F/1/1923.

\(^2\) Chambers to McDonald, 26 Feb. 1933, MM F/1/1923.

\(^3\) ibid.
The Rev. Robert Green himself concludes of the pre-Second World War period:

> It was tempting and perhaps pleasing for the Missionary to take the place of the Chief. This he had done...but it was not right, it was not Christian and it delayed independence [until July 1964].

He suggests that while Fijian aspirations for equality and independence were clearly articulated at times, they were modified in day-to-day encounters by Fijian modes of social deference given to Europeans, as it was to their own chiefs: *Ni lewa saka qa* was the well-known phrase: 'It is for you, Sir, to decide what to do.' The question is a vast one and needs detailed study before it is clear how and which Fijians satisfied their personal ambitions within the church, to what extent they were glad, as Green suggests, to have European Superintendents to make administrative decisions on their behalf, and how far they saw the church as an extension of local society.

In sharp contrast to the Wesleyan organization, the Roman Catholic church was from the beginning, but especially after 1888 with the arrival of the aggressive Bishop Julian Vidal and 11 new priests, badly out of phase with the Fijian Administration and the needs of villages. Intruders into a Wesleyan stronghold, the first priests

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1 Green, memoirs.

9 See Scarr, *Viceroy of the Pacific*, Chapter 20: The oppressed Marist Mission was rundown on Vidal's arrival. Eight priests lived on isolated mission stations with a few adherents and schoolchildren: 'no retreats, no crosses on the churches even, so as not to attract attention; several churches in decay...'
had to gain their few adherents by exploiting the divisions and weaknesses of local societies. They could not or would not live in villages, and preferred to establish isolated mission stations - wherever possible on freehold land. To dissident individuals the Catholic mission compound became 'a city of refuge where they [were] safe from Government and Taxation'.¹ Père Rouillac gave shelter at the mission at Culanuka in Serua in 1891 to three families who had been ordered by the Serua District Council to return to Serua Island. 'It is merely a repetition', noted one colonial official, 'of what is in existence throughout the whole colony, and is part of the policy of the RC priests in this country'.²

At these mission stations a band of Catholic retainers formed the nucleus of a rival Catholic settlement where the priest made all the decisions and shielded his servants and also, as far as possible, his adherents in the adjacent towns from chiefly oppression by the Wesleyan heretics. A frequent complaint of the Bulis was that Catholics pleaded their frequent religious observances such as 'holy days of obligation' and weeks-long 'retreats' to evade communal work. They were also forbidden to build village schools and churches other than their own. At Tunuloa Catholic mission in 1890 individuals receiving instruction in the faith were kept on the mission station for up to six months to work the priest's gardens. The rest of the district was so neglected that the roads were impassable and not six

¹ J. Stewart, minute, 11 Sept. 1893, CSO 93/2958.
² ibid.
houses were in good repair. His counterpart at 'Savarekareka', Savusavu, in 1899 used similar means to send large shipments of yams for sale in Levuka. At Solevu in Bua the district scribe reported that the French priests were 'not like priests; they are like chiefs of the land in the way they levy on the people's food and labour'.

In time the Catholic mission became better established and less burdensome to its adherents. It did not exploit the corporate structures of society, as the Wesleyan church did, to finance itself through competitive collections. Most of its funds came from overseas to maintain a large European staff. It remained - to the present day - a very foreign-looking church which opened few avenues for Fijian aspirations to run their own affairs. Whereas the Wesleyans had ordained 40 teachers by 1870 and had sent many to evangelise the

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1 CSO 90/1669.  
2 Levani to the ESM of Bua, 10 Oct. 1890, CSO 91/1406.  
3 The consecration of Auxiliary Bishop Petero Mataca in 1974 was a break with the past. There were embarrassingly few Fijian priests still 'on the mission' from whom to choose, and few volunteers for the regional seminary recently opened in Suva - in contrast, say, to Samoa which has its own Cardinal-Archbishop and many more students for the priesthood. The modern success story for the Catholics in Fiji is the Marist Training Centre at Tutu where Fr Michael Bransfield S.M. fought for a new deal for Fijian religious brothers, giving them direct involvement in adult education and rural development - and liberating them for the first time from their miserable role as domestic servants of the European clergy.
Solomons and New Guinea, Fijian participation in the Catholic hierarchy was effectively limited to membership of a body founded by Bishop Vidal in 1891: 'Les Petits Frères Indigènes de Vicariat de Fiji' and a similar religious association for women. Little Brothers and Little Sisters were given no liturgical or preaching responsibilities or any area of independence. They took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to their (white) superiors under whom they lived in community - never in the villages. Their main duties seem to have been to assist in the schools and to cook, wash, and garden for the priests and nuns. In 1922 Bishop Nicholas noted that over 40 little brothers had taken vows and that some 15 of them had died 'de la façon la plus édifiante'.¹ Edifying in death, perhaps, but no foundation for a truly Fijian church. Later several local men were ordained priests, but few persevered with celibacy.

The greatest impact the Catholic church had on Fijian society was through its school system, which became the pace-setter for the rest. In 1910 they had 11 European teaching brothers and more than 40 teaching nuns supervising small schools in Suva, Kadavu, Serua, Namosi, Tailevu (Natovi), Ra (Naiseralagi), Ba, Ovalau, [Footnote 1: See text of an appeal to Rome to regularize the position of the Little Brothers as a Diocesan Congregation of Fiji [n.d.? 1922], Records of the Roman Catholic Mission in Fiji, microfilm, Canberra, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, PMB 454: 'Les Petits Frères étaient destinés par sa Grandeur [Vidal] à aider les Pères de chaque station, spécialement dans le travail de l'enseignement dans les écoles de station et dans le soin au matériel de chaque residence, afin que les Pères ne puissent pas accablés par le travail.']
Bua (Solevu), Savusavu, Tunuloa and Taveuni. Catholic policy was to educate boys and girls separately at centralized schools attached to the mission stations. 'Our great effort is to have ALL our Catholic children in our Boarding schools, and therefore we can do what we like outside school hours.' Standards were not high, but considerably higher than in the 600 to 700 village schools originally set up by the Wesleyans. And unlike the Wesleyans, they favoured extensive instruction in English, and a more academic curriculum.

English was taught at Cawaci central school from 1894. In 1899 Ro Tuisawau of Rewa wrote to Bishop Vidal asking for two European men to teach English at Naililili. 'Education', he said, 'is the most useful thing of all for the present age and for the future'. The school opened in 1899 under two Marist Brothers from Australia. The province paid a subsidy on condition that the school was open to all - over 140 Wesleyan students were enrolled. Under pressure from the Methodist Mission in 1901, the subsidy - and most of the children - were withdrawn. Yet the desire of Fijians for instruction in English was so great that the Wesleyan Annual Synod of 1899 reluctantly recognized that they would have to introduce some English in their own central school at Navuloa or lose their pupils to the 'perverts of Rome'.

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1 Bishop C. Nicholas to F. Corder, 23 Mar. 1929, PMB 454.
2 Tuisawau to Vidal, Jan. 1899, PMB 458.
3 Minutes of the Synod of the Fiji District, Oct. 1899, MM F/4/B.
The government too was meeting the demand for English in its own technical school, the Vulinitu, at Naikorokoro near Suva from about 1895. 'Write what you can in English about Norway and Sweden' was one of the questions in the English exam of 1898. The Vulinitu closed in about 1901 and was replaced by the Queen Victoria School in 1906. The chiefs insisted that their sons were to be taught as the sons of Europeans were taught, and that they ought not to waste their time in manual labour - an argument that found favour with Sir Everard im Thurn: 'After all it is education in the English language that the Fijian mostly needs if he is ever to play the part of an ordinary English subject."

(ii) 'the curse that was upon Adam they mean to avoid'

The new academic emphasis in Fijian education was never without Fijian critics. One magistrate at the Council of Chiefs in 1894 defended the practice of gardening by schoolchildren against the majority of chiefs who saw it as a waste of time: 'I most certainly think they ought to plant or they will grow up the most useless people we have in Fiji. It does them all the good

2 Im Thurn, message to the Legislative Council, 10 Oct. 1907, Legislative Council Proceedings 1907.
in the world to plant.' Book learning won the day. It was valued perhaps because parents believed that in learning English their children would find 'true knowledge' and an instant means of a vaguely conceived new human welfare.

The history of 20th century Fijian education begins with a growing loss of confidence in the village schools. Shortly after Cession there were 1,742 schools with 2,097 teachers and 40,882 scholars, all more or less controlled by the Wesleyan church through its pastor-teachers and catechists. About the turn of the century, Fijians began to organize district and grouped schools. The control of the Methodist Mission became so tenuous that in 1932 it finally withdrew from all but 34 higher grade schools. The Lauan chiefs on their initiative in 1907 voted £300 from provincial funds for the appointment of an English master, A.M. Hocart, to the

1 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1894, 30 June 1894. The chiefs were discussing the curriculum for the Vulinitu to replace the former technical school at Yanawai. The Roko Tui Tailevu had said, 'I do not think they should plant anything, let them simply be taught'.


3 For a full survey of education in Fiji, see A.C. Cato, 'A Survey of Native Education in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa, with special Attention to Fiji' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1951).

school at Lakeba. This school became the model for six
government-assisted provincial schools which in the 1930s
catered for the upper primary education of some 500 pupils
chosen by their districts for their ability and rank.
The best pupils of the provincial schools went on to the
Queen Victoria School. In 1944 only 28 Fijians, none of
them girls, were attending secondary schools (Davuilevu
Methodist High School and Marist Brothers Suva).¹

Even so, children were staying long enough in
school - financed largely by their own parents - for Fijian
leaders to speak of a rising generation who were having
difficulty settling back into village life:

As a body they look down on productive
labour connected with the soil. The curse
that was upon Adam they mean to avoid.
Their reasoning is based on experience.
Looking round they see, on the one side,
men of education clean and well-dressed -
appearances they have been taught to
respect - filling all the lucrative posts;
on the other, the simple folk dirty and
untidy - shortcomings for which they have
been whipped - tilling the ground. They
conclude that education (in the only form

¹ See F.B. Stephens, Report on Education in Fiji,
10 June 1944, CP 15/44. Of 20,549 Fijians in all
schools in 1944, 72% attended district schools,
reaching a standard not higher than class 2;
15% attended Roman Catholic schools, 6% Methodist
schools, 4% government schools, 2% Seventh Day
Adventist schools and 1% other. There was no post-
primary vocational or agricultural school. 'To
claim, therefore, that somewhere around 83% of
the Fijians are literate seems rather strained...untaless] literacy means nothing more than an
ability to read and write in a most elementary way.'
known to them) is a panacea for all human needs, providing for those who partake of it clean and well paid jobs.¹

Not surprisingly, there was a backlash at the Council of Chiefs in the 1930s against wholesale academic education - not against education itself. They frequently urged the provision of agricultural education (not gardening) and manual training suited to the rural life the great majority of students would have to follow.² In 1938 they even suggested provincial schools be abolished and resources devoted to improving district schools.³ About six provinces established training farms in the late 1930s for the 15-18 year olds, but the experiment was short-lived. Provincial funds were already over-stretched, and the farms required a great deal of unpaid labour to keep them going.

The enthusiasm of the people for education was such that districts commonly sent parties of men to work on the goldfields or the roads for a few months so that the whole or greater part of their earnings would be credited to the Government Savings Bank account of their local school. In 1937, five Ra tikina raised £688 in this way; most instances are not documented although the

1 Sukuna to CS, 21 Apr. 1933, CSO F15/1.
2 e.g. Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1933, Resolution XIII, that an agricultural instructor paid by the government be appointed to each provincial school and that agricultural classes for 15-18 year olds be formed. The standard reply was that no funds were available.
3 Proceedings...1938, Resolution XXIII.
practice is still in evidence today.¹

(iii) 'uplift and enlightenment'

The general faith of Fijians in education owed something to the high esteem accorded to middle-ranking Fijians of largely achieved status, such as the Native Medical Practitioners, the Ministers, the provincial scribes, teachers and others. Chiefly leadership was not of itself threatened by these men if they happened to be commoners. In Fijian councils chiefs always presided, but there was a proper place for men of stature in the community and their opinions could be influential. Still the gulf between educated and uneducated was keenly felt by many of the emergent middle-class. They desired a separate, more articulate voice in the colony's affairs. In the 1920s they found that voice in the Viti Caravou or Young Fijian Society.²

This organization developed from a society founded in 1922 by R.A. Derrick, Headmaster of the Davuilevu Technical School. Originally called the Viti Vou, New Fiji, it was designed to keep old boys of the school in touch

¹ See annual report for Ra, 1937, CSO F22/3. When I stayed at Maloku village in July 1974 a party of about 30 young men were enthused with a plan to go to New Zealand for six months and earn money for a village development scheme.

with each other.¹ They met frequently at Davuilevu for debating nights and to hear ideas for mutual improvement. An American freemason employed at the school as an agricultural adviser, W. Oesch, persuaded the society to adopt a secret code and certain rituals on masonic lines. The Secretary of Native Affairs Islay McOwan intervened to have the secret parts abolished. It is not clear from the records whether or not rituals continued, or indeed what were the dynamics of the society's articulate leadership. In 1924 the name Viti Caravou was adopted and a constitution drawn up to allow entry to non-Davuilevu boys. A strong branch was formed at the Queen Victoria School where two assistant Fijian masters Opetaia Drekitirua and Joeli Ravai were keenly interested in the society. They gradually took over its leadership. Branches were formed in nearly all provinces. An office was opened in Suva in February 1926 with a former Davuilevu teacher Mosese Buadromo as full time president. Derrick remained influential in the background and edited a small magazine called Na Viti designed to improve Fijian minds with wholesome stories such as prominent Suva citizen Sir Henry Marks' own account of his rise from rags to riches.² Buadromo was not governed by Derrick. They fell out in 1929 over financial irregularities in the Viti Caravou accounts and Derrick then resigned as adviser and honorary accountant.³

Buadromo gave this description of the society:

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¹ Seymour to CO, 2 Aug. 1933.
² Na Viti., June 1924.
The Young Fijian Society is, as its name indicates, an Association of Young, Educated Fijians who can fulfil certain conditions, and who pledge themselves to serve the best interests of their People in every possible way, to be loyal to the Empire, and the Government of the Colony, and to continue to engage in some useful, productive work as opposed to 'tiko wale ga' [being idle]. The membership is at present from 250 to 300; and includes native Magistrates and Doctors, Teachers, Government Scribes and Fijians engaged in Trades or other useful occupations... it exists to stimulate thought and discussion among the younger generation of Fijians; to watch the interests or development of the Race...the uplift and enlightenment of the Native Fijian People. Against such there is no law.¹

The defensive note with which the letter ends suggests his resentment that the government at first viewed the society with distrust as a political organization holding no favour amongst the chiefs and people.² Later it recognized in the society 'the articulate expression of this vague groping of the younger generation towards a new social system'³ - evident in their trenchant criticism of village life. Individuals desiring to get on with their own projects were hampered by orders given by the turaga ni koro, the Buli, the Roko or DC, the doctor, constables and chiefs: 'and it is very difficult for the men to be free and to decide their own work to gain

¹ Buadromo to the Acting Under SNA, 14 Sept. 1925, SNA 25/1194.
³ Seymour to CO, 2 Aug. 1933.
prosperity and wealth'. This was to echo the criticism of Europeans whose approval seems to have been sought by the Viti Caravou leaders as the seal of respectability for their organization. Village life was easily criticized, but the society came forward with no thoughtful programme of rural reform - indeed their interests were vested in their own careers, in legitimising their natural desire to escape community obligations.

Perhaps the main reason the Viti Caravou was not taken seriously by traditional Fijian leaders was this feeling that men who did not shoulder the responsibilities of village life, whose prestige derived from education and income rather than leadership, were not the men who could best speak for the community. They were not in touch with the people. It is certainly significant that the Viti Caravou never became a force to be reckoned with in Fijian communal politics, even if its claim was true in 1933 that it had some 4,000 members. The society had no corporateness, no basis for real power. It held many meetings, passed resolutions after resolutions - so much hot air while all the reins of power were held by the Fijian Administration. The Council of Chiefs, the provincial and district councils were secure in the knowledge that they alone could speak for fundamental groups bound in loyalty and a sense of common purpose.

The most that could be said for the Viti Caravou is that it influenced Fijian public opinion. Its constant

1 Drekitirua to McOwan, 5 Nov. 1928, CSO 29/771.
2 Ravai to SNA, 22 Aug. 1933, SNA 33/1537.
appeal for *toro cake*, progress and development, entered the standard rhetoric of Fijian politics. When McOwan agreed to open the annual conference of 1927 the movement gained a measure of respectability and won a limited right of dialogue with the government. The resolutions of the annual conferences were forwarded to the Secretary of Native Affairs for comments and replies. In 1930 they petitioned for laws to preserve racial purity, control of lands used by missions, an end to Indian and Asian immigration, relief from the obligation to pay compensation to out-going lessees, the reversion of extinct *matagali* lands to the *yavusa* rather than the Crown, all the Trustees of their funds to be Fijian, an extension of land rights to include mangrove swamps, a copy of lease agreements to be given to the owners, and the right to vote for the three Fijian members of the Legislative Council. The tenor of their thinking was 'progressive' in some senses but fiercely nationalist in the main and a good deal less conciliatory than the Council of Chiefs to the rights and needs of the Indian community: 'It is our desire to remain united with the Europeans but not with the Indians.' They showed a strong educational concern, petitioning in 1931 for an agricultural college, better education for future mothers and a 'college for the South Seas Islands' for boys and

1 See Ravai and 5858 others to the Governor, 29 Oct. 1930, CSO 30/2704, asking for a law to prohibit mixed marriages and illicit unions: 'Many of our women have children by non-natives and the Chinese are the worst offenders.'

girls who could not be sent overseas. They provided scholarships from their own funds, establishing a precedent that was taken up after the Second World War by provincial councils.

Another interest of the Viti Caravou was the working conditions of Fijian labourers. In 1927 members were forbidden to sign on as a labourer for less than £50 per annum. McOwan replied: 'This resolution savours of trade unionism and is to be deprecated.' Similarly the society made protests about the working conditions on board Union Steam Ship Company vessels, claiming food was thrown about like animal feed, there was no compensation for injuries, and much ill-usage by European overseers. The government investigated the complaints but found no evidence.

One regret of the society was the strict watch the authorities kept on its funds. It was given a block of Crown land in Suva and allowed to spend a few thousand pounds on a rest-house and new quarters but not to engage in commercial enterprises. Joeli Ravai (later appointed the first commoner Roko Tui Tailevu) and seven or eight of his colleagues began a venture of their own in 1933 called the Fijian Planters Association to enter the banana trade. Immediately several chiefs of Colo East and one from Kadavu wanted to donate several hundred cases as a yavu or foundation for the Salavata Vakaitaukei, literally, 

1 McOwan, minute, 24 Feb. 1927, SNA 27/309.
2 SNA 29/310.
'Road together as Fijians'. The donations were disallowed, and the Association ran at a loss on a small scale until it was reconstituted, with European advice, in 1937 and allotted its own buying area on the Wainibuka river and quota of cases. The FPA met its quota of 5,250 in 1938, paying 4s 6d a case, but at the end of the year the Wainibuka was hit hard by a hurricane and a flood. Even before that the company finances were in a mess. The Director of Agriculture was anxious to support them if only because they stood for his ideas on Fijian progress. He helped them in 1939 and 1940 to make their banana business profitable. Then in 1940 the FPA extended its operations to running a store, an office, and a fleet of lorries. It made a heavy loss. After another hurricane in 1941 it was bankrupt, and the shareholders lost their funds. There was no suggestion of fraud, just a total lack of managerial experience. It was a discouraging episode for the Viti Caravou members who had wanted to translate the rhetoric of self-reliance into action. The emergent Fijian middle class felt far safer in the security of the civil service.

1 Buli Soloira and others to SNA, 22 Mar. 1933, SNA 33/718; Ratu Aca Sogoso and others to SNA, 28 Mar. 1933, SNA 33/765.
(iv) 'Had yagona with them as a 'sevusevu' to the Spirits' (Ratu Sukuna)

The Viti Caravou was the voice of youth invoking new gods to sanction a new life-style. Were the old gods silenced? No account of the Fijian political experience can avoid mention of the occult, the dark substratum of Fijian lives, the enduring beliefs of Fijians in supernatural intervention by the spirits of the ancestors and the gods of mythology such as the great shark Dakuwaga. Draunikau, sorcery, survived as an adjunct to personal malice and political ambition; it was and is a phenomenon of perennial interest and fear in the lives of the people. In his article 'The sorcerer weaves his spell and a man dies in Fiji', Ratu Penaia L. Latianara has given outsiders some graphic examples from his own lifetime of the practice of draunikau - which he explains as 'the magic used by sorcerers using leaves to transmit a curse or even cause death to someone or something'. Hereditary priests are regarded as the spiritual agents for the control of the tribal spirit or the Vu who gives effect to the prayer of the sorcerer when certain rituals are fulfilled. Ordinary persons approach the priest with an offering of yagona, or, if the request is a large one, a tabua, whale's tooth.

1 Sukuna, diary, 6 Mar. 1933, CSO Fl5/5. He had anchored at Nasautoka 'on which no Bauan...will spend the night. It is a sort of Elysium.' The crew prepared yagona to offer to the Spirits before daring to sleep.

2 Latianara, Pacific Islands Monthly, Sept. 1973, pp.21-25. See also 'the seven ways of cursing' - not all of them Fijian - in Lambert, A Doctor in Paradise, pp.158-60.
As in many kinds of witchcraft the priest obtains some of the personal belongings of the victim, such as a piece of clothing or leftover food, adds special herbs and buries the mixture in a container or parcel of leaves somewhere near the victim's house.

In Colo North there was a case of draunikau in 1922 where the actual parcel was produced in court. The Fijian sergeant, a pillar of the church, would not touch it, nor anyone else. Finally a man was found who agreed to open the parcel after he had been allowed to drink a special potion to ward off the draunikau - there is 'white' magic as well as black. The man explained to the bemused European magistrate, who none the less seems not to have wanted to volunteer for the job himself, that without the potion he would have taken ill, perhaps mortally. Already he had accidentally touched the parcel and his hand had swollen to twice its size. 'The Tavua natives are in deadly fear of Draunikau', reported the magistrate.¹ It was true of most Fijians. Whenever a man took ill one of the reasons that came to his mind - and there had to be a reason - was the possibility of sorcery. When Ratu Pope Seniloli was dying of cirrhosis of the liver in 1936, he suspected that Ratu Sukuna must have draunikau'd him, and the accused hastened to reassure Ratu Pope in hospital that he bore no malice.²

² Lambert, A Doctor in Paradise (2nd Australian edn, Melbourne, 1942), pp.167-68.
Witchcraft was of course proscribed by the Native Regulations if there was 'intent to cause fear or death', but the government trusted vaguely to the advance of education and the work of the missions to eradicate the evil gradually. There was no great alarm when a report came from Nabukelevu, Kadavu, in 1937 that an occult society met regularly to prepare a special feast called the madrali, half of which was carried out to sea and offered to Dakuwaqa. And at night by the light of the mystic moon they danced naked and free - orgies of lust and abandon in the shadows of Wesley's churches though never, so far as the records allow, on Sundays.

There were indeed some benign aspects of the occult which Fijians were encouraged to exploit. Fire-walking by the islanders of Beqa is the phenomenon best known to the outside world; there are others such as

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1 Regulation 4 of 1883 prescribed a penalty of up to 40 lashes and two years imprisonment. See also Legislative Councils Proceedings 1969, pp.780-842 for the testimony of European, Fijian and Indian members on the widespread nature of draunikau in contemporary Fiji. One speaker (C.A. Shah, p.794) said that in the Tavua area both Indians and Fijians offered yagona to Degei, the snake god of the Nakauvadra range.


3 The church too regarded fire-walking with tolerance although it is intimately connected with the spirit-world. There is irony in the anxiety of the Rev. A.J. Small writing to the New Zealand Methodists in 1906 to ask that a visiting contingent of Beqa Islanders be given a good impression of the importance of Methodism: 'if they come back with the impression that the Methodist Church is nowhere, the result will be bad indeed.' - Small to Danks, 12 Dec. 1906, MM F/1/1906.
the calling of sharks on Lakeba, of turtle on Kadavu and Koro. Half a mile westward of Nacamaki on Koro there is a cliff 300-400 feet high on top of which members of a particular matagali intone a chant to Tui Naikasi, the god of Nacamaki, ending with the words 'Rise and float! Rise and float!' On an occasion when the sceptical DC of Lomaiviti Commander Burrows was present in 1937, 'the turtles responded to treatment and some 6-8 came up at intervals during a period of half an hour. Two sharks also'.¹ The phenomenon has often been recorded and no satisfactory natural explanation advanced. Fijians would say that they have as a people great mana. Have Europeans only been aware of the tip of the iceberg, the more spectacular instances which titillate their rationalist curiosity?

There are many instances of individuals who sought prominence and power through occult practices. Ratu A. Finau as Roko Tui Lau was disturbed in 1906 by the activities of a Cakaudrove man, Tevita Toga, at Vakano on Lakeba. Timing his performance by the call of the lali drum for the people to assemble in church, he would roll uci leaves between his palms and on his legs, then begin to shiver and tremble starting from his toes and convulsing

¹ Burrows, diary, 6 Dec. 1937, CSO F17/5. Another sighting recorded 7 Apr. 1937, *ibid*. A former official of the Fijian Administration, an educated chief from Tailevu with a pragmatic mind, told me that he once stood on the cliff for over half an hour scanning the sea for turtles before allowing the chant to begin. The turtles responded only to cue - coincidence? It is said that during the Second World War the turtles did not rise after 1942 - 'they went with our boys to the Solomons'. 
upwards till his whole body shook violently while he leapt about shrieking horribly or forcing incoherent words through his teeth. His attendants meanwhile calmly chewed yagona. When it was ready he would drink three times then eat a firebrand three times: 'The women all believe in him, a good many men believe in him, and very few went to church in the evening... The people have been flocking to him.' ¹ The missionary on Lakeba, the Rev. Colin Bleazard, was shocked that there had been 'some most heathenish devil-worship...on the island that has done so much for Christianity in other parts of Fiji & elsewhere'.² Some of his own teachers were involved. When he suspended them they united with Ratu Josua the recently dismissed Buli Lakeba, Ratu Salesi an ex-preacher and ex-NSM deposed for adultery, and 40 or 50 others to form a Free Church with the object of preventing the flow of church funds out of Lau.³

In 1914 there was a similar case of 'shaking' in Ra (Tokaimalo district) - a father and son together. Four men testified to the DC that the son bit off live embers and ate them. The men were possessed by the luveniwaï, 'children of the water', said the informants.⁴ Luveniwaï were the small gods who lived upon the coasts

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¹ Finau to NC, 8 Mar. 1906, copy in translation only at CSO F50/47.
² Bleazard to Small, 22 Apr. 1906, CSO F/1/1906.
³ Small to Danks, 31 July 1906, CSO F/1/1906. The Free Church survived several years.
⁴ H.C. Monckton to CS, 29 July 1914, CSO 14/6993.
and rocky parts. Some were boisterous, some mild and gentle when they took possession. It was usually the young men in some kind of fraternity who would build a bower decked out with flowers and vines. They would dress themselves in more leaves and flowers and rub their bodies with perfumed oil. They then prepared a tuituisalu, a parcel of sweet flowers and fruits cooked on coals, and a salumu, a small feast for themselves and the presiding priest or Vuniduvu. One portion was taken to the bush for the incoming luveniwalai. Finally a sacred meke for the meeting with the gods was performed, a libation of yaqona poured and the Vuniduvu became possessed, followed by the youths until all quivered and shook: 'Isa! Isa! Ratagane [Lord Man], Isa!'. After a period of hysteria, or if the spirits were slow to leave, the Vuniduvu would feed the youths live coals or beat them with clubs or throw spears at them. Possession gave them immunity from injury - but not always it seems. There was a case at Mali, Labasa, in 1905 where a youth was seriously injured by a Vuniduvu's spear.  

Early observers such as Thomas Williams took a lenient view of luveniwalai as a not quite innocent pastime, a diversion of youth. David Wilkinson insisted it was not seditious: 'I feel sure no punishment will restrain, but probably promote, in some more clandestine way, manner, and place. A moral, general disapproval will be much more

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1 This account is based on a Fijian one by Ratu Savenaca Seniloli, n.d. [1905], in translation at CSO F 50/47.

2 N. Chalmers to CS, 11 Jan. 1905, CSO 05/303.
effective in putting down the practice.' Such was not
the case with the more sinister Tuka cult of Navosavakadua.

Navosavakadua was the adopted name of one Dugomoi, a priest (bete) of Drauniivi at the foot of the sacred
Nakauvadra range on the Ra coast - he had borrowed the name
given by Fijians to the Chief Justice: 'he who speaks
once' (and you die). Shortly after Cession Navosavakadua
had proclaimed the imminent return of the twin Gods
Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria, the authentic originals
of the missionaries' deceitful substitutes, Jehovah and
Jesus. They would usher in an age when Fijians would rule
their own land again and the strangers would be ousted -
the whites and also the Fijians from other provinces
who held government appointments. His special followers
the bai tabua, 'sacred fence', would receive the gift
of Tuka, immortal life or eternal youth; unbelievers
would be exterminated.

In 1885 Thurston received reports that 60 or 70
men, their faces blackened for war, were drilling under
satini, sergeants, at Udu on the junction of the Wailoa
and Wainimala rivers. The Commissioner of Colo East
Walter Carew moved quickly to apprehend the men and
sentenced 38 of them to six months hard labour for disturbing
the peace. While Carew's court was in progress at Udu,
Navosavakadua processed through the village with his
followers, their clubs to the shoulder. A retinue of
five girls carried his yagona. Evidently both the force

1 Wilkinson, minute 27 Jan. 1905, CSO 05/303.
2 For Tuka see Scarr, Viceroy of the Pacific, Chapters
5, 14, 21 and Thurston's despatches to CO, 15 Jan.
1886, 16 Feb. 1886, 5 July 1886, 1 June 1887, 4 July
1887 and 12 Aug. 1891.
of soldiers and female attendants were to provide the vagona-sodden prophet with a fitting establishment pending the return of the twin gods and the upheaval of the world. 'Who shall ransom you?' was Navosa's text, 'Leave all and follow me'.

The prophet was arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment for 'making trouble in the land' (vakatubuca). Before his release date in 1887, the government passed an ordinance which gave it the power to exile him (and future dissidents) without trial as a danger to the peace and good order of the colony. He died in 1897. His followers kept Tuka alive in the hills and in 1891 were again proselytising from Udu. A tabua went from village to village with the prayer 'that we may be of one mind, that the Government be overthrown, and the Tuka flourish'. Rokoleba, Navosa's lieutenant, put about stories that have been handed on to the present day. The prophet was fed into the rollers of a sugar mill and came out smiling; they tied an anchor and chain around his neck and pitched him into the sea, but to no avail. He would suffer further - beneath a pile driver - then return in triumph.

Tuka took hold in the interior because there were few visible signs of government power. Thurston went on a leisurely progress through the mountains with three friends, 150 carriers and a few armed constables; had Rokoleba flogged before him at Nasoqo, chose the site for

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1 Carew to CS, 15 Dec. 1885, CSO 85/3259.
2 A.B. Joske to CS, 18 June 1891, CSO 91/1862.
3 CSO 91/1471.
a government hill station at Nadarivatu, and deported the entire village of Drauniivi to Kadavu. The old gods had met their match, and smouldered underground for a few years.

There was a shortlived revival in the Nadrau district in 1904; of 14 charged 11 were convicted.\(^1\) Specific details were hard to extract in court but evidently luveniwi practices were becoming mingled with aspects of Tuka in the interior of Viti Levu, causing the government some alarm. The long-serving Governor's Commissioner in Colo A.B. Joske started cricket clubs in the village to divert the energies of the young, only to find that they were used as a cloak for clandestine rituals involving an elaborate hierarchy of officials with fantastic titles.\(^2\) Usually there had to be some personal or political intrigue before the occult came before the courts. The wronged wife of a Vuniduvu near Nadrau informed on him to the Buli in 1907 who laid charges against 13 men and nine women for practising Tuka. They had offered yagona and tabua to a Vuniduvu, giving part to the Vuki, the official who would supervise the turning upside down (vuki) of the world decreed by Navosavakadua, after which his votaries would rule the nations and live forever. There were also Sergeants of the Tuka and Kalasia, meaning scribes. (The government had just created three classes of scribes.) Ten men were sentenced by Joske to two months in gaol. He saw it as his duty to suppress Tuka-related ceremonies as leading always to larceny, immorality and resistance

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1  CSO 04/4418.

2  Joske to NC, 17 Feb. 1908, CSO 08/974.
to the authority of the old men and the government.\textsuperscript{1} He recognized that Tuka was a superstition that lent itself strongly to Fijians with its prayers to the ancestral spirits and its promise of the re-establishment of the prestige of the tribes that professed it. There was always the fear, though, after the 1891 disturbances that the non-advent of Tuka would be explained by its priests as the lack of propitiation with human sacrifice and that serious revolt would ensue.\textsuperscript{2}

It was not until 1914 that the government learned that quite apart from the isolated cases reported by Joske, Tuka had survived within a highly organized secret society embracing all the leading chiefs and nearly all the men of Qaliyalatina tikina, with members in Toge on the Ba river and in three towns of Colo West (Namoli, Nukuilau and Vatubalavu).\textsuperscript{3} Ironically the high priest of the cult Osea Tamanikoro, the turaga ni koro of Batimaoli, had obtained his commission by sending 10 tabua to Navosavakadua's town of Drauniivi in 1892, shortly before the whole village had been deported by Thurston to Kadavu and the same year that the hill station at Nadarivatu had been established with a garrison of Armed Constabulary to keep Tuka from breaking out in the interior. It went

\textsuperscript{1} ibid.

\textsuperscript{2} Joske to the Resident Commissioner of Colo East, 1 Aug. 1891, CSO 91/2344.

\textsuperscript{3} The following account is an attempt to synthesize a mass of sworn testimony at the trials of the accused held in June and July 1914, encl. CSO 14/6189; CSO 14/7090 and attached papers.
underground. Little did Joske realize that the very men who co-operated so willingly in his heavy programme of road-building and other provincial works were being enrolled one by one by Osea with the connivance of the Buli Qaliyalatina, Josefa Tube, and the turaga ni koro of the other Qaliyalatina towns (Cuvu, Navala and Nakoroboya).

Each recruit was taken by a priest in the dead of night to present a root of yagona to Osea and seek admission to the bai tabua, the protectors of the Twin Gods Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria. On one occasion when Josefa Tube accepted the yagona he offered the following prayer:

I accept this Yagona, the Yagona of the Two Gods, the Yagona of life. Ye (two) extend your favour to us the Bai Tabua so that our land may prosper. This land is made over to Burotukula. Let the fact be known to the Vale Dina; let it be known to Vale Kurukuruya; let it be known as far as Ului Bua; let it be known to Vale Lawa; let it be known to Cautoka, let it be known to Naiyalayala. This is the prayer of the Bai Tabua.¹

Burotukula is one of the spirit-lands where the Twin Gods are in hiding. The bai tabua dedicated all their lands to Burotukula as to the new heaven and the new earth. Most of the other names referred to sacred places in the Nakauvadra range, home of the gods. Normally in the yagona ritual the ceremonial names of the chiefly lines of the participants are invoked with great respect and care.

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¹ Sitiveni evidence, 11 July 1914, encl. W.A. Scott to CS, 31 July 1914, CSO 14/7090.
Here the implication is clear: the bai tabua are of the gods; they will live forever; they do not belong to the ordinary run of chiefly houses. While the yagona was being chewed a chant such as the following was sung:

Me ra Yaval na Bai Tabua  
Era taubale ki Ulu ni Vanua  
Kele na Vale ko Nacoukula  
Vakarewa na Droti ni Bula

Let the Bai Tabua bestir themselves  
They walk to the Mountain  
Solid stands the house 'Nacoukula'  
Hoist the banner of Immortality

'Nacoukula' was the name of Osea's house. It was his audacious plans in 1914 for a huge new house that led to the exposure of the whole movement. The Provincial Commissioner of Colo North, W.E. Russell, became suspicious in May and June when Joseva Tube asked the NSM not to hold a court circuit in those months because there were no complaints. Rumours came to Russell on a visit to Nadrau that a heathen temple was under construction. Unusual quantities of sinnet had been ordered from Namoli in Colo West. Then the Buli himself visited Russell in Nadrau to ask permission to employ the whole district on Osea's house. Russell subsequently visited Cuvu and found the turaga ni koro's house hung around with a great number of clubs and traditional bark garments with strings of flowers - in preparation for rehearsals for a missionary meeting, said the people, but Russell was not so sure.

The Buli Navatusila meanwhile made inquiries in the town of Nanoko near the borders of his district.

1 Sailosi, evidence, 11 July 1914, ibid.
with Qaliyalatina and there obtained a man prepared to testify in court that his neighbours were engaged in a Tuka cult. Another willing witness was found in the Wesleyan teacher at Batimaoli. With these and three other informants available, Russell charged the Buli, Osea and 15 others with practices similar to luveniwai (the word Tuka not actually occurring in the regulation). They were remanded in custody to allow them to retain a lawyer from Ba. The convictions obtained at the subsequent legal proceedings were quashed by the Supreme Court on technical grounds, but the trials brought further details of Osea's scheme. His house was to be entirely of vesi logs dragged, not carried, from the forest and hoisted into position by block and tackle so that no part would be touched by hands. There were to be no openings apart from two glass doors or windows through which he promised they would be able to see the Twin Gods when they returned to inaugurate a new era and install Osea himself as ruler of all Fiji. The whites would be their slaves; some would be killed. The church and the government would be driven out. Then all the world would contribute to a vast new house to be built above Batimaoli at Vatukoro, the place where their fathers had massacred a force of Bauans sent in 1868 to avenge the death of the Rev. Thomas Baker in the previous year.

Pending the outcome of the court hearings, Joseva Tube was dismissed as Buli and the tikina of Qaliyalatina was abolished.¹ Joseva, Osea and his followers then

¹ CSO 14/7297. Nakoroboya was attached to Tavua, the other three towns to Navatusila.
converted en masse to Roman Catholicism. If they sensed that the French priest at Ba would be a good advocate, their confidence was shrewdly placed. Père Picherit S.M. immediately began protesting their innocence and loyalty. When Russell reported in December 1914 that he had met with stubborn resistance in Qaliyalatina and urged the deportation of Osea, Josefa and three other ringleaders,¹ Picherit obtained a copy of the letter and vigorously denied the various charges, mentioning in passing that 172 out of the 179 inhabitants of Cuvu, Navala and Batimaoli were devout Catholics. When the Provincial Commissioner had come to inspect their district it was no discourtesy that the villages were nearly empty - they had all been to the opening of a new church at Ba by Bishop Vidal: 'I must say that in my opinion the dangers of opposition to the Government of His Most Gracious Majesty by the natives of this district is imaginary and has no foundation in fact.'²

His unction and ignorance of the facts aside, the priest was probably right in questioning the need for the harsh action the government took at Russell's request. Osea was confined to Oneata for 10 years, Joseva Tube and three others were confined for five years to parts of Lau and Kadavu. The people petitioned at least three times for their release and Picherit wrote on their behalf again in 1918.³ Finally their sentences expired in 1920 and

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1 Russell to CS, 14 Dec. 1914, CSO 14/10450.
2 Picherit to CS, 15 Feb. 1915, CSO 15/1621.
3 See CSO 17/7444, 18/3529, 18/9707, and for the reinstatement of Qaliyalatina as a tikina see below, p.272.
a year later Osea also was allowed to return home. If he ever reactivated the bai tabua, the government did not get to hear of it.

One other movement at this time deserves brief notice, that of the half-mad Sailosi Nagusolevu alias Ratu, and Aisake Sivo. Sailosi told a meeting of 700-800 Fijians at Tavua on 25 March 1918 that Navosavakadua had gone from Nadarivatu to England to kill Queen Victoria. And now Britain had surrendered to Germany, the Governor was deposed and all the DCs. The Viti Company (see below, pp.202-36 ) would take their place. There would be no taxes, no vakamisioneri collections, and as a sign of the new order they should celebrate the sabbath on Saturday. The movement spread rapidly inland down the Sigatoka and the Rewa tributaries. The new sabbath was celebrated in Nadrau and from there two men took it to Nasoqo, Nabobouco, in April. For a short period the people were openly defiant of the orders of the Provincial Commissioner of Colo North. The religion was dubbed 'Number Eight', the last religion to have come to Fiji being Seventh Day Adventism known to Fijians in short form as the 'seventh church', lotu ikavitu. Sailosi was confined to the asylum before he could get very far and Aisake Sivo exiled to Yanuca for seven years.

The importance of the Number Eight movement is the repercussions it had on the Wesleyan church in a few inland areas. Teachers and church officials who had desecrated the sabbath were publicly humiliated and expelled

1 For Sailosi see Chambers to Small, 22 May 1918, MM F/1/1918; SNA C91/18; CSO 18/6336; and Escott to CO, 4 June 1918, and 13 June 1918, CO 83/142.
by meetings of their circuits. The Seventh Day Adventists stepped into the breach. Their Fijian agent, one Pauliasis, toured the interior with the adventist formula for making Saturday Sunday. He saved the face of the 'Sailosiites' and established congregations on the Wainibuka, in Nadrau and some towns of Colo East, where they remain strong today.

All was quiet in Colo North until in June 1934 Navosavakadua (died 1897) visited Atekini Ciobale of Nasogoro, and informed him that a council of the spirit chiefs at Bua had decided the time had come to inaugurate a new era. Navosa's own task was to visit the country of the white man and bring back the Government Offices for their headquarters. Meanwhile would he, Atekini, take charge of the people along with Ameniasia Naqiomila, who was to be the prophet through whom messages would come, and Kitione Koro who was to be the doctor charged with dispensing the water of life to the faithful.

That at least is the beginning as the DC Colo North, Stuart Reay, reconstructed it five months afterwards.¹ On 4 November 1934 one of Reay's trainee clerks at Nadarivatu asked permission to go to Nasiriti, over 20 miles away in Nabobouco. On being pressed for his reason the youth explained that his father had sent for him to drink the water of life. Surely Mr Reay knew that on the 5th, 15th and 25th of the month people came from far and wide to drink the healing liquid?² Mr Reay was

¹ Documentary sources for this account are: Reay, diary 1934 passim, CSO F13/21 Reay to CS, 25 May 1935, and 25 Aug. 1936 CSO F13/1.

² Not only to drink it but, according to several oral accounts, to see it change colours.
indeed interested to find that most of his staff had already partaken but that none had cared to share the good news with the DC. A trusty provincial constable was despatched forthwith to Nasiriti where in a village of five families he counted 321 people - 99 of them from Colo East and 25 from Ra. Buli Nabobouco was there and Buli Muaira from Colo East. A little dispensary had been built, reserved for the good doctor Kitione and his dresser. There were three notices, one saying that those who came from various districts or provinces in Fiji were to bring letters, another forbidding anyone to approach the spring without permission - signed 'Kitione P. Koro the Doctor of Fiji'. The third forbade spitting, smoking and speaking when the medicine was being drunk. The track to the spring had been neatly cut and bordered with shrubs.¹ A sort of outpatients' Register had been kept showing that over 9,000 people had been treated - although as the clerk was later found to be unable to count past 1,099 the true number was probably less than 2,000. The Provincial Constable (a chief of Nabutautau) ransacked the Buli's private papers and came back with one curious item, a letter from the Buli to Atekini Ciobale dated 19 April 1934 telling him that he had presided at a ceremony the previous day in memory of the blood that flowed at Vunawi - possibly the spot at Nasogo where Thurston had flogged Rokoleba after the **Tuka** revival of 1891.

Was this another revival of that cult? Reay believed that it was, but he could get none of the above

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¹ The shrubs were still growing in September 1974 but the pool and spring much less cared for.
evidence sworn to in court. He obtained convictions on
the charge of illegal assembly. It is a distinct possibility
that the whole connection with Navosavakadua was fabricated
by Reay's private informant - possibly a man from Nasoqo
who wanted to discredit Nasiriti, hitherto a very unimportant.
village compared to its neighbours.\(^1\) The Buli Nabobouco
himself, when Reay interrogated him on 11 November, was
'obviously in a funk'\(^2\) - there was no doubt that he had
had opportunities to report the matter to Reay who was
not impressed with his excuse that many women in Nabobouco
were childless and that he had wanted to give Kitione a
chance to prove himself. For Reay had been with the Buli
in Nasoqo on 18 August and the latter had alluded to the
talk of a new cure, but not in such a way that Reay would
take it seriously. Reay was convinced the Buli was
smarting from a public censure that the chiefs and Bulis
of Colo North had (at Reay's request) delivered in Nasoqo
in December 1933.\(^3\) A list of the crimes of Nabobouco had
been read out - defiance of orders, wholesale evasion of
taxes, provocative behaviour to the people of Nasau *tikina*;
and other offences. It seemed plausible then that they
should revive a cult which aimed at the overthrow of the
government.

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\(^1\) Obviously this is a sensitive area for research and
interviews could not be taken far. Rivalries between
villages in Nabobouco are intense. Dr Karl Erik
Larsson of Sweden has done extensive fieldwork in
the area, and his findings are keenly awaited.

\(^2\) Reay, diary 11 Nov. 1934, CSO F13/2.

\(^3\) *ibid.*, 12-14 Dec. 1933.
Despite Reay's affirmations, the Tuka connection remains obscure.\(^1\) What is certain is that the Nasoqo and Nasiriti people have no apologies to make about the water of life. People still come to drink it and it is carried to the sick in distant places. A catalogue of cures is available for the asking, and all the inquisitive outsider needs to know any further is that the people say prayers before and after drinking it: 'it is God's gift to us.'

(v) 'I am the only chief since Cakobau died, I am the saviour of the Fijians'

The scale of the outbreaks of the ever-smouldering Tuka and luveniwai in remote parts of the group is dwarfed by the phenomenon of the Viti Company that seized Fiji during the First World War and remained significant until the Second. There are no Fijians of whom there are more legends than the founder of the Viti Company, Apolosi R. Nawai. By most accounts he was born at Narewa, Nadi, although for rhetorical reasons he identified himself with

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\(^1\) In Reay's report for 1937 he noted that Nabobouco had been the first of two tikina in Colo North to adopt by unanimous resolution of district council Ratu Sukuna's land proposal - 'showing that in their hearts they trust the Government'. - extract encl. CP 42/38.
Vuda the mythical landing place of the Fijian ancestors.¹

In oral tradition Apolosi is portrayed as the spiritual heir of Navosavakadua, the one who had first 'manifested the strength in Fiji' and performed many 'works of mana'.²

The link is not so clear in the written record. Apolosi sent a letter to Josefa Tube of Qaliyalatina some time before 1914 but that tikina proved to be the only district in Colo North that did not support the Viti Company.³

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¹ See also, (1) A. Thompson to the editor, Pacific Islands Monthly, July 1975, pp.21-2. He writes that Apolosi's father came from Nawaka, Nadi, and his mother from Malevu, Naviti Island, Yasawa Group. In a personal communication of 18 Sept. 1975, Mr Thompson writes that he has at my request checked his sources in the Yasawas and would now agree that Apolosi's father came from Narewa. A grandmother came from Malevu. Our oral sources now agree also that Sikitutu village near Nadi Airport was Apolosi's mother's place. (2) The text of the confining order encl. Escott to CO, 7 Dec. 1917: 'Whereas Apolosi Nawai of Vuda in the district of Nadi...' Peter France has demonstrated the very recent genesis of the Fijian migration legend with its landfall at Vuda - 'The Kaunitoni Migration. Notes on the Genesis of a Fijian Tradition', Journal of Pacific History, (1966), pp.107-13.

² See Adi S. Gaunavou R. Nawai and David L. Toma's Ai Tukutuku Bibi e baleti Ratu Avolosi R. Nawai (Nadi, 1966?), p.6. These stories of the 'true man of Fiji', 'the slave of Fiji' by his daughter cast Apolosi in the role of the Saviour who suffered that all might live. I am most grateful to Adi Sereima for making a copy available to me.

³ See Joseva Tube, evidence, 25 July 1914, encl. Scott to CS, 31 July 1914, CSO 14/7090. The Qaliyalatina people in fact attributed their disgrace to revengeful Viti Company machinations, a view which found support in 1921, even with the lawyer (Nathaniel Chalmers) who had conducted the prosecutions in 1914. See Chalmers to CS, 25 Oct. 1921, CSO 21/6063 appealing successfully for Osea's release.
The Tuka cult operated quietly in the night; it was for a few initiates. The Viti Company in the early years sought the full glare of publicity and the trappings of respectability: it was for all Fijians. Only when driven underground in the 1930s did it become a cult seeking legitimacy in the older tradition.

Apolosi was educated at the central Methodist training institute at Navula and Davuilevu where he acquired a mastery of the Bible and skill as a carpenter. He and a Bauan chief, Ratu J. Tabailwalu, led a team which was based at Davuilevu and made contracts to build those expensive wooden churches that competed with sailing cutters to drain the capital resources of Fijian villages. Oral traditions agree that they were building a church at Korovatu near Vunidawa, Colo East, about 1912, when Apolosi first announced his scheme for the Viti Company. Perhaps it was the procession of European-owned punts on the Wainimala river bringing down Fijian-grown bananas for the lucrative export trade out of Suva that led him to dwell on the backwardness of Fijians in the commercial economy. For some time he had been dreaming of a way his own countrymen, who called themselves the taukei, owners, could directly enter the banana trade or other business venture and enjoy some of the profits that made possible the comforts of the Europeans. At 5 p.m. one evening in Mitieli's house at Lutu on the Wainibuka river, the man from Ra unfolded his scheme to the chiefs and people. Provided that they were valo gaga, strong-minded and determined, began the carpenter, already able to fire their imagination with his superb command of language, Fijians could unite and do without the European middlemen, take control of their own enterprises, learn the required
skills and keep the profits in their own hands.\(^1\)

But how was a man of no personal rank in Nadi, let alone in the proud chiefly confederations of eastern Fiji, to arrogate to himself a leadership role when traditionally, and equally in the provincial administration, initiative came from the chiefs? How was he to gain support across Fiji for his proposal when even within the confines of one province it was not possible for an individual to canvas support for a project or an idea outside his own district tikina? The chiefly representatives on the provincial council were not elected on a political platform but were sent as the natural representatives of their groups in relation to other groups. The tikina came together in council and looked upwards to the Roko to respond to initiatives that came from him or higher authority - to protect their own group interests and privileges, too, but not to articulate needs that went further than particular concrete problems such as water supplies, access to medical services, roads, or markets for produce.

When Apolosi said 'we Fijians' to people with whom he had no connection or status, then, he was speaking a new language. He also needed a new basis of legitimacy and he sought it in the western model of a company of

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\(^1\) This paragraph is based on oral evidence from old men at Lutu and Vatukoula. Mitieli was a chief and ex-Buli Lutu, later to become district manager of the Viti Company. It is part of the style of Fijian storytelling to specify an exact time of day while the year is never known. Apolosi spoke of beginning his work in 1911, but the government only became aware of it in 1913.
shareholders united solely on the basis of their capital contribution and the specific aims of the enterprise, and delegating the control of its operations to a managing director. Apolosi did not know or care much for the financial details of company organization - it was the status, the titles, the impressive office, the company letterhead and especially the shareholders' meeting that were his first concern to achieve.

A true man of the people, he had an unerring psychological strategy for validating his scheme in their eyes. It was a propitious time for a Fiji Company. Most Fijians had heard of the Tongan Company (1909-12) and the rumoured prosperity of its members at the expense of European traders. Nor did the watchword of that company, Tonga ma'a Tonga, Tonga for the Tongans, lose in translation to Fijian commercial conditions. The collapse of the 19th century government marketing organization for tax produce had bound Fijians hand and foot to European and Chinese traders. The Planters' Petition of 1908 seeking the nationalization of unused Fijian lands and the knowledge that it had the support of the Supreme Chief Sir Everard in Thurn, followed by the downgrading of the chiefs' role in the administration, had created 'an atmosphere of troubled suspicion...for the first time perhaps since cession', and Apolosi knew how to turn it to advantage.¹

At the end of 1913 the government became aware that agents of the Viti Company were soliciting 'share' subscriptions from chiefs and people in nearly every part

¹ Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna, memorandum, 12 Mar. 1917, CSO 17/2286.
of the group. The promoters claimed government approval, despite an official warning in *Na Mata* that the company was 'hardly known to the Government'.\(^1\) Apolosi demanded that shareholders sell only to their company and be content with a lower price until its offices were properly established in Suva. The people of Lutu and most of their neighbours on the tributaries of the Rewa River gave their bananas without payment to Apolosi's agents; the islanders of Nayau in Lau province gave him their copra, and one district in Ra province handed over its entire tax money. The company aroused great excitement in all parts of the group and was widely attributed to the inspiration of the Twin Gods Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria, a suggestion Apolosi did nothing to dispel. In January 1914 an old Fijian servant of the government in the interior roused himself from retirement to warn that the company's objects were said to be the return of the lands alienated to Europeans before Cession, the closure of all the European and Indian stores in Fiji, the abolition of government taxes and the expulsion of all Europeans from Fiji - while there were 'other reports which it is not seemly to relate'.\(^2\)

Apolosi issued orders to the Bulis of eastern Viti Levu to assemble with their people at Draubuta village in the Rewa delta for the official inauguration ceremonies of the company on 29 April 1914. When the Secretary for Native Affairs

\(^1\) *Na Mata*, Jan. 1914, p.1; June 1914, pp.82-3.

\(^2\) Joni Kuruduadua to the Provincial Commissioner Colo East, 28 Jan. 1914, CSO 14/1975.
K.J. Allardyce told the Bulis by circular letter that in no circumstances were they to take their orders from the Viti Company, Apolosi and his ex-Davuilevu colleague from Bau, Ratu J. Tabaiwalu, countered with a circular of their own, impressively typed, saying that Allardyce's letter was 'foolish indeed' as there was no law to prevent the collection of money or the formation of a company. Allardyce urged that Apolosi be exiled forthwith under the Confining Ordinance (111 of 1887) originally designed to remove Navosavakadua to Rotuma without trial, but Governor Sir E. Bickham Sweet-Escott, fatally ignorant of the interpretation Fijians would place on his caution, allowed the meeting to go ahead. He feared 'a false step'.

Was not the government now anxious that 'the communal system with its paralysing influence on individual effort and ambition should be broken down'? Apolosi's Viti Company could herald a healthy new phase in the Fijians' transition from simple subsistence to a liberal economy. The protests of the threatened European banana interest had to be balanced against the government tradition of strong protection for the legitimate aspirations of the Fijians.

That, certainly, was not the view of the traditional leaders of the Fijians, the high chiefs. The Tui Nayau (Roko Tui Lau in his government capacity) was one of the first to try and discredit the company. Apolosi, he reported, had arrived in state at the island of Nayau

1 Escott, minute, 3 June 1914, and other papers at CSO 14/4758.

2 May to CO, 3 May 1911, CO 83/101.
with £70 worth of gifts to exchange for women. Then at a district church meeting (polotu) Apolosi boasted that he did not honour anyone in Fiji, whether white, red or black, nor any Governor, Roko or Magistrate. To dramatize the point he tore up summonses issued by the European Magistrate at Lomaloma. Finally, warned the Roko, Apolosi advised the people not to pay their debts to the Europeans. The other chiefs had their first opportunity to discuss the company at the Council of Chiefs in May 1914. They were assured by the Buli Nadi that Apolosi and his brother Kiniviliame were 'people of no position' and that they had both been driven out of Nadi. The Viti Company was the work of young upstarts, an affront to chiefly prerogatives. The Council urged the government to prohibit the collection of money for an unregistered company and to prosecute the promoters. A shrewd chief of Kadavu added that as long as Apolosi and his followers were allowed to make their boasts with impunity, the people would assume tacit government approval for the venture. As the chiefs were well aware, Apolosi had to give the Company an aura of chiefly authority before the people would rally to its flag.

In a predicament created by its own mood of liberalism, the government replied that only the misuse of money was unlawful. Apolosi must be legally convicted of an offence before the Viti Company's activities could be constrained. As no one could be found who would

1 Ratu A. Finau to CS, 18 Feb. 1914, CSO 14/2413.
3 Rankine, minute, 11 June 1 14, CSO 14/4712. The collection of money was eventually regulated in 1928.
testify in court to his squandering of money held in trust, the man from Ra had free rein to develop his organization. To heighten the impression of a great chiefly enterprise he appointed a large number of company officials with authoritative-sounding titles. Almost every Buli in the District Administration was flanked by a 'Manager' while the government village chiefs, the turaga ni koro, were in many places virtually replaced with company nominees bearing the same title. Similarly he appointed ovisa to correspond with the provincial constables, and threatened to fine or imprison the enemies of the company. It was as though there were two governments in Fiji, complained the Roko Tui Macuata.¹

Promoters of the company carried its messages and instructions from village to village, stirring up enthusiasm and collecting funds. Apolosi was later to claim, and it was doubtless the case, that he had little control over what they said and did in the name of the Viti Company. Nor was there much a handful of overworked magistrates could do to monitor their movements. A chief of Bau, for instance, Ratu Vakatotovo, promised the people of Buca Bay that they would receive 13s a bunch for their bananas from the Company—the market price was 1s. He told them the beacons erected by government surveyors marked the places where soil samples had been taken to send to prospective settlers overseas. Unless Fijians organized themselves and supported the Company, he warned, they

¹ See *Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1917*, encl. Escott to CO, 11 July 1917, CO 83/137.
would be driven off their lands and shot as had happened to the Australian taukei. The Roko Tui Nadroga reported similar propaganda in his own province. How seriously the people viewed these rumours is difficult to determine. But the anxiety of Fijian landowners was after all based on a correct reading of the desire of most of the European colonists to see Fiji become an advanced British country on the lines of Australia and New Zealand, with the Crown assuming control of the bulk of the lands and offering them on easy terms to new settlers.

In June 1914 Apolosi was advising his managers that the Company was 'nearly formed and its flag hoisted'.\(^1\) In August a levy of £10 was demanded from every district and the membership fee fixed at £1.\(^2\) In the banana-rich villages of the Rewa delta Apolosi proclaimed that anyone selling to Europeans would be prosecuted by the company and imprisoned. The Provincial Commissioner of Colo East reported that rather than sell to European buyers offering cash on the spot, the people were burying their bananas.\(^3\) The government began to realize that intervention would soon be necessary: it was simply a question of the length of the rope.\(^4\)

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1 Apolosi and Kinivilame Nawai to Ilaya (manager on Naviti) 19 June 1914, CSO 14/9384.

2 Akuila Tuivuna, 'Clerk of the Viti Company', to Buli Kavula, 21 Aug. 1914, CSO 14/9385.

3 Baker to CS, 1 Dec. 1914, CSO 14/10313.

4 Stewart, minute, 7 Dec. 1914, CSO 14/10287.
When it came to the disposal of bananas, copra, and other produce Apolosi was compelled to work with Europeans already in the business. Although the details of his dealings are not documented, it seems the Viti Company had its own inter-island cutters and river punts - essential status symbols - but used established firms to handle overseas shipments. Seeing a chance to capitalize on Fijian patriotism, five Suva businessmen went ahead without Apolosi and legally incorporated a company called the Viti Company with a capital of 10,000 shares at £1 each, 5% on allotment. A certificate to commence business was issued on 16 January 1915. The memorandum of association provided for all the business activities Apolosi had urged Fijians to take on themselves: the marketing of Fijian produce and traditional manufactures, the management of wholesale and retail stores, importing and exporting, shipbuilding, insurance, banking and auctioneering. However the board was always to have five of its seven members Europeans and in the first instance no Fijians were appointed.¹

In letters to Governor and to press the European directors denounced the use of the company's name by Apolosi or anyone else to collect funds. For his part, Apolosi seized on this parasitical Viti Company's legal standing to impress or confuse the people with the legality of the original Viti Company in its diffuse semi-political form. In January 1915 he brought some 3,000-4,000 people back to Draubuta for meetings and celebrations lasting nearly a month. In oral traditions this meeting is often

¹ Registrar of Companies to CS, 25 Nov. 1916, CSO 16/9253.
regarded as the real inauguration of the Company. Apolosi addressed the crowd from a high stage hung with a hundred *tabua*. Ro Tuisawau, dissident high chief of Rewa, is said to have presented Apolosi with a large *tabua*, whale's tooth, to confer on him a chiefly mandate to ensure the prosperity of the whole country.¹ Many minor chiefs and ex-government officials were present, as well as five Bulis of Colo East expressly forbidden to attend. The meeting is poorly documented but apparently Apolosi used it to bolster his claim to be the true leader of the Viti Company, for shortly afterwards he warned the Bulis of Nadroga they should cease their hostility to the company 'lest you incur serious trouble'. Did they not understand that the Viti Company had been duly registered and had legal authority?²

In March 1915 Apolosi faced a crisis. The first annual general meeting of the legal Viti Company in the Suva Town Hall was to be held on the 27th; hundreds of Viti Company shareholders (of both companies) were expected to attend and they would learn for the first time that Apolosi was not the Managing Director - one A.J. Mackay was. Apolosi met the problem head on. He called his own meeting for the evening of the same day to follow Mackay's, which went badly enough. Mackay warned of 'certain Fijians...who can only be called Germans' collecting money


² Apolosi to Bulis of Nadroga, 17 Mar. 1915, CSO 15/2851.
illegally in the name of the Viti Company. Then the Tui Nausori took two tabua to the Directors, begging them to take no notice of Apolosi and his agitators: 'Europeans were the only people who could run their Company properly.' At night hundreds of Fijians, and a few curious European observers or officials packed the hall to hear what Apolosi would have to say in reply. The man from Ra drove up outside in a gleaming black car and attired in a well-fitting tussore silk suit made for him by Peapes of Sydney. The Fijians in the audience received him as if he had been the Governor himself, but Apolosi was careful to begin on the self-deprecating note demanded by both his sense of dramatic contrast and Fijian chiefly etiquette:

Chief of all Fiji and chiefs of Papalagi present here today. I am one who has not been long in this world, I am but a child [he was about 37]...it is not my prerogative to summon you chiefs together that you should leave your chiefly lands and put aside your chiefly rank to attend a meeting called in my name. Why then did you come? To see me? Is it not rather that you endorse this work of cleanliness to achieve our prosperity and increase in the present time...

Then after outlining the history of the Viti Company and the lack of support he had received from Europeans, including the directors of the legal company, he asked the meeting for what reason had he been excluded from the Board: 'Someone tell me. Am I a thief. Do I oppose the Government?' He paused for a minute or two to search the faces of his audience. No one said a word. Then he

1 Fiji Times, 30 Mar. 1915.
went on to say how sad he was to hear that the afternoon meeting had gone badly for them. Could someone tell him why? One Felipe volunteered that they were angry to see Fijians had been excluded from the Board. If it was really a Fijian company then surely Fijians should be in control. Apolosi asked the meeting to raise their hands if they agreed. There were no dissenters.¹

Much encouraged no doubt, Apolosi stepped up his fund-raising for a variety of schemes called 'Life Insurance on Native Towns', 'A Fijian Club', 'Entrance to the Viti Company' and others more or less under his direction. Some of the Methodist missionaries became worried by the fall-off in their vakamisioneri collections, although the Chairman of the mission thought that the bubble would burst: 'Fair promise without anything in the way of vakadinadina [proof] cannot, surely, long satisfy the people.'² European settlers were more alarmed by the political undertones of the movement. Viti Levu was alive with rumour. In one cable the District Commissioner of Ra reported that a young girl had been killed, cooked and partly eaten in Colo West. Settlers at Tavua, near the old seat of the Tuka cult at Drauniivi, demanded ammunition. An isolated storekeeper in Serua warned that the European population was in real danger. He had heard heathen songs and dances gleefully representing the whites as swimming

¹ Fijian text supplied by the company and printed *ibid*. See also Gilchrist Alexander, *From the Middle Temple to the South Seas* (London, 1927), p.72.

² Small to Amos, 8 April 1915, MM F/1/1915.
for their lives: 'Everything seems to point to an approaching conflict between black and white.'

In May 1915 Apolosi was touring the Yasawa group collecting copra when a Fijian constable sent from Suva arrived at Yaqeta with a warrant for his arrest on a charge of embezzlement in Rewa. When Apolosi flatly refused to go, the constable returned to the mainland for reinforcements. On 17 May the police arrived at dusk to find Apolosi standing on the beach between two fires with about 30 men seated in a circle around him. Apolosi said in English, 'stand up, boys'. Tense and sweating, his protectors rose and stood shoulder to shoulder in silence. Light from the fire illumined their three-foot pile of stout batons, and flickered up to faces blackened as if for war. Police Inspector Scott-Young read firmly from his warrant. Apolosi raised one arm and replied: 'I swear by Jesus Christ that I won't be taken alive. You may take my dead body. I don't care if you have 2,000 warrants. I will not go.' For an hour and a half Scott-Young stood there reasoning and threatening into the darkness. Then fearing bloodshed - his own - he retreated to his boat.

Two days later the Inspector General of Constabulary, Colonel Islay McOwan, sailed from Lautoka with an armed party. At the mouth of the Ba River they intercepted a little fleet of cutters manned by Apolosi and his followers. The leader and 24 of his men were

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1 Barrow to Governor, 5 Apr. 1915, CSO 15/3130.
2 Escott to CO, 7 Dec. 1917, CO 83/139 encloses a long account of these incidents and defence by Apolosi himself.
apprehended easily and charged with resisting a police officer in the execution of his duty. There were rumours, but as always no convicting evidence, that Apolosi and his men were on their way to Natutu in Ba to raise open rebellion and that if those people refused, then he was to go up into the mountains of Colo East. Apolosi was tried in Suva and sentenced to 18 months with hard labour. His brother Kiniviliame and six others received shorter sentences.

While Apolosi was in gaol others carried on his work under the name 'Fiji Produce Agency'. Their leader was one Joeli Cava of Vuce, Tokatoka, who re-asserted the legitimate business aims of the company and curried favour with the government. At the same time a meeting of the FPA at Sabeto in December 1915 drew up a protest against the government's attempts to control leasing arrangements and urged that Fijians themselves should cultivate their idle lands and market the produce.¹

A large delegation led by Joeli was received at Government House on Christmas Eve 1915, their objections discussed, and their projects cautiously approved. The colonial authorities were still prepared to encourage Fijian commercial ambitions provided they did not 'interfere with the social organisation necessary for the good life of the majority of the people...the only life possible at this stage' for Fijians.²

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1 Tuisawau and others to the Governor, Na Mata, Jan. 1916, pp.8-9.

2 Text of a personal warning from Escott read to Apolosi in Korovou gaol, Sept. 1916, CSO 16/6390.
In gaol Apolosi received visits from two chaplains. The Rev. W. Brown reported his conversations to the Governor: 'he talks as though he had communications with the old gods of Fiji etc., and at times talks most incoherently... the man is mentally unsound.' To the Rev. Father Fox, SM, Apolosi spoke, quite coherently, of his ambition to improve the narrow educational opportunities provided by the Mission Schools. He lamented his own lack of useful knowledge.¹

Four weeks after his release on 30 September 1916, Apolosi was back at Draubuta for a hero's welcome and to tell how much he had suffered for the company cause. He inspected a guard of honour of 120 schoolchildren neatly dressed in the European clothes prescribed by the company as the outward sign of internal progress towards a modern way of life. A surprise visitor was A.J. Mackay who announced that he had sold his £200 share in the legal company to Apolosi and men of Apolosi's choice (a French clerk, Adrian Zacharie, and a ship's steward, J.F. Dunne). The board was now short of its required number and proportion of European blood; or rather the title director ceased to have any more meaning than the other titles in the original company's pantheon. Books were kept spasmodically, and recorded only a fraction of the Company's transactions, most of which were handled by Apolosi personally. Thousands of pounds were unaccounted for. In November the district of Lutu constructed a meeting house for the company, 96 feet long, 36 feet wide - the foundations are still visible. Meanwhile Apolosi and Joeli

¹ Enclosures, Hutson to CO, 22 Mar. 1916, CO 83/130.
were making a new bid for respectability. They called on Governor Sir Bickham Escott to leave a donation of £30 for Lady Escott's fund for wounded soldiers, and implored His Excellency not to believe evil stories that might be spread about them. They also called in at Davuilevu, Apolosi's alma mater, and talked with the Principal, the Rev. C.O. Lelean, about their plans for Fijians. Apolosi inquired after his young relative Lucy and begged Lelean not to allow her to be sent to the Hospital for training as an obstetric nurse - the 'moral danger' of the place distressed him. Lucy should go to his school at Draubuta where the Company's own teacher Tikiko Tuwai would give her a modern education that included (it later eventuated) nightly classes for the girls in 'massage'. Apolosi impressed Lelean, as he had the Governor, with his sincerity and enthusiasm.

On 7 December 1916 the real Apolosi with his harem and a large entourage travelled in a flotilla of boats up the Wainibuka River to Lutu for the opening of the Bose Ko Viti, the Council of Fiji, as the meeting was not inaptly called. As he came ashore with Ro Tuisawau beside him the assembly of 5,449 people from every part of Fiji gave the muted roar of the tama: DUOl 01! The high chiefly presentations of tabua, and the full kava ceremony (yagona vakaturaga) were performed just as they would have been for the Supreme Chief, the Governor, or a member of the Royal Family. Wherever the man from Ra moved, a body of ovisa with red armbands cleared the way;

1 Escott to CO, 19 Apr. 1917, CO 83/134; Lelean to Small, 16 Nov. 1916, MM F/l/1916.
APOLOSI R. NAWAI 1876-1946
courtesy of Niko Driu of Sikituru
when he was inside a house or sleeping, they mounted guard on the doorways. His eight 'doves' took it in turns to roll cigarettes and put them in his mouth, or cool him with fans. At short meetings held daily for a week Apolosi and the Company officials were dressed in white shirts, white trousers, golf stockings and tennis shoes. Physically Apolosi (like Navosavakadua) was not impressive. He was neither tall nor - by Fijian standards - powerfully built. His dark full face was dominated by wide-set eyes under heavy eyebrows and a nose that flared out around cavernous nostrils. Fijians remember him for his resonant voice and the way his eyes focussed hypnotically to seal his message. 'When he spoke', recalled one, 'it was like a bullet hitting your brain - whack!' 1 At Lutu he compensated for his lack of physical stature by sitting in an elaborate pulpit-like wooden throne ornamented with the flags of many nations, his bodyguard to either side, and at the lower level in front of him two men with typewriters to take the minutes of the meetings like the Hansard reporters in the Legislative Council. Could anyone doubt that a great chiefly council was now in progress?

Lutu, 7th December 1916, 12 noon.
I now open our meeting house. The Government has ordered that as I am the promoter of the Company, I should be the Manager...if there be anyone here who is an enemy of the Company... I shall send to Suva for Constables to arrest him... God has appointed me to be your comforter in bodily and spiritual things. Many chiefs of Fiji now dead and many still alive are not equal to me... Before I was born God predestined me to be your chief and to

1 Or in the words of an old man of Matacawalevu village, Yasawas: 'Once Apolosi opened his mouth your mind was no longer your own.' - A. Thompson, personal communication, 17 Nov. 1975.
bring into being a new scheme by which Fiji would be independent in future and free from Government control...¹

In the words of a Fijian constable, 'It was exactly like a government meeting. There were Chief Constables, Magistrates, Doctors, just as if Apolosi was founding a government that might become something terrible...one question I wish to ask about Apolosi, if everybody salutes him as they do what is the use of the Government?'

A vast programme was agreed upon. The company would have ships and shipyards, stores and storehouses, a soap factory, its own school system. A Committee of Chiefs was formed under Ro Tuisawau the ex-Roko Tui Rewa with Ratu Jese, ex-Native Assistant to the District Commissioner in Serua; Ratu Bola of Bau, ex-Buli Sawakasa; the fiercely anti-Bauan Ratu mai Verata; the Tui Levuka and 10 others, most of them harbouring some grievance against the colonial government. Company officers, managers, town chiefs and clerks were appointed for every province except Macuata and possibly Bua. Apolosi's salary was fixed at £100 a month. The meeting closed on 20 December in an atmosphere of celebration and hope.

The first signs that the euphoria was not to last came from some Colo East banana growers who received no payment for five shipments of bananas. Hitherto they had willingly accepted half the market price or less, for the cause, but their patience and loyalty did not

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, reports of Apolosi's words cited hereafter are located in restricted files, and my translations from the Fijian seek to give some of the flavour of the original.
extend indefinitely. They refused to send further shipments. Nevertheless they also refused to sell to Europeans and in the latter half of 1917 thousands of bananas rotted on the trees. Not a single man could be found to testify against the company in court. Between January and April 1917 Apolosi received in his own name over £3,000 in bananas and copra. After examining the chaotic books of the Company an accountant found there was no way of knowing the real extent of its operations or what happened to the proceeds. Since government was powerless to act under the existing Companies Ordinance until the shareholders petitioned for redress, it proposed to the Colonial Office a Native Company Ordinance giving the Registrar of Companies draconian powers of supervision over any company with one single Fijian member. The Secretary of State thought it difficult to believe such a measure could be contemplated seriously, and there the matter rested.¹

About June 1917 Apolosi finally found a European businessman he could trust, an American named Walter Jago. Jago, it seems, tried hard to restrain Apolosi and establish the Viti Company on sound business lines. But it was too late. The settlers were after Apolosi's head for telling the Fijians that it was folly to lease lands to Europeans for 5s or 10s an acre and watch them reap £10 or £15 an acre in cane. If Indians were prepared to find £1 an acre or more, Apolosi was saying, why should Europeans or sugar companies get land for less? Two Europeans attended one of Apolosi's rallies at Nakorovou, Tavua, on 31 August 1917.

¹ CO to Escott, 11 July 1917, encl. CSO 17/7208.
Afterwards one of them made a statutory declaration that Apolosi had said, *Koi au na meca ni matanitu, au na tamata kaukauwa*, 'I am the enemy of the government, I am the strong man'. This, and a similar declaration by the other, provided the Governor and Executive Council with the sure evidence they needed. They issued another Confining Order (without trial) exiling Apolosi to Rotuma for seven years.

In an impassioned letter to the Executive Council after his arrest at Votua on 19 November 1917, Apolosi begged to be allowed to kiss the bible in their presence and swear before God and King that he had not said anything of the sort: 'I humbly beg that you will hear me and permit those natives who were present on the 31st August 1917 at the meeting at Tavua to testify to what they heard at that meeting.' It is indeed unlikely that Apolosi would have been foolish enough to say the words attributed to him in the presence of Messrs Herbert Hodgson and Alex Eastgate - the latter had once been a magistrate in Ra. The crude phraseology is inconsistent with his desire to give the company the trappings of legality, and the phrase 'strong man' is not one he would have chosen in his more extravagant moments - he would have made some claim to chieftainship. In short he was probably framed. The shoddiness of the confinement proceedings did not escape the Colonial Office: 'in the absence of judicial proceedings we really have to rely on the Governor's opinion.'

1 Apolosi to Governor, 27 Nov. 1917, encl. Escott to CO, 7 Dec. 1917, CO 83/139.

2 Long, minute, 28 Feb. 1918, *ibid.*
to review the case after a year.

Apolosi's own reaction is evident in his apologia: 'I cannot turn left, right, forward or backward, up or down, with the crowd of enemies that are about me.' He also offered a psychological analysis of himself and his past:

There are two great things that influence my body and my mind; firstly physical and mental foolishness; secondly, ignorance...
Their influence over me is due to my childish instability of character, and that as a result of bad education and bad upbringing... My mother and father were foolish and ignorant people. They had no wisdom or enlightenment, and therefore I inherited none from them whereby to be guided in my walk through life. Any knowledge or enlightenment that I have been able to gain has been through my own personal efforts... I have had no one to take an interest in me or hold me up or lead me out of the black darkness...it was as though I were covered with worms and everything repulsive. Many saw me, laughed at me, and mocked me. It was as though they sucked my blood and wrung the water out of my soul...\(^1\)

In exile again on Rotuma, Apolosi kept regular contact with his supporters by mail and special messengers. For the most part he lived quietly with his wife and daughter. The only incident of interest occurred inside the Methodist church he attended. Church elders remonstrated

\(^1\) ibid. I have not seen the Fijian original of this long document professing his loyalty to the government and quoting from his speeches about the use of time and the need for Fijians to work their land rather than accept labouring for 2s a day - 'less than the cost of the food of a horse'.

with him one Sunday for sitting in the railed-off space reserved for teachers, Europeans and the chief. Apolosi stood up without a word, walked slowly down the aisle and turned his back on Wesleyan Christianity forever. Shortly afterwards he became a Roman Catholic and published a letter in their newspaper Ai Talanoa urging all Fijians to follow him into this true church. The conversion proved a good political move. Fear of drawing a strong protest from the Catholic Bishop was the main reason why the Acting Governor decided not to prevent Apolosi's release from exile on 12 December 1924.¹

For the next five years reliable information is hard to come by. One unusual Fijian source — a letter that went astray in the mail and was eventually opened by the Post Office — suggests that Apolosi compensated for the collapse of his past organization by a new emphasis on his personal destiny as Saviour of his countrymen. The letter describes a sermon by Apolosi at Sabeto village, Nadi, on 25 February 1925:

It was as if we saw the Son of God...
Apolosi explained that the Company had failed but that he was not joining together all the black countries, Tonga, Samoa, Rotuma, the Solomons, Tokelau and Futuna so that they would all be subject to Fiji, and Fiji to Vuda where all the money of Fiji would be collected and deposited in the Government Savings Bank. 'I am alive after seven years death on Rotuma. Our Lord God and the Great Government of the

¹ Fell to CO, 12 May 1924. Apolosi even talked of proselytising the Ra Circuit of the Methodist Church — see A.D. Lelean to R.L. McDonald, 30 Sept. 1924, MM F/1/1924.
In a reference that puzzled the officials in the Secretariat, the writer spoke of Apolosi holding in his hands an object called the 'Crown Colony'. Oral evidence has it that Apolosi at various times displayed a 'Crown Grant' giving him supreme power in Fiji. It was sealed in a bamboo. Towards the end of the 1920s, when perhaps the Crown Grant was wearing thin, he claimed to have the 'sacred box of the mana of Fiji' lost at Vuda from the canoe which brought the ancestors of the Fijian race; alternatively - for Apolosi never wearied his clientele with consistency - it was the Vola Ko Viti, the Book of Fiji, which had cost him £10,000; finally a sacred tabua which validated the claim of his Navutulevu clan to be the real descendants of the first-born (ulumatua) of the ancestor-gods and thus the highest chiefs in Fiji. In 1931 the eccentric Rev. A.D. Lelean actually suggested to the Governor that Apolosi's right to be paramount chief should be recognized in view of his historical claims and the endorsement of the Bose ko Viti of 1916. Apolosi's chiefly pretensions outraged those high chiefs of eastern Fiji who held government office and gave a focus to the ever-smouldering resentment of western Viti Levu against the dominance of the Bauan chiefs and their allies in the Fijian Administration. It is significant that Apolosi's chief lieutenants Patemo Vai and Tikiko Tuwai were sons of Nemani Dreu, the last Nadi chief to be appointed Roko Tui of that province (Ba
and the Yasawas). After Dreu's resignation in 1899 the province was in Bauan hands until 1912 and thereafter ruled by a European Provincial Commissioner. In 1920, without consultation with the people, the province was divided into three (Ba, Nadi, Lautoka and Yasawas), making it even more difficult for the west, the *Vasavasa Ra*, to hold their own against the eastern provinces in the assemblies of the land.

Apolosi's following was much diminished in the first years after his release. The Nailaga District Council in Ba voted in May 1925 to ban him from their district, although the people of Votua village gave him shelter until August. In September 1925 he was at Lodini in Tailevu province with his eight women, staying in the government quarters of a relative stationed there as Native Medical Practitioner. He formed a partnership for a few months with a European banana buyer and another trader, and kept within the law. He spent another nine months further north at Lawaki ostensibly starting a co-operative, buying fruit at 2s a case when the market value was 5s. In August 1926 the District Council tried to remove him, and some time later he returned to his favourite hunting ground, the Yasawas. During the year he had already collected hundreds of pounds there for various projects: £677 from Tamasua for a Buli's house, £100 from Nacula, £80 from Navotua, £100 from Malakati. According to the sworn statement of one Nacula villager Apolosi intimidated the people: 'If you don't do as I say I will sell your lands. Cakobau is dead and I am his successor - King of Fiji.' He had demanded a total of £800 to set up a new office in Suva.
From the same island comes the first hint of a technique Apolosi was rapidly to perfect: 'Something would happen' on a set date, there would be noise, thunder and a sign: 'if his words were not true they should cut wood, pour kerosene on and light it and burn him on it.' When Fijians who remember Apolosi are asked to account for the hold he had over the people they usually recite a series of Apolosi's predictions that came true - the building of Nadi International Airport, for instance, is said to have been implicit in a promise that people from the four ends of the earth would come to Nadi. The independence of Fiji was another of his best known predictions. His credibility at the time, say the people, depended on the many miracles attributed to him, about which there is a flourishing mythology. The stories told in one place of Apolosi will be told in another of Navosavakadua and run to a type - as, for instance, how the British threw him overboard to drown him but when they came back to the wharf found him waiting; or how they once hammered nails into his eyes but could not hurt him. In 1973 a man of Vatakoula asked: 'Tell me, friend, as one who has read many books about many countries have you ever come across a more wonderful man than Apolosi?' - referring not to his moral character but to his mana, which excused everything else.

Apolosi left the Yasawas about March 1928 and returned to his own village in Nadi. For a short time he moved to Lautoka and ran a successful restaurant there. Evidently the catering business did not satisfy him though for in March 1929 he and his brother Josevata (Kiniviliame had died) were back on Votua with a band of followers to plan a new enterprise: the Church of the Era, Na Lotu ni Gauna.
The era or time was the messianic age about to burst in upon the world. Government first heard of it from a Votua villager aggrieved when his wife was requisitioned to be Apolosi's twelfth. Apolosi was prophesying the time when his brother Josevata would be King of Heaven and Vicar of Jesus Christ (Tui kei Lomalagi mei Sosomi kei Jesu Karisito); he himself would be merely King of the World (Tui kei Vuravura). In late 1929 western Viti Levu was full of talk about the new religion and Apolosi's wondrous powers. Lelean found that the lotu ni gauna consisted of

Methodism plus prayers to Dengei, Lutunasobosobo, Salusalui and Vosavakadua. A bowl of grog is used for prayers and their Duka or sins. Baptism is by a bowl of grog down the neck, and promising to obey when the command is given.¹

The word gauna was also used in the Tuka cult of 1914 to mean the time of the Twin Gods' return. Lelean's mention of Navosavakadua is one of the few documentary clues to the influence of the older syncretist cults. His information was good - he omitted to mention that one of his mission teachers, Patimo Vai, was high priest of the new lotu, and styled 'Father of the Society'.

Excitement was such that the Provincial Commissioners were unable to keep the people to their programmes of work. The climax came on New Years Day 1930 at a big meeting inside the compound of the chief of Sabeto, Nadi. Apolosi said that England had lost all her gold and silver;

¹ Lelean to McDonald, 31 Mar. 1930, MM F/1/1930.
soon there would be no money left in the Government Savings Bank and a plague would visit Fiji later in the year. At Apolosi's command the Tui Vuda, a chief of rank, bent down and kissed the prophet's feet. 'I will make you King of Fiji,' Apolosi promised, undertaking to have his uniform ready by March. The Executive Council had heard enough. An order was issued confining Apolosi to Rotuma for 10 years. He was arrested near Tui Vuda's village on 16 January 1930. Lelean believed 1,060 men were ready to take up arms under Apolosi and reckoned he had been arrested just in time.

In custody the man from Ra was once again the man of sorrows, humbled but still conscious of his power. He blamed his enemies amongst the people and complained:

Had I been given a position in the Government there would have been no trouble. I am cleverer and more ingenious than any other Fijian...
I should have done a lot of good for the Fijians... I should be worth all the Bulis of Nadi Province put together.

He denied he had claimed to be high chief of Fiji insisting only that he was the proper man to be the next Tui Nadi. Asked why he predicted trouble for Fiji, he said:

In my dream I saw a great flood come in from the sea and overwhelm Fiji. All the lands of Fiji were covered except one high peak on which I and a few others stood. The waters came up to my neck then receded. I saw many people, Europeans, Indians and Fijians swimming about in the waters, but only a few of them could reach land. That is why I spoke to the people about a great trouble to come next year and told them to repent of their sins and wash away all evil customs. I did not claim to save them.

There could be no more graphic image of his longing to see the existing colonial order dissolved and his inability
to articulate an alternative set of institutions which would guarantee a prominent place for able men like himself. His mind was swimming with dreams and schemes. His flights of oratory and mysterious allusions to supernatural sources kept the people spellbound.

Apolosi was a leader who commanded faith and loyalty. He tapped the roots of Fijian pride and patriotism, and showed them a way of cutting across the parochial limitations of their existing institutions to meet new needs. He lacked the education, the experience, self-discipline and sense of responsibility to carry through his ideas. He could feel what was lacking in the Fijian Administration: there was no room for innovation and initiative from below: 'Very few people', he said, 'are in a bad plight because of their own decisions about themselves'. Yet although the company model put everyone on a new basis, Apolosi exercised his power as Managing Director in a way that was far more autocratic, overbearing and selfish than were the chiefs he professed to despise. The Viti Company and its Managing Director became in the end a decadent parody of the Administration and the Supreme Chief, and equally impotent as a vehicle of economic progress.

A retreat into otherworldly messianism or the invocation of a deus ex machina was now Apolosi's only hope of resolving the issues his movement had raised. He had not been a year in exile when rumours spread through Viti Levu that the king of the era would return in triumph on Christmas Day 1930 and assume his sovereignty the following year. The reason for the shortage of money, it was said in Nadroga, was that the coins were being
withdrawn to be recast with Apolosi's head. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company manager at Ba feared a communist plot to unite Fijians and Indians in common cause against the Europeans. The Fijians who took up cane farming on CSR estates in the early 1930s, especially those at Toko in Tavua, were ardent supporters of Apolosi; they secretly organized themselves into an association (sogosogo) to support the Lotu ni Gauna and contribute funds for the 'opening of the era' and the immediate needs of their exiled king whose works were kept alive to them by Josevata, the Preacher of the Era. He lived mostly at Toko, the glory of his brother balm for his leprosy. His letters to Apolosi are those of a fervent believer:

Josefata K.L.M. Nawai to Ratu Apolosi
R. Nawai, King of the Era 9th Feb. 1931
[We arrived in Suva on 22nd November 1930]
and on the 23rd there swept over the whole of Fiji a big hurricane the like of which has never been seen since Fiji was created. Large houses were destroyed, many people killed and vessels lost...this was the Heavy Order known of by the Preacher of the Era.

In another letter he tells of an interview at Lautoka with Governor Sir Murchison Fletcher 'at four minutes to three' on 10 January 1931. He has explained to the Governor their real status in Fiji: 'He is lucky this 19th Governor to discover what 18 other Governors sought.' In October the same year Josevata sends his brother a list of 16 Biblical texts he calls 'the keys of life,' and 16 texts he names 'the books of life...out of which may come the big order of the era, that is 16 x 2 = 32 (1932)'.

The Lotu ni Gauna had a following in several parts of Viti Levu, including Suva. In the inland district of Nasau, Ra, they prayed: 'Remember God the Leader of the Era, Apolosi Ranawai.' On the Wainimala River there
were some who expected that their food and necessities would be provided by invisible means, vakayalo, and that their children would be endowed with the wisdom of the era, vuku vakagauna. It was a far cry from their enthusiasm of 20 years before when they were keen to meet Europeans on their own ground through a company on the European model. Apolosi kept alive the hopes of his supporters in Nadroga, Ra, Nadi, Nadrau and Tailevu with regular encyclical letters from Rotuma:

Apolosi to all members of the New Era, 28th June 1938:
I am ordered by Jesus Christ our Saviour to write to you for the New Era is drawing nigh, as the Bible says...Jesus Christ will come in the year 1944. Everyone that believes in the New Era will be gathered together in the sky and then proceed together to the New Jerusalem which is prepared for the just. I Thes. 4: 16-17; John 14:2. The wicked people will be destroyed, Revelations 1:7 and 6: 14-17, Isaiah 66: 15-17...

I bear the pains inflicted on me in order to obtain Life and the performance of miracles will be given to me by God our Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost Amen... Come unto me... Follow me... Abide in me... Trust in me.

It is my desire that you repent immediately and take the right path to follow. I will then forgive the sin of the Society and will be able to cleanse it that we may reach the New Era. I am the only one and there is but one Shepherd and one flock of sheep. You are to prepare for my coming.

Messianic language, but he offers practical hope too if only they will make sacrifices. The sacrifice demanded of members is, predictably, a cash contribution. Apolosi is always specific. In 1938 he suggests that every man
pay 1s 6d a week. In 1939 he sets a target of £25,000 'for the opening of the door of prosperous life and wealth'. The door will be 'flung open' immediately if the sum can be increased to £50,000. He proposes to set aside £20,000 for the grand opening of the New Era and invest £10,000 in both CSR and Burns Philp, £5,000 in Morris Hedstrom's, £3,000 in Brown and Joske, £2,000 in the gold mines. The new era, it seems, still has a place for capital and dividends. At heart Apolosi is a realist:

I have also in mind to establish businesses for the benefit of those whom I consider wise and careful. It shall be left to them to choose what particular kind... to build for themselves good wealthy and happy lives.

I realise that I am causing poverty to us all by these instructions, for business is not too bright. But you must know that this is in accordance with God's will, for it is indicative of the seriousness of our belief and preparation of the New Era...
The secret year in 1944 and it is then that the truth for which we have struggled so much will emerge and stand forth as proofs of our worthy lives and the life of the New Era... This is the cessation of earthly time... Obey me also that you may live and be blessed.

In March 1940 Apolosi was released from Rotuma and let live under close supervision at the government settlement in Suva where he could not influence the 2,000 Fijian goldminers at Vatukoula - a recent concentration of manpower and obvious field for his eloquence. The man from Ra claimed to be 62 years old. Native Lands Commission records made him 64. Despite bouts of filariasis, he looked younger than his years. A minutely documented police report of the sexual conquests he achieved between March and May left no doubts as to his virility. Nor did
he restrain his talk of the New Era, although what finally moved the government to exile him yet again was a report that he was about to start a Trade Union. On 30 May 1940 he was confined to Rotuma for a further ten years.\footnote{Luke to CO, 4 June 1940, and enclosures.}

In 1941 Fr Yves Helliet of Nasomolevu mission near Yaqeta (where Apolosi had resisted arrest in 1915) warned the government that people were predicting (hoping?) the Japanese would conquer Rotuma and bring Apolosi to Fiji. The very thought was enough to have Apolosi secretly transferred to gaol in New Zealand for the duration of the war. On his return he was confined to the small island of Yacata in Cakaudrove. After a short illness in Waiyevo hospital Taveuni he died and was buried on Yanuca island in April 1946 - or did he die? Some of the faithful believe he still lives, \textit{sa bula tiko}. When so many of his aspirations for Fijians to come to terms with the modern economy remain unfulfilled it is not surprising that he lives on in the hearts of his followers together with his promise -'to relieve you of your loads, heal and console... and introduce upon your land luxurious living and peace...'}
A SEMI-FEUDAL SEMI-SELF-SUFFICING SOCIETY
(Ratu Sukuna)\(^1\)

Young men swaggering through the countryside collecting subscriptions for Apolosi, the willingness of some chiefs to serve as officials of the Viti Company, the spirit of lawlessness that accompanied its spectacular meetings - was Fijian society coming apart at the seams? There are two contradictory themes to be resolved: the breakdown of village discipline, and the ability of the district organization to withstand disruptive social change.

At the early meetings of the Council of Chiefs there was already some alarm over the new and freer lifestyle developing amongst young people contemptuous of cultural restrictions associated with 'the time of darkness'. Men and women were performing together mekes, action songs and dances, previously reserved for one or other sex. The regulation restricting women from imbibing yagona was ineffective - even young women were casually indulging the ceremonial liquid and strolling about openly with the young men. And as for wives, they had 'none of that modest delicacy and respect for their husbands which they formerly

\(^1\) 'It may be that to decry the omnipotence of the great octopus of the modern world bespeaks an old-world outlook; but it is, after all, of a semi-feudal, semi-self-sufficing, society that we are, in the main, treating' - Sukuna to CS, 29 Sept. 1934, CSO F15/1.
had'. The single men's sleeping houses in the villages had been abandoned - and not, it was hinted, for the sanctuary of well-disciplined Christian households. 'The evil is that our former customs in these matters have been named vakatevoro [devilish] and have therefore been abandoned without the institution of anything better.' In 1894 when the chiefs were discussing the curriculum for a New Native Technical School, a magistrate wanted old customs to be taught as one of the subjects. 'Our customs have already begun to be forgotten amongst us', agreed the Roko Tui Bua, 'and in many ways we seem to be no longer Fijians'.

The number of men and women absent at any one time from their village, district and even province was seen by the chiefs as one of the greatest threats to village life, a running sore in society because it represented the indifference of the young to the common good of the community and the stricter but legitimate demands of traditional authority. A man had not been free in former times to come and go at will; nor was he free under the Native Regulations to leave his village without permission for longer than 60 days. Yet as early as 1887 there was a small colony of Ra men living in Suva where, the chiefs complained, 'facilities are afforded for vagabonds to congregate and sometimes conceal


2 *Proceedings...*1879, Resolution V.

3 *Proceedings...*1894, 2 July 1894.
themselves. Our women also too often wander from their homes and fall into bad habits.\textsuperscript{1}

The numbers of absentees were small in the 19th century, though still too many for the authorities of the time. In the first decade of the 20th century when the chiefs began to lose their grip on the Administration at the higher levels there were frequent complaints from the Bulis of Tailevu, Rewa and Kadavu about their young men:

They come to Suva and put on no end of 'side' amongst the women and wear collars and ties and smart coats, sport crook walking sticks and turn up in great force at church - the Suva Methodist Jubilee Church on Sundays. They all do a minimum of work and when any trouble arrives away back they go to the Matagali or the village and so make sure of shelter and food.\textsuperscript{2}

Prosecution for absence could be made after 60 days; many returned home on the 59th then left again a few days later. In the new regulations of 1912 absenteeism ceased to be an offence for men; only women needed permission of their parents or guardians to be absent more than 60 days - a

\textsuperscript{1} Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1887. A Native Inspector of Police reported of the Ra men: 'Some are angry with their chief of villages. Some came to earn money to pay their local rates with, some came to look for work in order that they might buy sulus & the cause of some of them coming was that Roko Tui Ra...would not let them go to their villages...[and kept] them like prisoners so they ran away to Suva. Some of them were angry with their relatives...and when they were employed by the Europeans they became contented and did not wish to return to their villages' - Josua Uluigalau to the Governor, 30 May 1889, CSO 89/1246.

\textsuperscript{2} W.A. Scott, memorandum, 4 Jan. 1910, CSO 10/1242.
provision very hard to enforce. Furthermore European employers could take advantage of the Fijian Employment Ordinance of 1912 to ignore the main safeguards of the 19th century legislation (the Fiji Labour Ordinance of 1895 and the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1890) and sign on a married man before any magistrate in the colony who could be satisfied that the man had made provision for his dependents. Secondly they could sign on any man who had been voluntarily absent from his village for two years without reference to the home authorities; finally any Fijian could renew his contract on expiry so long as the employer paid his rates and taxes.

The way was again open for recruiters to go into Fijian villages with the time-dishonoured *vagona* money. There was a great demand for Fijian labour in the 1920s, especially after the cancellation of Indian indentures in January 1920 and with the natural unwillingness of many Indians to continue on as paid servants of the CSR. The Company paid Fijian recruiters for each man they produced in Lautoka for engagement under the Masters and Servants Ordinance (under which no licences were required for recruiters). The men were taken without reference to the Buli or the situation of the village. Communal and family obligations were easily evaded and at the end of the term of indenture, usually six months or a year, the men often returned to their villages penniless. Having planted no garden, they had no food and depended on the

1 Regulation IV of 1912, section 77.
2 See CSO 23/2576 and 27/1115.
strained charity of relatives. Some did not return for months if in lieu of a passage home they were paid a cash sum enabling them to holiday a while in the village of their choice, meeting no obligations of any kind. For the first time in the history of Fiji there were reports of food shortages in good years, while the villages entered upon a steady physical decline from the settlements of substantial, high-built heavily-thatched houses of old Fiji towards the uninsulated, ill-drained coffins of wood and iron that house most contemporary Fijians. By 1927 Islay McOwan, the Secretary of Native Affairs, noting that the government considered 'a supply of labour for agricultural purposes was of greater importance than the welfare of the natives themselves', expressed his fear that the Fijian Administration could collapse.  

There was no real danger of collapse; erosion might be a better word for the effects of the policy the Colonial Office rather meaninglessly prescribed as 'a careful regulation of the communal system accompanied by a gradual loosening of its bonds'. The term 'communal system' was used as if there were some entity superimposed and separable from Fijian society which could be modified at any time without drastic modification of the groups - the households, villages and vanua - comprising that society. The semantic comfort of such phrases as 'loosening the bonds' concealed a woolly imprecision, a clichéé liberalism of 'certain certainties' about the nature of man and society.

1 McOwan, minute, 21 Mar. 1927, CSO 27/1115.
2 CO to Jackson, 8 May 1903, CO 83/76.
One of these certainties in 20th century colonial Fiji was that any restriction on the personal liberty of Fijians was an 'obstacle' to their becoming 'full British subjects' in the sense that Maoris were understood to be in New Zealand. Im Thurn, for instance, sincerely believed that the inability of Fijians to alienate their land robbed them of their potential dignity and that 'the interminable little personal services' rendered to the chiefs (and enforced by the Native Regulations) hindered 'the creation in the Fijian of that individuality which would, I believe, be the only thing to save him and his race from extinction'. 1 Disillusioned by the defeat of his land reforms, he left Fiji with the hope that by gradual replacement of the Native Regulations with English laws Fijians would one day 'for the first time become British subjects in the ordinary sense of the term' 2 - in other words 'they' were to become more like 'us' hardworking, thrifty, go-ahead Anglo-Saxons, with civil liberties enshrined in a democratic parliament and the common law as in the United Kingdom. He and his successors, too, adhered to an already outmoded orthodoxy in British social studies to insist that Fijian society, like all others, had to evolve through a universal sequence of stages towards the superior western model of 'monogamous, individualistic, capitalist, "democratic" man...the culminating product of a natural law of inevitable progress'. 3

1  im Thurn Papers, MS 2, Item 10.
2  im Thurn to CO, 22 Sept. 1909, CO 83/92.
Im Thurn's successor Sir Henry May was quite disgusted by Fijians and their institutions:

These people have practically no object in life - nothing to live for except the satisfaction of their animal appetites. I don't think they will ever increase or multiply till they take a serious part in the battle of life.¹

Nevertheless while he agreed with im Thurn that it was desirable 'the communal system with its paralysing influence on individual effort and ambition should be broken down', he added:

But no one who has the interest of these Islands at heart would unduly hasten this change in a people of whom it is literally true that less than 50 years ago they were only emerging from the Stone Age.²

May endorsed the desire of the European community including the leading officials of the government to be socially segregated from Fijians and to educate their children in an entirely European atmosphere and aloof from contact with coloured children whose precocity in sexual matters and whose less careful bringing up at home is a real danger to white children.³

Ultimately May hoped Fijians would become individual peasant proprietors on their own lands, although Native Lands Commissioner Maxwell persuaded him that subdivision of land was out of the question until the mataqali holdings

² May to CO, 3 May 1911, CO 83/101.
³ May to CO, 6 June 1911, ibid.
had first been registered - a process that Maxwell thought would take a few years. It took 50. For the present May promulgated a new code of Native Regulations (1912), accepting the report of a revising committee that was European-dominated but included three Fijian chiefs. The homiletic preambles included in the old regulations to reflect Fijian sentiments were excised as 'vain excess', as were all Fijian phrases in the English version: e.g. 'Are the werevakavanua [food gardens] kept in good order?' The new regulations also abandoned 'the endeavour - not hitherto successful - to shepherd the native flock into the fold of morality by means of regulation'. Fijians could now fornicate fearlessly provided they maintained their 'children of the path' where they refused to marry the mother. Divorce could be obtained more easily on the grounds of cruelty, adultery, twelve months desertion or by mutual consent. The regulation regarding chiefs - III of 1877 - was rescinded so that it was no longer an offence for Fijians to disobey their chiefs 'in all things lawful according to their customs'. However, the lala rights of the chiefs were authorised for house-building, garden planting, supplying visitors with food, cutting and building canoes, supplying turtle and making mats,

1 See CSO 07/5274.

2 Report of the Committee appointed to revise the Native Regulations, encl. May to CO, 17 May 1912, CO 83/107.

3 ibid.

4 Mission protest led to the elimination of mutual consent in 1915, and to the extension of the period of desertion to three years. Fijian opinion on the matter does not seem to have been sought.
masi cloth or other traditional manufactures. Chiefs were obliged - as they were by custom - to feed or pay those performing such services. As in the old regulations, provision was made for the commutation of personal services in the form of a fixed annual payment in cash or kind. The provision was never acted upon, which suggests that personal lala was still accepted by the people as part of the customary order of things and not found over-burdensome.

The cornerstone of the 'communal system' remained - the Communal Services Regulation (7 of 1912). Individualism was fine as a slogan but when it came to the provision of essential day-to-day services such as the clearing of bush tracks between villages, or of planting land, the constant repairing of thatched houses, the housing of newly married couples or the supplying of visitors with food, the villages needed the co-operation of its ablebodied men for at least two or three days a week. The government accepted, for want of a practical alternative, that if village leaders were deprived of physical sanctions against the lazy they needed the support of a regulation. With less justification communal services were extended to include the transport of government officers on duty, the carriage of official letters, and the assistance of Native Lands Commission surveyors.

In a sense then the government was stuck with a system for which it felt strong moral disapproval. The self-help aspects of the Gordon system saved a considerable expenditure of central revenue. To salve the progressive conscience Fijians were encouraged, from 1917, to take advantage of a provision in the Communal Services Regulation of 1912 allowing the Governor to grant exemption from
communal services if the individual wanted to take up commercial agriculture or some business activity. The applicant had to apply through his district council for the galala exemption, as it was called, and pay in advance a fee of £2. 10s. He had to be able to show evidence of his enterprise. There was no provision for credit of any kind, loans or technical advice, nor any guarantee that after a year's exemption the privilege would not be revoked. When it was easy to leave a village for wage employment there was not much to encourage a man to undertake the effort and risks of commercial agriculture. Until 1929 only about 200 to 300 applications were granted each year, just sufficient for the government to be able to reassure itself and Downing Street - in the face of the visible disintegration of village life and the profound dismay of the Fijian leaders - that it was making efforts through a process of education and training, to create in the native an incentive to energy, and to grant him more individual liberty. By this means there may evolve a greater scope for individual initiative than is to be found in a purer communism which restricted natives from absenting themselves from their villages. Now, however, where considerations of individual interest conflict with communistic demands the wish of the individual is allowed precedence over communal interests... Unimpeachable sentiments, these, from a British colony in 1920, or was it that a veil of cant was being drawn over a period of avoidable social disruption and non-productive change?

1 CSO 17/2206; Na Mata, Sept. 1917.
Fijian village communities were not hostile to all individual farmers who wanted some temporary relief from their obligations to raise money for some reason. Sakiasi Lomalagi, Buli Deuba until November 1911, was released from communal duties the following year to attend to 14 acres of bananas, 10 acres of sugar cane, $2^{1/2}$ acres of *yagona* and four acres of *dalo* (taro).\(^1\) A Naitasiri man had no problem obtaining exemption in 1913 to look after 12 acres of bananas, 18 cattle, three horses and three houses.\(^2\) A Lomaiviti man Taniela J. Batiudolu successfully applied in 1918 to work full-time on a plantation where he employed 19 indentured Fijian labourers and seven Indians to care for 8,000 yams, 6,000 *yagona*, 4,000 bananas, 1,000 coconut trees and staple food crops. He had run his own store since 1915 and owned a five-ton boat. Later his exemption was cancelled by his own request because he had accepted the post of *turaga ni koro* in his village and wished 'to devote one year to improving his people'.\(^3\) Joeli Verebasaga of Ravitaki, Kadavu, was exempted in 1919 to grow European vegetables for export to Suva.\(^4\)

These entrepreneurs were few. A major problem was that with the abolition of the system of taxation in kind and the government marketing organization that had

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1. CSO 12/1017.
2. CSO 13/2997.
4. CSO 18/10217.
enabled Fijian producers to realize the highest market price for their produce, farmers were now at the mercy of local traders. In copra provinces Chinese storekeepers encouraged Fijians to morketi (mortgage) articles for 20-30% of their value with one to three weeks to redeem their property. To achieve this payments might be made in nuts at 40 for 1s (1927) or with immature nuts and the balance made up by working for the storekeeper at low wages. Traders also took liens on growing nuts - a pernicious credit system that swelled the profits of firms like H. Marks or Burns Philp.¹ When Ratu Sukuna became District Commissioner of Lau he tried strenuously to break the hand-to-mouth habits of the people who were cutting small lots of copra and selling locally at deflated prices for grossly inflated trade goods (see below pp.325-8). In 1934 yagona bought in Suva for 2d sold in Lakeba for 6d; canvas shoes 3s 6d in Suva were 6s 6d in Lakeba; black sulus rose from 2s each to 6s:

The native told all this will politely agree that the remedy is to sell and buy in Suva. If the initiative is left to him, nothing further will happen, for the average native prefers the certainty of the bird in the hand, bony and tough though it may obviously be, to better nourished ones so far away.²

A direct consequence of the low produce prices obtained locally was that to meet the payment of provincial rates,

¹ Frequent observations are made on this situation in the Lau Provincial Council Book, passim; see also report of S.A. Bull, 8 Dec. 1927, SNA 29/2101 and, for the 1930s, the DCs' annual reports for Lau at CSO F15/1.

² Sukuna to CS, 23 Mar. 1935, CSO F15/1.
the native tax, and the educational expenses of their children, the men had to leave their wives and children in the care of others to go and labour on plantations or, in the 1930s, the gold mines - 'and for this Fijians will be counted virtuous; their industry will be on men's lips as a sign of Fijian progress'.

While the government consoled itself that the development of individualistic tendencies was 'bound to be slow' and that 'it would be dangerous...to force such tendencies by artificial means', the Fijian chiefs fought a spasmodic rearguard defence of their threatened way of life. Without directly challenging the ethos of the day, lest they appear disloyal, the chiefs in the provincial councils and the Council of Chiefs urged specific measures to stem absenteeism, increase the control of the Bulis, regulate recruiting activities, and ensure the return of labourers on expiry of their contracts. At the 1911 Council of Chiefs the Roko Tui Ra observed how easy it was for men to use the Masters and Servants Ordinance to get away without leave. On making enquiry we are told that the men are in employment, yet when they come they have not a penny either in money or property. They are really a burden on their people as they have not been planting. They should not be indentured without the Buli's consent.

Roko Tui Ba: They ought to be paid off in

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1 Sukuna to CS, 17 Mar. 1939, ibid.
2 Rodwell to CO, 27 June 1922.
their own districts. Now they are paid anywhere... They spend their wages during indenture and are ashamed to come home...
The custom in force only suits the European employer. 1

Similarly in 1917 the chiefs urged the government to give Bulis the power to compel men to return home if they were living in European towns and not in regular employment. 2 To this and similar requests the Governor replied that it was not policy to restrict any further the freedom of the individual. In 1920 the chiefs requested that provinces should be allowed, if they wished, to revert to the payment of taxes in kind, the only scheme that had ever succeeded in ensuring that Fijians would be substantial producers while retaining the full value of their produce and the benefits of a cash income, yet without having to be dependent on European employers. 3 The Colonial Secretary opposed the resolution 'on general grounds' as a 'retrospective step involving difficulty' - presumably to current employers of Fijian labour, though the argument he advanced was pitched to the vaguer certainties of the liberal ethos: 'The basis of the inertness of the Fijian is, to my mind, due to...an overburden of communalism, and the difficulty of individual Fijians to assert and maintain individualism'. 4 The Acting Receiver General picked up the tune, protesting that the resolution was

1 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1911.
2 Proceedings...1917, Resolution VII.
3 Proceedings...1920, Resolution IV.
4 T.E. Fell, minute, 10 November 1920, CSO 20/7813.
a negation of the recognition of the Fijian as an individual - it insists in an unmistakable manner upon the perpetuation of the communal system. This is retrogression...he should develop sufficiently to be able to live and support himself and his dependants as units of the community European civilization has evolved...¹

The new orthodoxy was unshakeable. Nothing the Chiefs could say would be interpreted other than as reactionary conservatism and, knowing this, they tried again for smaller measures. In 1923 they asked permission to increase provincial rates for men absent from home longer than 12 months, (an estimated 15% of taxpayers or 3,000 men, of whom 840 were in permanent employment), and repeated their request that no man be indentured without the approval of his Buli.² Both resolutions were rejected. An official in the Secretariat added privately: 'I realize that the foundations of the 'communal system' are being undermined, gradually but surely. Evolution is the natural and philosophic order of things.'³

(ii) the exceeding sinfulness of sin

The chiefs were equally exercised with the problem of women who drifted to the towns, went off with Indian taxi-drivers, or were seduced by Chinese storekeepers and Europeans with outrageous ease. Ratu Sukuna proposed

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1 Harcourt, minute, 15 Feb. 1921, ibid.
a regulation to compel women to obtain the Buli's consent before leaving their district for longer than 28 days, arguing that Fijian women had always to be in the power of a husband, parent, or guardian:

The freedom now enjoyed by women and girls appals the older generation... It is undoubtedly a grave question whether the rights of civilised women accustomed to moving in over-populated cities should be allowed to native women brought up in small villages. In Suva and Levuka the experiment is proving fatal.¹

At least here the chiefs had their way. After much debate the Native Regulations Board resolved that the sugar mills and larger centres should become 'prohibited areas' to unchaperoned women unless they had a permit from Buli for stays longer than a month (reduced to a week in 1932, two days in 1935).² A suggestion from the Ba Provincial Council in 1925 that women be compelled to weed the villages and similar suggestions from other councils that women be made to do some outside work were rejected.³ Their obligation to feed visitors was considered sufficient. In 1933 the Council of Chiefs wanted a further regulation to prohibit married women leaving their village without permission of their husbands, but here the government drew the line: 'the coercion of women is not in accordance with modern principles. A standard of conduct should be enforced by public opinion rather than by

¹ Sukuna, minute, 22 Mar. 1926, CSO 26/797.
² Native Regulation 4 of 1927, section 83.
³ See SNA 23/242 and 26/942.
Government Regulation." The chiefs had plainly despaired of public opinion. In 1940 they even requested a regulation to fine a woman 40s for leaving a child under three unattended for more than half a day. A year later the Colo East provincial council suggested that women remaining in prohibited areas should be whipped.

To European observers the problem was a larger one than the few hundred women who constituted 'the invasion' of Suva or who drifted around the gold mines at Vatukoula in the mid-1930s. Some English officials like the Colonial Secretary Juxon Barton argued on racial grounds that while it was obvious Fijian women were badly out of control, 'native women [everywhere] are not on the same plane as native men; and it is idle for us to expect them to regard them as we do our women'. The missionaries had traditionally relied on the impact of the gospel itself; they were discouraged by the results: 'Thieving abounds and such fornication as would disgrace the beasts of the field' wrote one. "Never in my life have I seen such an immoral place as this', wrote the Rev. W. Brown from Lakeba in 1913 'and the people do not seem to care'.

1 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1933, reply to resolution XXV.
2 Proceedings...1940, resolution XXIX.
3 CSO F50/74.
5 Amos to Small, 9 Feb. 1915, MM F/1/1915.
6 Brown to Small, 22 Feb. 1913, MM F/1/1913.
Fourteen years of preaching later, the Rev. A.G. Adamson wrote from the same island:

There seems to be very little love or anything lovely in them. It makes my heart very sad when I think that the lotu had been here for nearly 100 years and yet its mostly just on the surface.¹

The Chairman of the Mission the Rev. A.J. Small urged the brethren not to flag: 'The cure is - religion at white heat, clothes, and the safeguards that surround the well-ordered European Christian house.'² Calling for 'a deeper spiritual life in the hearts of our members', he acknowledged that first 'there must be produced in them a keener sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin'.³

At the end of the 1920s the Methodist missionaries sensed that while their circuit organization had interlocked with the tikina to become an integral part of Fijian community life - and as such was not under threat - yet their control over personal behaviour and forms of social life was blatantly flouted by young and old. Choir practices (vuli sere) were fun, a good excuse for a yagona party and one of the few easy village meeting-grounds with the opposite sex. In early 1925 a simple dance that began

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1 Adamson to R.L. McDonald, 22 Aug. 1927, MM F/l/1927. 'Skin deep' was a word often used: 'The religion of the great bulk of the people is only skin deep & with some of them it is not even that. for it it difficult to get them near on a/c of Boi Ca [body odour]; They don't wash as you know.'- Poole to Small, 14 June 1906 (Kadavu), MM F/l/1906.

2 Small to W. Deane, 26 Jan. 1911, MM F/l/1911.

3 Small to Brown, 17 May 1905, MM F/l/1905.
as a game taught to boys and girls in Nadroga, the taralala, spread like an epidemic to the farthest parts of the group. The taralala brought the sexes together for the first time in a vibrating throng, an unprecedented liberation from the strictures of ancient etiquette. The Rev. Harold Chambers came back to his station at Niusawa (Taveuni) one day in 1933 and was horrified to hear a great stamping and shouting and whooping from his schoolchildren. There he found two big girls from Welagi koro,...

wriggling, and twisting their bodies in sinuous movements, and shaking themselves in such a way, as to cause their breasts to shake from side to side and up and down, before the crowd of goggling boys and in the midst was the teacher... I was staggered and hurt beyond words... sailed into the lot, boys and girls with my ganuya cane and wacked them right and left...expelled all Welagi girls over 10.1

The taralala was a curse, the Catholic and Methodist missionaries agreed, and not the best means of increasing the population.

The DCs were asked their opinions in 1931 and were generally agreed that it was harmless but could lead to immoralities. These they were urged to try and prevent. The missionaries knew of more than one case, though, where a DC thought it the best thing that happened to the villages in years and actively encouraged the dancing to enliven the dreary round of his village inspections. The children's teacher in Nadroga had innocently created a minor revolution in social mores. The European missionaries could denounce it from the pulpits, but they had to put away their ganuya

1 Chambers to McDonald, 10 June 1933, MM F/1/1933.
canes when they saw that the chiefs and people would go their own way regardless and eagerly adopt such music and customs from the west as gave them pleasure.

One of the real difficulties for the Methodist missionaries, as they saw it, was that they had neglected the education of girls. Mary Ballantine's school at Matavelo, Ba (1899) and another at Richmond, Kadavu, and smaller efforts elsewhere by the handful of Methodist Mission sisters hardly matched the much greater effort of the Roman Catholic nuns (over 40 nuns in 13 girls' schools by 1913), an effort that was restricted to about 10% - 15% of the school population. The great bulk of Fijian girls had less education than the little the boys received. In 1920 the Rev. W. Amos blamed the '60 years criminal neglect' by the government and his own mission for producing 'a degenerated race of women lacking the capacity almost for virtue'. There were he said, 'thousands of illegitimate marriages and thousands of paltry divorces and thousands of separated homes'. If this was so, others wondered whether school education was really the answer - to take girls, as the nuns did, and supervise them carefully in their dormitories during term then send them home with a smattering of knowledge and a brace of medals to protect their virtue.

In the late 1920s there was a return to O'Brien's thinking, that a new effort had to be made to reach young

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1 The first nuns set up their schools at Loreto, Ovalau, and Wairiki, Taveuni, in about 1883.

2 Amos to Small, 30 Mar. 1920, MM F/1/1920.
mothers in their homes and to help them to rear their children. Child mortality rates were distressingly high with children under five accounting for around 30% to 40% of all deaths. In 1927, a New Zealand nurse, Mrs Suckling, was appointed as the first full-time child welfare nurse with two Fijian assistants. They began in Tailevu by training a small women's committee in each village. The committee was asked to assemble the children daily to see that all of them were properly bathed and dressed and fed, and to treat minor ailments with a small stock of medicines. Dr Regina Flood-Keyes Roberts, the wife of the American consul, volunteered in December 1927 to supervise the dozen villages in the Suva-Nausori district, and developed the women's committee system a stage further. She had learnt from a similar experiment in Samoa in 1926 and 1927 that unless the entire village became interested in the work and the scheme had the active support of the chiefs, it was doomed to failure. When Dr Roberts descended on a village she did so in style, having made sure that the Buli came with her and that all would be present for a public weighing of the infants after a general lesson on sanitation and health. She made committee leaders stand to attention to give their reports - the meetings were deliberately formal so that when individual mothers were praised or blamed for the state of their infants they could feel the full weight of community feeling for or against them: 'A practice is made to clap the hands for every child that has gained weight.'

The effects were dramatic. Mothers vied with each other to push those scales ever higher; the condition of the children improved beyond belief. Dr Roberts was probably instrumental in obtaining £2,000 from the government for child welfare work in 1928 and another £2,000 from CSR. She also made it a fashionable cause amongst the ladies of Suva. Mrs Seymour, wife of the Colonial Secretary, started a baby show. It was to become a regular feature in many provinces. Then the Methodist Mission in June 1928 provided a child welfare worker for Ba, and another of their sisters Mrs Ruby Brewer resigned to take up the work in October:

That is my only hope of getting out to these people. In this 'I surrender all'...as each child dies I know that I am partly responsible for not going out earlier with medicines etc. I know this is my work.¹

The Catholic Bishop C.J. Nicholas agreed to let nuns do child welfare work in Namosi, the most backward province, but held out little hope of success, recalling the failure of O'Brien's hygiene mission.² Père Guinard, who had lived in Namosi for over 30 years, said that nurses were not needed: proper food was. 'The children are starved', he said; when he came to a village, often bringing food, they swarmed around like a pack of hungry dogs. Parents left their children at home with a few pieces of cold dalo, and returned from their gardens in the

¹ Brewer to McDonald, 1 Oct. 1928, MM F/1/1929. The dedication of these women is legendary. One of the sisters Miss Hettie Hames is said to have delivered over 1,000 babies in Nadroga circuit.

evening when the children were too tired to eat.\footnote{Guinard, as reported by the Acting DC Navua to CS, 31 Mar. 1927, encl. \textit{ibid}.}

These problems were overcome in most of the provinces by the kind of social engineering that the child welfare movement consciously or unconsciously employed. By 1937 there were six European nurses and 16 Fijian nurses on child welfare work, and scores of volunteers often led by the wives of Rokos or DCs. Although child mortality rates did not improve significantly during the decade, the general cleanliness of children, the incidence of yaws and ringworm and other loathsome conditions was much improved. The year Mrs Brewer began her work in Ba, 440 of 450 children needed treatment.\footnote{CSO 30/1179.} In 1933 she submitted a report on all the children in Ba and Lautoka - with photographs to prove it - and classified them as follows:\footnote{SNA 33/1347 and 33/1348.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Frail</th>
<th>Mad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautoka</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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This time the improvement was permanent and after the war child mortality rates began to fall rapidly. The child welfare movement was one of the few successful innovations for changing the domestic habits of the people. The reason for its success was that it was so devised that
that the people could make it their own.\textsuperscript{1} Women's guilds and committees became an enjoyable part of the social life of village women to the present day, and undoubtedly raised their level of self-esteem and respect, while disseminating much useful knowledge.

(iii) 'members of one family in a distinct and separate Buliship as of old'

The child welfare movement successfully adapted itself to the realities of village Fiji where for so long the seeds of much good advice had fallen on stony ground. If there was a lesson in this demonstration of the possibilities of building on the strengths of the tikina, it was not heeded by a government that looked forward to the system's 'ultimate extinction' by means of resettling the population as individual cultivators on their own land.\textsuperscript{2}

The traditional-type structures which still regulated the daily lives of almost 90% of the Fijian population, and in one way or another affected them all, were left to pursue the 'paths of the land' subject to occasional official harassment in the form of raikoro, tours of village inspection by the DCs.

The district organization was the strength of Fijian society - under severe strain, it has been seen, from the cumulative effect of individuals coming and going

\textsuperscript{1} Within a year of its beginning in Tailevu the daughter of the Buli Cicia and five earnest maidens reported themselves to the local NMF for instruction on health and hygiene. They put a rigid programme into effect in their village - SNA 28/1659.

too easily - but deep-rooted in the past, still semi-self-sufficient, and capable of asserting its own priorities before those of colonial government. It was the framework for a distinctively Fijian life-style, for a social and political life under authentic local leadership with institutions and laws in essential harmony with the needs of the community and accepted ways of mutual co-operation.

The districts, tikina, into which the provinces were divided numbered 173 in 1900. Originally each tikina comprised not a territorial area of administrative convenience so much as a political and social entity recognized by the local population as a vanua of allied social groups owing allegiance to one chief. Even at the close of the 19th century boundaries were not such that they could be delineated on a map. The first Native Lands Commissioner, David Wilkinson gives some examples for Serua in 1899:

The Buli Saru with many of his people reside in the town of Cabe; in the same town are also some who give allegiance to [Buli] Komave, and others to Buli Nasikawa of Navola...

It will thus be seen that within one Buliship 3 Bulis reside... Two of the said Bulis give allegiance to Colo West and the other to Serua within which province the whole of the lands so occupied are situated.¹

The same report speaks of three towns (Navutulevu, Culanuku and Vunibau) which 'belong to and form part of the Buliship

¹ Wilkinson to CS, Mar. 1899, CSO 99/1575.
of Serua but are situated within the geographical area of other Buliships'. Similarly in Nadroga scattered mataqali continued to give fealty to distant chiefs. The Sanasana people, for instance, petitioned to be put under the chief of Malomalo, two miles from Sanasana, instead of their true hereditary chief living eight miles away at Cuvu.¹ Gradually whether by administrative fiat of the Supreme Chief the Governor or, as in the latter case, by the petition of the people, the 'higglety-pigglety state of gubernational things existing'² was remedied by reconstructing the tikina on stricter geographical lines or simply creating new smaller tikina to contain minority groups. Hence the increase from 84 in 1874 to 173 tikina in 1900, 184 in 1930.

Sometimes the people had a choice of moving closer to their true chief; occasionally they had to change allegiance. Technically a change of tikina boundaries did not necessitate a change in the vakavanua traditional patterns of allegiance, though colonial administrators sometimes failed to comprehend that the people did not generally need to make a clear distinction between governmental and traditional, vakamatanitu and vakavanua. At district level the two were inextricably (and by design) tangled together. Administrative arrangements emanating from Vale levu, the Supreme Chief's house, became authoritative statements of the interpretation to be placed on pre-existing but far from fixed paths of allegiance and social relationship.

¹ CSO 99/683.
² Wilkinson to CS, Mar. 1899, CSO 99/1575.
Thus when the Komave people agitated from the turn of the century to be separated from the province of Serua and attached to Colo West, the inconvenience of travelling to the Roko Tui's quarters on Serua Island or the European magistrate's at Navua was the alleged but not the real issue. The Komave people, the Noi Vuso, had a land quarrel with their hereditary overlord the Vunivalu (and Roko Tui) of Serua. Although they had occupied their lands for over 50 years at the time of the Native Lands Commission, the previous occupiers (the Lutuya tribe) who were loyal dependants (gali) of the Serua chiefs and lived just inside Komave at Navutulevu, were recognized by the Commission as the 'true owners' (taukei dina) with joint tenancy of the Noi Vuso lands and the right of reversion. Thereafter the Noi Vuso chafed at the lala of the Serua chiefs. With the help of a European storekeeper, G.L. Barrow, who had his own personal grievance against the Vunivalu of Serua, Ratu Aseri Latianara, they petitioned for either a European Commissioner in Serua or for transfer to Colo West. Finally in December 1916 Governor Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott, impressed perhaps with the perseverance of the petitioners, ignored the advice of his subordinates and ordered the transfer of Komave tikina to Colo West.

This decision was hailed by the Noi Vuso as a triumph over Ratu Aseri and a body blow to the prestige of the Serua chiefs: 'for although it refers to government administration only, natives do not appreciate that distinction and take it as a complete severance of all relationships -

1 See CSO 04/4656, 13/3500, 19/1859.
tribal or otherwise.\footnote{G.V. Maxwell, minute, 21 May 1919, CSO 19/1859. It was not their first victory over Ratu Aseri. As a young man of 20 he had been appointed Buli Komave when their own man had failed. The turaga ni koros of the Komave villages successfully petitioned to have him removed in 1899 - CSO 99/674.} Ratu Aseri tried hard to have the decision reversed:

The attachment of Komave to this province is not just a recent thing but very ancient...and to me it seems a drastic thing that suddenly they should be cut off from our province when...it was approved that we should be one province in accordance with our ancient boundaries.\footnote{Latianara to DC Navua, 17 Oct. 1917, CSO 17/10162. Sometimes Ratu Aseri insisted on the return of the whole of Komave; at other times he pressed for Navutulevu, Nabutini and Nabukelevu only - the towns more closely connected to his chiefly matagali, Raralevu, than were the Noi Vuso. As a sub-plot to this complex struggle, Nabutini and Nabukelevu (the vanua Burenitu) tried on several occasions to re-establish past glory by the creation of their own tikina. See SNA 22/916 CSO 19/5323, 19/6537, 24/3353.}

The Komave chiefs rubbed salt in the wounds by frustrating Ratu Aseri's attempts to make traditional calls on the members of his yavusa residing in Komave. In 1921, to give an example of the petty irritations which enraged Ratu Aseri, the Buli Komave forbade the Navutulevu people to supply their chief with an oco ni vale, a customary presentation of food needed to pay off some housebuilders.\footnote{Buli Komave to Provincial Commissioner Nadroga and Colo West, 27 Sept. 1921, SNA 21/1137.} 'Ratu Aseri is very indignant', commented the Provincial Commissioner of Colo West, 'and accuses Buli Komave of secretly working
against him and attempting to undermine his powers as chief among his own people'.

At the second inquiry of the NLC in 1932 the Noi Vuso people appealed against the right of the Vunivalu of Serua to call himself their supreme chief: 'Rogiano Duwailea our chief', said their spokesman, 'is known as Tanivuso. He is politically independent and owes allegiance to no one.'

The Tanivuso himself wrote that they had had 'nothing to do with Serua' ever since they had been separated from the province administratively in 1916. In an interesting judgement Ratu Sukuna denied the possibility, except in Colo, of having a vanua that was not directly under or at least protected by a Supreme Overlord; he ruled that the Vunivalu of Serua was without doubt 'that Superior Overlord or Paramount Chief' for all Komave. Finally in the reorganization of 1944 - the issue still much alive - Nabukelevu, Naboutini and Navutulevu were returned to their

1 H. Disbrowe, minute, 28 Oct. 1921, ibid.
2 Ilikini Senitiri, evidence, 2 Feb. 1932, CSO F50/27/19.
3 R. Duwailea and others to SNA, 1 Mar. 1932, ibid.
4 Sukuna, memorandum, 3 Jan. 1934, SNA 32/552.

Sukuna interpreted Wilkinson's decision to make the Tanivuso and the Vunivalu joint turaga i taukei of the Komave lands as an ill-advised sop to Noi Vuso sensibilities. But as regards the land itself Wilkinson had argued that the Noi Vuso title was a strong one and that the Lutuya should relinquish their claims (vaka lutu) given their other extensive holdings around Somosomo Bay - Wilkinson to CS, Mar. 1899, CSO 99/1575.
rightful province but the rest of Komave remained outside in the new province of Nadroga and Navosa. To this day Komave is reluctant to acknowledge that it owes any allegiance to Serua. It seems then that the drawing of administrative boundaries vakamatanitu was re-stated by the people, so to speak, as the seal of vakavanua independence and dignity. In other words, by the manipulation of its decision-making processes the Fijian Administration became a new battleground for the resolution of traditional rivalries and the pursuit of local political ascendancy.

A persistent theme of district politics was the attempt of minority groups within the tikina to break away and form their own tikina under a Buli who was one of their own chiefs. Many tikina included groups of people in some kind of dependent relationship to the dominant lineage. They may have taken shelter during past wars and stayed on to intermarry and share the planting lands of their hosts on a permissive basis, but always with the reservation that they were still vulagi, strangers, and not taukei dina, the true owners. Years of peace eliminated the need for physical protection, although peace did nothing to swell their numbers. If the vulagi were about 100 to 200 strong and had a focus of unity in a chiefly lineage, it was usual for them at some stage to exhibit signs of unhappiness and to petition through the provincial council for their establishment as an independent tikina - read vanua. Standard procedure was to obtain a resolution such as that of the Provincial Council of Ba and the Yasawas in October 1897:

That the villages of Sekituru, Yavusama, Moala and Korovuto who lately requested in the Nadi Dist. Council to have a Buli of their own inasmuch as they were not connected with the adjacent tribes and villages and that if they were under the
sole control of their hereditary chiefs they would be much more contented and Govt. work would be very much facilitated, be formed into a separate Buliship to be called Sekituru and that Marika Visei who has been the chief of the village since annexation be apptd. Buli.¹

This resolution and about 100 others were approved, each on their own merits, until the stage was reached where the process of subdivision had reached its absolute practical limits: 184 Bulis on the staff of the Fijian Administration in 1930 and the population of the tikina as small as 200 people, seldom more than 800. Between 1900 and 1944 there was hardly a substantial group in the Fijian community that could not boast its own chief as Buli, or at least its own tikina council if the Buli himself was an outsider.

What this administrative situation meant to Fijians is best seen by examining the few cases where a significant minority had still to liberate itself. In Colo North, on the upper reaches of the Sigatoka river, there were several such groups. On account of their 'rebellion' in the Little War of 1876 and subsequent history of disaffection leading to the establishment of a government hill station at Nadarivatu in 1892, they had been placed under the control of the strong and ambitious chiefs of Nadrau. For their own purposes the latter had remained loyal in the Little War to the coastal forces of the government - Nadrau was the headquarters of a large contingent. The extension of the Nadrau tikina by way of reward for their loyalty achieved in one stroke the ascendancy over the region that had eluded

¹ Resolution XVI of the Provincial Council of Ba and the Yasawas, 14 Oct. 1897, encl. CSO 98/330.
them for decades. According to a version of these events written in Nadrau in 1913, Tui Nadrau had the satisfaction of witnessing the hanging of five neighbouring Nacawanisa chiefs downstream from Nadrau at Vatula. Then Gordon had given him some money - 'your reward for helping the army of the government and the church in these parts. Whatever you decide about these men and their land is up to you. And keep your guns ready...'¹

These were the memories, for the most part accurate, that Nadrau brought forward to counter the incessant petitions of the Savatu people (the kai Nubu and kai Nacawanisa), to be established as a separate tikina. Nabobouco and Navatusila had already succeeded in splitting off from Nadrau, but Savatu was more important to the Nadrau chiefs who had occupied it after 1876 and established all their planting lands in the area. The Savatu petition was fully examined by the government in 1913 and rejected: 'the only reason advanced by the petitioners...is that the kai Navuta [Nadrau] are an alien tribe', noted the Native Commissioner. In Colo North, a province of many small mountain tribes, it was 'inevitable that such conditions must exist and the government should not have to indulge every prejudice of the Fijians against making new connections

¹ 'Ai Tukutuku ni Valu ka kabai Colo', 8 Feb. 1913, CSO 13/1463. Significantly this Nadrau account attributes the beginning of the war to Tui Nadrau sending messages to the government forces at Nasaucoko inviting help to subjugate 'those Navatusila, Nubu and Nacawanisa who were not Christians but Devils who do disgraceful things to Nadrau, digging up our gardens...'
unless it rendered administration easier.¹ In this case the kai Navuta, by the petitioners' own statements, had been living amongst them for generations with a great deal of intermarriage.

The dispute was referred back to the Provincial Commissioner of Colo North, W.E. Russell, who explained that the Savatu petition was 'part of a matured plot...to drive the buli's tribe off the lands of the petitioners' - where they were by right of conquest and occupation 'but after native custom, claiming rights of usufruct only'.² It was inconceivable to ask the kai Navuta to return to their true lands between Savatu and the Wailoa river. These lands were rugged and mountainous, quite unsuitable for planting. The Savatu people were not to be palmed off so easily. In June 1913 they demanded that Nadrau pay an annual rent of 1,000 yams, 5 cattle, 50 mats and 50 tabua. Russell prevailed on Nadrau to make a presentation which 'buried' the matter for a while.

Six years later a visit to the province by Governor Sir Cecil Rodwell prompted the Savatu people to present a further petition (their eighth since 1906). It seems that Nadrau was not fully apprised of the move. The Secretary of Native Affairs K.J. Allardyce could see no objection therefore to the petition, but took the opportunity to have the chiefs of the kai Nacawanisa and kai Nubu sign an agreement to move closer to Nadarivatu and allow the government to lease their vacated lands. (The agreement does not seem to have been enforced.) The new Tikina

¹ W. Sutherland, minute, 18 Feb. 1913, ibid.
² Russell, minute, 13 May 1913, ibid.
of Savatu came into being on 1 January 1920. As the number of subjects of the Buli Nadrau was thereby halved so too was his salary (from £12 to £6).\(^1\) It was a fait accompli; too late now for Nadrau to marshall 100 years of history to their cause or the forgotten promises of Gordon that Tui Nadrau and his successors would rule the vanquished for all time. The Savatu victory over Nadrau was only modified by the success of the latter in having its claims to Savatu lands upheld by the Native Lands Commission in 1926.

Also within the boundaries of Colo North, adjoining Savatu but closer to the Ba river and the coast, was the group of villages collectively known as Qaliyalatina. Years before Cession they had lost out to Nadrau and then had been scattered by the forces of the Cakobau Government - some to Ba, others to Nadrau. Being perforce on the right side of the Little War, they were allowed a few years later to be re-formed as a *tikina* on their true lands. They earned a reputation in the 1880s for constant internecine feuding and were threatened in 1888 with dismemberment of the *tikina*.\(^2\) Given the Fijian values attached to the *tikina*, the threat caused them to close ranks and they loyally supported the strenuous road construction schemes of A.B. Joske the first Commissioner of Colo North. It was related above (p. 195) how in 1914 they were found to be building a large temple to the Twin Gods on the site of a massacre of Bauan Christians in 1868.

1. CSO 5696/13.
2. CSO 88/67, 88/801.
The Buli was exiled, the tikina broken up, and the people converted from nominal Wesleyanism to nominal Catholicism. In 1922 when the Bishop came to Cuvu to confirm his new charges, a delegation appealed to him to intercede for them with the authorities in Suva for the restoration of their tikina:

Have pity on us and listen to the cry of Qaleolatina district which I lay before you. We have lately been divided; we long to be united again as members of one family in a distinct and separate Buliship as of old.

The Fathers were sympathetic and did make representations to the government. When the Provincial Commissioner also supported the petition, the re-establishment of the tikina was finally approved at the end of 1923.

The 50-year struggles of Savatu and Qaliyalatina to be rid of Nadrau reveals something of the type of vakavanua preoccupations of district politics — inward-looking and past-orientated. Lest it be thought that these are examples of parochialism to be expected from the interior as distinct from the tikina closer to European influence, there is also the notorious rivalry of Bau and Verata (Ucunivanua), two of the proudest chiefly centres in Fiji. Verata in ancient times was an old and powerful matanitu, some 26 miles north of Bau, with extensive lands and a large population. Bau and

1 Na Mata, Dec. 1914, pp.185-6.
2 CSO 15/1621.
3 Fr Y. Helliet to Bishop Nicholas, 18 Aug. 1922, records of the Roman Catholic Mission, microfilm, Canberra, PMB 466.
4 CSO 23/771.
Verata recognized common ancestors but quarrelled early in the 19th century. Naulivou, the Vunivalu of Bau, defeated Verata in battle. Verata retaliated some years later with a massacre of a party of Bauans visiting Waimaro whereupon Cakobau forced the unwilling allies of Bau to join forces and lay siege to Verata.

In colonial times the power of Verata was a memory inversely proportioned to their bitter resentment of the prominence of Bau in the Fijian Administration, especially in Tailevu province. The Verata chiefs and people resorted to the arts of petty annoyance and impudence (viavialevu). In 1890 Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (Roko Tui Tailevu) complained that the Verata people had cut up the nets of his fishermen the Lasakau; and when he had gaol ed a Verata man on Bau island, 'instead of making use of the gaol water closet he used to go to the one belonging to the Lasakau people and pull parts of the thatch out for his own convenience'. 1 When taxes were due from Verata the young men set sail for the Yasawas or Koro; when they were at home they drank yagona day and night and brawled at will. 2

This reputation for lawlessness continued down to the 1930s. The Ratu mai Verata, Ratu Penioni Ravoka, was a wild eccentric man associated with Apolosi in the early days of the Viti Company. In 1915, it was later alleged by the chiefs of Tailevu, he declared himself completely independent

1 Nailatikau to Thurston, 1 Sept. 1890, CSO 90/1734.
2 CSO 90/3091.
'even as regards the King'. Nevertheless in the report of the Bauan Commission of 1917 a 'Ratu Venione' of Verata, almost certainly the same man, is quoted as saying, 'I have heard that Verata surrendered to Bau', and that 'Ratu Cakobau had the right to levy from Verata because he had conquered it'.

When accused by Buli Nakelo and 24 other chiefs in 1921 of trying to divide the province of Tailevu into two, the Ratu countered that it would be a good thing: 'I want a separate province to prove my zeal for the government, for it is a long time that we have been relying on Bau and our hearts are not in it.' In July of the same year, Ratu Peni fired several shots in dubious salute as the Roko lay off the reef at Verata waiting for the turn of the tide.

The Bauan appointed to replace the rebellious chief as Buli of Tai and Verata, Apenisa Lawenitotoka, was powerless in Verata; on one occasion (September 1921) he was threatened and ordered to leave the town when he requested food for workers on Bau. Verata made no contribution to the mekes and feasts of the Tailevu Provincial Council in June 1922. Apenisa confessed to the government in April 1923 that his instructions were ignored in Verata and that if Suva did not intervene soon then Ratu might as

1 F. Raiwalui (Buli Nakelo) and 24 chiefs to SNA, 20 Jan. 1921, SNA 21/230.
2 Maxwell to CS, 11 July 1917, CSO 17/5947.
3 Peni Ravoka to SNA, 21 Jan. 1921, SNA 21/230.
4 CSO 22/5611.
5 CSO 22/1127, 22/1728.
well be reinstated as Buli. Apenisa was removed and a higher-ranking Bauan, Ratu Waqalevu, appointed Buli Verata from 1 July 1923. The people refused to build him a house and he retreated to Bau. Then Ratu Peni began to intimidate Ratu Pope Seniloli's servants (kai vale) at nearby Kumi. All Fiji was talking about the dispute.

Bau felt that its prestige was at stake. The Roko Tuis of Cakaudrove, Bua, Ra, Macuata and Lau were prevailed on to appeal to the Governor for his 'chiefly ruling' (lewa vakaturaga):

The people of Verata are steeped in insolence and scorn our traditional customs of courteous dealing...(Unless punished) the spirit of foolishness and the spirit of discord will grow amongst the people of the land and they will come to despise their chiefs.

At the Council of Chiefs in 1923 it was suggested that Ratu mai Verata was insane and ought to be locked up. However when the DC Rewa visited Verata in March 1924, he was hospitably received and was able to arrange for the Bauan Buli to retire in favour of a second ranking chief of Verata (Laitia Drevuata).4

The Veratan example was, as the high chiefs had feared, infectious. In 1924 the Tailevu Provincial Council

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1 A.R. Lawenitotoka to Under SNA, 30 Apr. 1923, CSO 23/1622.
2 Ratu J.A. Rabici, D. Toganivalu, E. Ganilau, P. Veli and A. Finau to the Governor, 13 Nov. 1923, CSO 23/1715.
3 D.R. Stewart, minute, 6 Dec. 1923, CSO 23/4338.
4 ibid.
representatives revolted against the 'customary' demands of the chiefs of Bau to have the repair of their houses put on the provincial programme of work. When Ratu Pope Seniloli appealed to them to remember their old customs, 'there was no response and it was quite obvious from the attitude of the people that they were unwilling even to consider the proposal'. Although there were 56 houses on Bau in a bad way, only seven of the 200 delegates would agree to include the building in the programme of work. The whole burden fell to the home tikina of Bau with the result that the chiefly island became more and more decrepit. (The Provincial Council partly relented in 1929 and offered to repair one house for each tikina.)

In 1930 Verata took to the attack again. The Buli defended his tikina against another charge of non-compliance with the Provincial Council resolutions on housebuilding: 'Verata did not owe allegiance (vakarorogo) to Bau in ancient times nor does it now.' The practice of using government institutions to achieve housebuilding on Bau was corrupt, he argued; there was a customary way of sending envoys (mata) with such requests, and a customary way of complying which had better regard for the dignity of the parties than did the threat of prosecution. Who were the Bauans to talk of upholding ancient customs?

1 A.J. Armstrong, minute, 16 Feb. 1925, CSO 25/2441. The government put the blame on the Bauan chiefs themselves: 'They have received much and given little.' — J.S. Neill, minute, 4 Aug. 1925, ibid.

2 Buli Verata to DC Rewa, 28 Aug. 1930, CSO 30/3068.
The Veratan challenge was taken seriously by Bau and the whole chiefly order. Ratu Sukuna regarded it as a conflict that 'had repercussions through the whole length and breadth of the Fijian Social System'. The government of the day had little interest in Fijian politics and was glad to delegate to Ratu Sukuna the resolution of this dispute (and several similar disputes). A special hearing of the Native Lands Commission was held on 7 September 1933 at Naimasimasi, half-way between the contending seats. Both sides attended in force, and with much ceremonial skirmishing. Proceedings began with a 'fine conciliatory speech' by Ratu Aseri Latianara of Serua (sitting as Assessor) and both sides gave evidence 'without rancour', perhaps because Ratu Peni declined to appear personally. Ratu Sukuna ruled in favour of Bau. Ratu Peni had one last moment of glory in October 1935 when he ordered the Roman Catholic and Wesleyan mission staff to leave their houses and gardens. He was arrested and committed to the Lunatic Asylum in Suva.

1 Sukuna, diary, 12 Sept. 1933, CSO F 15/5.
2 See Sukuna, diary, 5-12 Sept., ibid. The NLC records of this inquiry, like all NLC records, are not yet available, making it difficult to do justice to the complexity and immense vitality of Fijian communal politics.
3 'Ratu's authority in the district is tremendous and he has always been a little abnormal on the subjects of the church and the Government... The district... became quiet again after Ratu left.' - E. Baker to CS, 31 Jan. 1936, CSO F23/7.
and the following year was sent into exile on Batiki.¹ For it is written in the hearts of Fijians that those who defy chiefly authority will become sick or insane.

If the issues and preoccupations of the chiefs and people in these vakavanua affairs seem excessively parochial, the scale minute, and the general orientation towards past glory or old grievances rather than colonialist desiderata such as economic prosperity or the national interest, then it is a true reflection of the nature of Fijian societies prior to the Second World War - and the background for understanding the failure of new concepts of progress to take root amongst the people.

(iv) 'Work is carried on more efficiently in small districts. There seems to be more esprit de corps in them.'²

As a unit of colonial administration and yet the focus and vehicle of these vakavanua energies, the tikina was a thoroughly ambiguous institution. Legally the Bulis and their district councils were responsible to the Roko Tuis and the provincial councils, the European magistrates or DCs, and finally the Governor (through his deputy, the

¹ Ratu Sukuna visited Ratu Peni in May 1936: 'Except on religion he talked normally, he was gaunt in appearance, I thought.' - diary, 18 May 1936, CSO F 15/5. It may have been a humane intervention on Sukuna's part that obtained his release.

² A.B. Joske, minute, 1 Sept. 1904, CSO 04/3046.
The Native Regulations gave the district councils at first sight minimal direct responsibility. The areas listed read as though they were the wishful thinking of a sanitary inspector:

There shall be in each district a Council called the District Council...consisting of the Buli of the district, the chiefs of towns, and the chiefs of qalis and mataqalis in the district and any other person or persons directed to attend by the Buli...

The Council may make rules affecting any or all of the following matters:-

1. public bathing places;
2. keeping the villages clean and the planting of couch grass therein;
3. the removal of rubbish;
4. the planting of gardens;
5. village paths and bridges;
6. house building;
7. any other matter concerning the health and good government of the district; and these rules shall be submitted to the Roko of the province for his approval.2

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1 It is obvious from this simple structure that Fijians had nothing whatsoever to gain and much to lose by the insertion of a democratic Legislative Council, especially if controlled by local Europeans. To deplore the lack of western modes of political awareness in this period misses the main point, that Fijians had a political life all their own, real power in the direction of their own lives, and indirect power in constituting a presence in the colony whose interests were paramount.

2 Regulation III of 1912, part III.
It was of course the 'any other matter' of (7) that gave the council significance in the lives of the people. Tikina councils did not meet monthly to dispose of rubbish in the villages but to thrash out the affairs of the land, na ka vakavanua. Yet even the routine items on the agenda would be coloured by local personalities and kinship politics:

The resignation and appointment of Turaga ni Koros, concealing discussion on suitability and status, the planting of food crops, which doubtless produced arguments about season and quantity; the need for better water supplies, involving the decision to break such and such family ties, the renovation of village drains, which brought up the complicated subject of providing food for all communal workers; the tabu on nuts for the payment of the [Provincial] Rate, where compromises were proposed and considered; applications for exemption from communal services, in which the characters of the applicants were lauded and attacked. Clearly then these Councils play a large part in the life of its villagers.¹

At no stage was there an attempt to regulate the procedures followed in these councils. The idiom was that of local custom. The chiefs and their spokesmen (matanivanua) sat on fine mats at the innermost end of an ordinary village dwelling facing down to the customary vagona bowl and its attendants. The turaga ni koros and village elders sat facing the chiefs from the other sides of the room, ranged according to the local table of precedence. The meeting was begun with a vagona ceremony with its implicit invocation of the ancestral spirits and capped with a prayer to the God of the Sabbath. Conventions of etiquette and oratory

¹ Sukuna to CS, 16 Apr. 1940, CSO F 15/1.
applied as much to the tikina councils as they did to any other assembly of the land.

Provincial councils by contrast were more formal affairs, held only once a year and attended by a European officer from the Native Department or by the DC. They were heavily dominated by the routine requirements of government work, mainly the raising of taxes and the allocation of provincial resources to public works. But the gathering of so many people in one place, up to 200 delegates and their attendants, made the provincial councils the major social event of the year, a festival of the people with much exchange of property, mekes and feasts on the side.

The report of the 1929 Provincial Council of Colo East gives some glimpse of the priorities of the people on these occasions:

The proceedings were opened with the usual ceremonies followed by a huge magiti [feast] for the two thousand odd people present. After four hours of keen discussion, Council adjourned for further feasting and mekes and after the second session of Council, the proceedings closed with a well-practised meke from the women of Muaira, followed by the dividing of the spoils and all districts' veisau [exchange].

Only in this social context did the provincial councils match the importance of the monthly tikina councils as a liturgy, so to speak, a celebration of corporate identity and common ideals on the one hand, a reaffirmation of the dignity and status of each constituent group on the other. The district and provincial councils provided a congenial

1 Colo East Provincial Council Report, 1929.
A forum for making decisions required by the colonial government without doing violence to traditional decision-making processes and preferred forms of social intercourse and collaboration. It would be a pointless exercise to attempt, as scholars have done with colonial institutions affecting land, to filter out those activities of the councils which were 'authentically' Fijian from those which were pseudo-customary colonial innovations. It is more to the point to argue that the very success of the original Gordon-Thurston design in maintaining a strong rural Fijian corporate life preserved also the capacity and inclination of the people to assert their own priorities and modify the intrusions of the western economic order espoused by the European and Indian communities.

It is difficult to recreate a sense of the irrelevance of the gospel of progress to communities which fitted the material goods of the trade stores into their own cultural context - or dispensed with them altogether if they could not be obtained without too much effort (e.g. with lease monies). The Rev. Robert Green recalls in his memoirs 'the simple but impressive glory and beauty that was old Fiji's economic way of life'. He gives an eye-witness description from the 1920s of a presentation of property which took place at an annual general meeting of the Ba circuit - it might have been any vakavanua exchange supported by the same chiefs. There had been the usual months of busy preparation to ensure that the name of each vanua or tikina or church would not be disgraced by a mean showing:

All the offerings and gifts came in unhurried dignity and order to the beat of the wooden drum and the music and movement of a women's dance (Meke). First came a Fijian canoe with outrigger in full sail, borne on the shoulders of more than 20 men. The canoe was laden with
a well selected variety of the wealth of the Islands. Standing in the prow was a Fijian in ancient dress, blowing a Davui (Conch Shell) as when a canoe is approaching land. Then were brought in half a dozen young bullocks, 20 pigs, half a score of turtles and numberless crabs. Women in long lines moved in, bearing countless fathoms of Masi (native cloth) followed by a similar number carrying hundreds of beautifully woven Ihe (mats). These women joined those already seated and swelled the orchestra and music supporting the dancers (meke). Following on came men in Meke dress bearing the fruit of their gardens including 100 bunches of bananas which they piled in little mountains with the other gifts in the semi-circle of the spectators. These men metaphorically leaving the spade and the hoe took up the club and the spear and gave a war-meke...¹

Occasionally on the marriages and deaths of high chiefs the people were involved in weeks-long festivities. The missionary on Lakeba reported in June 1918 that Lau had been 'holding high festival for a month' to lift the mourning for Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (died 1901):

It has been a continual round of 'magitis' [feasts] mekes boses [councils] sports... Surely not less than 500 visitors & possibly nearly 1000, were here from every island in Lau. Not one buli, n.m. [native minister], catechist or chief worth the name was absent. As many as 17 cutters were in the harbour at any one time... Dalo by the 10 thousands, yams and nearly a score of bullocks, etc. pigs and turtles in even larger numbers. The goods [for the solevu, exchange] consisted of three large canoes, gatu [snakes], mats, magimagi [sinnet]...

¹ Green, unpublished memoirs.
² Rev. W. Amos to Small, 13 June 1918, MM F/1/1918. The other party to the exchange would have been the Bauans.
Apart from the festivals of church and state, there endured well into the 1920s and 1930s, and to some extent to the present day, traditional trading networks that supplied from the surplus of one region the deficiencies of another. At Lomaiwai in Nadroga the people made salt in the mangrove flats and smoked it in cylinders of fibre so that it could be transported to Rewa and traded for pots, to Vatulele for choice masi, Kadavu for mats, Lau for rope-fibre or wooden bowls, Colo for vagona, timber and bamboos, upper Serua for kauri gum (makadre) used for glazing pots and making torches. Apparently the specialities of each region were well-known and in the predominantly social context of customary exchanges there was no incentive, even if the resources were present, for one region to challenge the monopoly of another. It was never the object of trade to make a profit in the commercial sense:

The important thing is not that the exchange is trade, but that the framework within which it takes place is primarily social, not economic. The economic relationship is brought about because of the social relationship; the economic need is solved through a social mechanism; the economic transaction gives expression to an already existing social relationship part of whose function is to satisfy this type of need...

Even if the quality of district life prior to the Second World War eludes documentation other than the repeated verbal eulogies of old people pining for the good old days

of ordered life and simple plenty, it seems that the tikina was an institution ideally suited to give Fijians effective direction of their own affairs and satisfaction of their material and social needs. It was still strong enough in 1939 for the Secretary of Native Affairs to claim that not a single Fijian was destitute or homeless, a situation simply taken for granted at the time but one which takes on retrospective interest with the recent recognition of rural destitution as a serious problem in some parts of contemporary Fiji.¹ In Ratu Sukuna's words spoken in 1944 after 11,000 Fijians had passed through the armed services:

There can be nothing spiritually very wrong with a system that maintains the old and the sick without resort to homes for the aged and schemes of social security, that despite discouragement and discrimination comes forward in times of stress and danger to help the larger community of which it forms a part.²

Secondly, there was throughout the period a remarkable absence of serious crime in the provinces. Between 1930 and 1939 in Lau, times of acute depression for the copra industry, the annual reports of the District Commissioner mention up to a dozen major cases a year but nothing more serious than adultery, larceny or assault. In 1936 and 1937 not a single serious offence such as

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1 H.C. Monckton, minute, 17 Sept. 1939, CSO F 50/6. The reports of the DCs mention squalid living conditions in some places but never absolute poverty. If children were poorly nourished it was parental neglect or ignorance of nutrition.

2 Sukuna, 'Policy with Regard to Fijian Communal Obligations', June 1944, typescript.
aggravated assault came before the courts.\textsuperscript{1} Again, such a situation was taken for granted, though there was a great deal of minor court-work, mainly for failure to pay rates and taxes. Even if the court statistics concealed the real level of crime in the community, they testify to the efficacy of a social system able to dispense with the assistance of the courts in maintaining peace and achieving reconciliation.

\textit{(v) 'The true chiefs of the vanua were appointed Bulis...and there was peace and plenty.'\textsuperscript{2}}

The administrative success of the tikina system hinged on the office of Buli. After 20 years' experience as Commissioner of Viti Levu provinces, Walter Carew argued in 1896 that the Roko Tuis 'could be dispensed with any day without any evil results' - and in the 20th century they often were - but

If there is one thing more certain than another in Native Politics it is that we must not wilfully run Counter to the Bulis but must support them and their dignity all we can.\textsuperscript{3}

It is tempting to suggest that in fact the only reason the Bulis did survive so long in the 20th century was because no one could devise a cheaper system of local government. Bulis were given little support and recognition. Conversely

\begin{enumerate}
\item CSO F 15/1.
\item Ratu S. Seniloli to NC, 14 Mar. 1912, CSO 12/2592.
\item Carew to CS, 24 Apr. 1896, CSO 96/1431.
\end{enumerate}
they were comparatively free to rule their districts much as they liked, and the tikina system had long developed its own momentum. Just as the model of the vanua with its preoccupations, loyalties and emotions infused the tikina, so the chiefly model of the head of a vanua — usually styled Tui in modern times (Tui Nadi, Tui Bua, etc.) — governed the role expectations of the Buli. In practice it was not feasible for a commoner to hold the post. If he did so, on the appointment of a European official, then he had to give his orders legitimacy by seeking the approval of the natural leaders of the vanua. The appointment of a commoner who was also an outsider was regarded as an outrage by the people and rarely attempted. How could such a man be their leader in the vakavanua affairs that mattered most?

A case occurred in 1904 when George Wright, a determined Commissioner of Colo West, criticized his predecessors for treating Fijians 'as children & excusing every fault in their ignorance'. Real social change, Wright argued, could only happen if the right men were appointed Buli. He persuaded an old chief of Koroinasau to retire and replaced him with a young protégé from Nadroga, Ravuame Latilevu, a commoner of no standing in either province. Wright concealed this fact from the Native Commissioner, although a delegation from Koroinasau soon put Suva in the light and had the appointment cancelled. The Native Office were generally sympathetic to the desire of the people to be ruled by their own chiefs:

1 Wright, minute, 3 Feb. 1905, CSO 04/4910.
The Buli of a District should certainly be one of the leading men of the District for many reasons. The pay he receives - £6 per. an. is more of a retaining fee than a salary and it is the duty of the people to support him - this in the cirs. they can only be expected to do willingly if he is one of themselves. Native SM's Scribes &c. are on a quite different footing and we prefer to send strangers.  

The new Buli of Koroinasau had enemies of his own in the tikina and he was obsessed with their efforts, aided by Wright he thought, to displace him. His fears were realized in March 1909 when Wright sentenced him to 12 months hard labour of two charges of adultery. Wright pleaded again to be allowed to give Latilevu a try. The Acting Governor was sympathetic, saying that there was no reason for any hard or fast rules about 'one of themselves'...it is the duty of the natives to conform to the appointment and not to indulge in any such foolish talk as 'not accepting' the nominee of the Govt...if they wish to ventilate sentimental 'objections', I will not see them.  

First came the letter of protest. The people said they were 'overwhelmed with grief and tears' wondering what they had done to incur such awful punishment. Then came a delegation-bearing gifts. Would the government accept a parcel of land and cancel the hateful appointment? The Supreme Chief was unmoved. Not so the ancestors - within a month of taking up his appointment Ravuame Latilevu was dead.

1 W. Sutherland, minute, 2 Mar. 1909, CSO 08/1240.  
2 C. Major, minute, 5 Mar. 1909, ibid.  
3 The people of Koroinasau to NC, 27 Mar. 1909, ibid.
An analysis of 114 appointments where sufficient information is given about the appointees suggests that of the majority (58%) of Bulis appointed between 1900 and 1940 it could be said, in the routine words of the nomination of Buli Wainunu in 1897, 'He is the chief of the highest rank as well as the most influential person in the district'. Similarly, in the same province of Bua, the Bauan Roko Tui, Deve Toganivalu (1909-1928) often preferred local men of rank as Bulis although he might have been expected - as a matanivanua himself and civil servant chosen for his ability - to have been more sympathetic to a different type of man. One of his first appointments was to reinstate as Buli Kubulau a chief previously dismissed for slackness. The sole qualifications ascribed to the Buli Dama appointed in 1910 was that he was 'their chief and son of Stephen, a former Buli Dama'. In the same year a similar appointment was made in Solevu and a man of 22 was made Buli Vuya on the grounds that he was the highest-ranking chief, son of a former Buli and brother of another. In 1927 the Roko could suggest no name other than the son of Tui Wainunu for the post of Buli Wainunu even though he had been dismissed once before for embezzlement.

1 W.L. Allardyce, minute, 31 May 1897, CSO 97/1906.
2 CSO 09/4699.
3 CSO 10/9699.
4 CSO 10/470.
5 CSO 10/8154.
6 SNA 28/18.
After Deve's retirement the province was ruled by his son Ratu George Toganivalu under a European Provincial Commissioner. Several commoners were appointed as Buli. Ratu George, a progressive man, proposed in 1929 a drastic tikina reorganization by amalgamating Bua's nine tikina into three. He wanted to abolish the Bulis' lala and pay them a decent salary in return for a greater area of responsibility. The proposal was accepted in 1931. Surprisingly - or was it? - Ratu George appointed three hereditary chiefs to be the new Bulis and dismissed the redundant five commoner-Bulis and one chief. The Bulis were paid £30, £40 and £50, while rent shares would have increased these amounts by £25 to £40. Was this the beginning of a new type of civil-servant Buli? Not yet. The hereditary chiefs were acceptable only in that part of the new large tikina owing them vakavanua allegiance. The remaining parts agitated for a return to rule by 'one of themselves'. Old tikina rivalries were further exacerbated by religious differences. The Wesleyans of Dama, for instance, boasted a chief the Tuwailevu who considered himself superior to Roman Catholic Solevu. Rather than go to Buli Solevu they went straight to Provincial Headquarters. The amalgamation was abandoned on 1 June 1936 - a decade before the same

1 G. Toganivalu to SNA, 26 Jan. 1929, CSO 29/1257.
2 The amalgamated tikina were (1)Lekutu (Lekutu, Navakasiga, Bua); (2) Solevu (Solevu, Vuya, Dama); (3) Wainunu (Wainunu, Kubulau, Nadi).
3 J. Goepel to CS, 20 Feb. 1933, CSO F 11/1. The files analysing the Bua amalgamation are missing.
experiment was tried on a colony-wide basis and with the same unhappy but surely predictable results.

It was not easy to achieve through the Bulis the minimal standards, mostly sanitary, of colonial government:

every day experience shows that villages left to themselves soon deteriorate, become overgrown and untidy, with houses leaking and damp, refuse unburnt and unburied, latrines ripe and foul. There is nothing strange or perverse in this, for in these matters the barbarian conscience is silent, progress ultimately depending on the leader of the communities understanding the reason why.¹

In the absence of any but a simple clerical training at provincial headquarters (and often not even that) where were progressive Bulis to be found, and how could they be made acceptable to the people? On the death of Buli Muaira, Colo East, in 1931 the Provincial Commissioner did not approve of a single candidate. He tried a man who had been dismissed as Buli before, and found him 'worse than useless - he is weak to an unbelievable degree'.² In October 1932 an ancient ex-magistrate was appointed. He lasted a month. A proposal to bring an outsider from Soloira met a hostile reception from the people and a veto from Suva. Finally a minor chief of Muaira was released from his duties as caretaker of the guesthouse at Nadarivatu and proved more acceptable to the people. Similarly in Naitasiri tikina the Commissioner wanted to appoint an

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1  Sukuna to CS, 16 Apr. 1940, CSO F15/1.
2  J.W. Gittins, minute, 21 July 1932, SNA 31/141.
outsider as Buli in 1923. 'This tikina of ours', protested the people, 'is the one by which the whole province is named. It is not right, Sir, that we should be handed over to a man from another province.' The government accepted the candidate of their choice.

Tui Toga and his people were indignant in 1918 when the Provincial Commissioner insisted on appointing to their tikina Ratu Tevita Douraki, head of one of the two leading families of Burebasaga, only a few hundred yards downstream the Rewa. Perhaps the Commissioner thought it close enough. When the 'loyal, trustworthy...earnest' Ratu Tevita crossed the river to enter his district he found five people. The remainder were on their way to Suva to see the Talai and protest both in person and writing: 'You chose him by yourself...a bad man such as this... We absolutely refuse to have him.' Three times they marched on Suva, 50 or 60 strong, only to be told that the appointment was made solely vakamatanitu and that it 'did not, and could not, affect in any way the position vakavanua of the chiefs and people of the district'. But that of course was the people's point. Such appointments did have vakavanua repercussions so long as Bulis had the

1 The chiefs of Naitasiri to the Provincial Commissioner Naitasiri, 11 Jan. 1923, CSO 23/3340.

2 D.R. Stewart to Acting SNA, 13 Apr. 1918, CSO 18/3298.

3 Tui Toga and others to Provincial Commissioner Rewa, 27 Mar. 1918, ibid.

4 Stewart, ibid.
functions of the chief of a vanua in directing the daily lives of the people.

Although it was never the intention of the government to interfere with the local tables of vakavanua precedence, there is some evidence that the appointment itself of a man as Buli (or even Roko Tui) could be a decisive intervention in favour of that man to be installed or to act de facto as chief of the vanua. In an extract from NLC records (possibly many more examples could be found if the records themselves were not closed) a spokesman from Tunuloa discussing the chiefly succession stated: 'After Raco's death no one was elected to succeed him; although Ilimotua Maciu, as Buli, was treated as our chief.'  
And some time later Maciu was formally installed as chief by the Tui Tunuloa, his overlord. On Moala, Marshall Sahlins reports that every Buli since Cession has been de facto (but not installed) Tui Moala - the title itself was a Tongan creation. The government appointment was the decisive factor in resolving the complex status disputes of the leading lineages within the chiefly seat (Naroi), while the tikina organization enabled the Buli-Tui Moala to consolidate a degree of control over the whole island that prior to Cession would have been disputed by lesser chiefs claiming a measure of local independence.  

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1 Misaele Vakadranu, evidence from Cakaudrove Evidence Book encl. CSO F 50/27/6.

2 Sahlins, *Moala* (Ann Arbor, 1962), p.305: 'There has never been a split between Government and native leadership of Moala simply because the Government Chief or a member of his family is de facto native chief, no matter how much rancor this might cause among higher ranking persons or lines.'
Laura Thompson reports an instance where the titular chief of Kabara was bypassed in the appointment of Buli in favour of a rival chief with latent claims of precedence from pre-Tongan days. As a result the former was never installed as vakavanua chief because of his loss of prestige and power. First fruits (ai sevu) were seldom presented to him except in his own village.¹ In these cases much depended on the personality of the chief himself as to whether he could maintain his prestige and power without the government appointment as Buli.

Returning to the sample of 114 appointments, about one-sixth (16%) were of this type where more talented or younger chiefs from a second-ranking chiefly family were preferred to the titular chief. Slightly more appointments (18%) were of chiefs from other tikina within the province. Mostly these chiefs were closely connected with the Roko Tui, often a son or nephew appointed to strengthen the high chief's control over his subjects. The Tui Nayau's son, for example, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, was appointed Buli Cicia in May 1930.² A rare protest against this kind of manipulation of government appointments survives from a Buli of Macuata, Kemueli Tuidravu, who protested against his replacement by a kinsman of the Roko Tui (Ratu Veli):

The Roko wants to appoint elderly men as Bulis in this province - and others who are

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¹ Thompson, *Fijian Frontier* (San Francisco, 1940), p.68.
² SNA 30/698.
either his relatives or friends so that he can do things in his own way. The Roko wants to have me dismissed because I am an educated man and know how to 'speak and write in English' and because I don't put much store by our native customs and chiefly ceremonial, for I think the time for those things ended in 1874 - nowadays they only make the people miserable and impoverish them.¹

Tuidravu seems aware of one of the dilemmas of the Buli's role. By regulation if not also by custom accruing to his personal rank, the Buli was furnished with the chiefly privilege of lala, although in 20th century practise this seldom amounted to more than a day's desultory work in his garden each month. He also received a 5% share in lease monies, an amount that was significant (more than £50) in about six sugar-cane tikina (Nailaga, Bulu and Sekituru in Ba; Labasa, Naitasiri and Nausori). Elsewhere it was a few shillings to a few pounds, no real compensation for an annual salary that was £6 to £12 at the beginning of the century and £18 to £24 after 1927. The lowest clerk in the civil service was twice as well paid as the man generally acknowledged to be the lynchpin of the Fijian Administration.

Apparently then the Buli was not in the first instance a civil servant so much as a subsidized chief. He was already at the apex of a self-sufficient little world that provided its own rewards: style, the power of keeping the peace, the dignity of presiding over the eternal flow of goods and services. If he chose not to conform to

¹ Tuidravu to SNA, 27 Sept. 1930, SNA 30/2280.
to the chiefly expectations of his role then he was depriving himself of the only rewards offered him. And yet the same man was responsible for the implementation of all the orders of the Roko, the DC, the Provincial Council, and the entire body of Native Regulations. Of all his government duties the most onerous and most important was the collection of his district's tax assessment and provincial rate (a total of some £35,000 from all the provinces). Ratu Sukuna wrote a sensitive account of the Buli's dilemma:

Unlike his Biblical prototype who waxed fat on taxes and not on the love of Jews, the Buli fattens rather on the goodwill of his people, taxes for him being nothing but a temptation leading to ruin. Hence all that any of his brethren has to say to him to delay payment is 'au sa leqa', which is being interpreted, I can't pay. Knowing that the anger of authority is far away, but the displeasure of the people at his door, the Buli being one of them construes the saying liberally and replies, sa vinaka which means, all right. And so it goes on, a perfectly natural and intelligible proceeding.¹

There were a few Bulis like Kemueli Tuidravu of Macuata who bucked against the chiefly style and took their responsibilities literally. Without exception they owed their job to a progressive-minded European official anxious to upset the chiefly complacency of the preceding Bulis or to shake up a lethargic community. It was convention but not law that required consultation with

¹ Sukuna to CS, 21 Apr. 1933, CSO F 15/1.
the people over appointments, and some European Commissioners preferred to take a hard line. In a 1904 report on Kadavu, the Assistant Native Commissioner noted with satisfaction that the Buli Nabukelevu, a commoner, was disliked by the people because he makes them do as he wishes...
he is hated by the young hereditary chief Ratu Sogo Sogo because he keeps him and his lala within bounds. He is not a favourite with the Wesleyan Native Ministers and teachers because he tells them openly that...they exact too much from the people.1

A kindred soul was Buli Sigatoka in the late 1920s, a cause of much trouble 'because he is an individualist. He cares nothing for custom or tradition or rank...dispenses with food presentation...speaks his own mind...' Rated the most energetic man in the district, he was a keen cane farmer with his own horses, bullocks and ploughing equipment. 'He is too impatient of incompetence to make a really good Buli as he discourages the people by setting a standard...they cannot hope to attain.'2 The tikina system could not accommodate men like these. It is significant that in April 1929 Buli Sigatoka lost his job because of his identification with the Apolosi movement,3 the focus of Fijian aspirations for an involvement in the commercial economy for which the tikina system had not been designed.

1 W.A. Scott to NC, 21 Sept. 1904, CSO 04/4229.
3 SNA 28/1919.
CHAPTER SIX

NOW THAT THEY ARE ADOLESCENT

By the beginning of the 1930s government was less philosophic about the evolution of Fijian society through the breakdown of the 'communal system' - in effect, the breakdown of district organization. Despite the cumulative results of individuals leaving the villages periodically to earn taxes or simply to go wandering, rural society was institutionally well-entrenched, most of its leaders and people deaf to the tired rhetoric of individualism. There was no evidence that the strains which this society was allowed to suffer in the 1920s were justified by the emergence of the much desired new class of independent farmers, any more than the Viti Company had been productive of a new class of entrepreneurs and traders. Then again, the Fijian Administration had worked smoothly enough and given so little cause for anxiety that there was no incentive to force through drastic institutional reforms against the certain opposition of Fijian leaders. The most government felt it could do was to continue its efforts to convert Fijian leaders to vague concepts of economic and social development. Existing agricultural and social organization had to be tolerated for a long time to come, but specific initiatives and experiments were now to be encouraged if they paved the way for what was seen as a more healthy society - one where Fijians would, in Governor May's familiar phrase, take 'a serious part in the
battle of life'. Or as Governor Sir Murchison Fletcher expressed it in 1930, 'the world has set a pace at which all of us willy-nilly travel...the Fijian must see to it that he does not lag behind'.

Some urgency was given the situation by the rapid increase of the Indian population from 60,634 in 1921 to 85,002 in 1936. The census of that year found the 97,651 Fijians to be just under half of the total population. In the years 1928-37 the mean crude birthrate of Fijians (35.24) was only slightly less than that of the Indians (36.81) but the death rate of Fijians (22.97) was twice that of the Indians (10.27). Fijians would soon face the unpleasant demographic fact of being a minority in their own land. The success of the Indians in gaining three elected members in the Legislative Council after 1929, the comparative prosperity of the CSR tenant farmers,


2 Fletcher, address to the Legislative Council, 13 May 1930, CP 1/30. 'The dignity of work, the concentration of effort, the conservation of the reward of labour: these lessons he must determine himself to understand. The people have the will to go forward... it is the chiefs who should point the way, and lead the people on...'

3 W.B. Burrows, A Report on the 1936 Census (Suva, 1936). The Indian population component had increased from 0.46% in 1881 to 42.85% in 1936 (Fijians 49.22%).

4 Means are calculated from data tabulated by Ahmed Ali from the annual reports of the Secretary of Native Affairs, and the Secretary of Indian Affairs - 'Fiji and the Franchise', (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1974), pp.266-7.
the development of education for Indian children, and the ease with which over 1,000 Indians had entered commerce by 1936 left no doubt that they would in time become prosperous and influential in the colony. The Viti Caravou pressed for a restriction of Chinese and Indian migration into Fiji and for laws protecting racial purity.¹

Fijian society closed ranks in alliance with the small European community (4,028 in 1936) to resist the Indian campaign for a common electoral roll for the Legislative and Municipal Councils. The 1933 Council of Chiefs recorded its 'strong and unanimous opinion' that the 'Indian immigrant population should neither directly nor indirectly have any part in the control of direction of matters affecting the interests of the Fijian race'.² In 1935 the Fijian members of the Legislative Council scorned 'a system that rests on the counting of heads' if it did not achieve the peace and prosperity for which the Fijian chiefs had ceded their domains 'as a fief of the Crown'. Fijians were entitled to be ruled directly by the King's Representative with the help of his officers and at most 'such Europeans of the Legislative Council as are, as far as possible, above the influence of local interest and prejudice'.³ These demands

1 ibid., p.192.
2 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs 1933, Resolution XVIII, CP 8/34. Resolution XVII supported the principle of nomination to ensure government control of the municipal councils with a minority of Fijian, Indian and European members elected from communal (ethnic) rolls.
3 Ratu David Toganivalu, Pope Seniloli Cakobau, and J.L.V. Sukuna 'for and on behalf of the senior Chiefs of Fiji' to Acting CS, 5 Nov. 1935, CP 47/35.
found sympathy with the government, coinciding as they did with European fears of losing their own political position. In 1937 municipal franchise was abolished to eliminate the possibility of Suva's Indians taking control of the Suva council. The Legislative Council from that year to 1963 comprised 16 official members, five Fijian members nominated from a panel of 10 chosen by the Council of Chiefs, two European and two Indian nominated members, three European and three Indian members elected from separate rolls, giving an official majority of one.

Politically these changes made no compromise over the paramountcy of Fijian interests to match the concessions made over land in 1936. The Fijian community had every opportunity, it seemed, to concentrate on its own development while the British held the fort - if only Fijian goals and aspirations could be channelled 'along progressive lines'. It was still accepted as a fact by government that the 'better type' of Fijian or the more energetic would want to break free from communal living, and steps were taken to make it easier for the galala, the exempt farmers, to commute their obligations to perform communal services.

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1 See above, pp.82-6.

2 'The development of the Fijian has been a slow process, principally I think for the reasons that custom is deeply rooted, the people are very conservative in their ideas and there has been a lack of leadership along progressive lines' - I. McOwan, minute, 7 Mar. 1929, CSO 29/1257.
There were only 81 galala in 1928 but a reduction of the fee from £2 10s to £1 in that year (and in 1933 to 10s) led to a great increase in the number of applications. Often it was obvious that the privilege of exemption was not sought by the enterprising workers but by the enterprising evaders of community obligations, and the protests of district councils had in most cases to be sustained. Nemani Komainatavu, a father of seven children who had worked for 12 years at Queen Victoria School and wanted to retire to his village near Bau, requested to be tu galala in order to build a house and clothe and feed his children by planting for the market, fishing and collecting sici shell. Ratu Pope Seniloli protested against his exemption, saying that Nemani had no definite scheme for developing his land and that the privilege should be granted only to those who lived apart from the community; further, it raised

the larger question and most important question as to the future development of we Fijians as a people. At present our whole social system is threatened...some of the villages are deprived entirely of the services of their young men...the time has come for the Government to decide...is the village to remain the social unit? If it is then steps should be taken to make village life more attractive... Are we to develop individually on our own plot of land? This seems to be the tendency today but unfortunately the individual development is not taking place on our own blocks of land but in the European centres where men find employment and get cash comparatively easy.1

If the authorities were serious, he argued, they would be doing something about developing new crops and marketing

1 Seniloli, minute (in English), 26 May 1930, SNA 39/1053.
them for Fijians and training individuals in new techniques - as had been attempted under Thurston, and for just these reasons.

The government avoided the analysis of its aims that Fijians were now demanding but certainly favoured the general ideal of individual effort aided by voluntary co-operative methods and small communities of individual farmers owning their own lands and houses. At last it was prepared to give Fijians practical advice and education. Sir Murchison Fletcher set up an Agricultural Advisory Committee in May 1930 to recommend improvements in agricultural methods, education and marketing. The Agriculture Department issued a series of pamphlets for both Fijians and Indians on growing potatoes, maze, tobacco, cowpea, Mauritius bean, rice, and sugar cane. (They had done no research on improving the subsistence sector, it being generally agreed that Fijians were good agriculturalists at this level.) Four pupils were chosen from Queen Victoria School in 1931 to train at the Navuso Agricultural station to be the first native Assistant Agricultural Officers. Several more were trained at Sigatoka. They were to teach Fijians how to use modern implements, handle animals, and grow the new crops. Advances were made to selected individuals for planting material or the purchase of implements and livestock.¹ After the hurricanes of November 1930 and February 1931 £250 was advanced for banana suckers to growers in Serua, Colo East and Tailevu. In the same year 32 ploughs and 36 harrows were distributed in Nadroga -

¹ Fletcher to CO, 28 Jan. 1931.
the Department had a modest budget, a small enthusiastic staff and concentrated on demonstration farms and the training of a few individualists rather than large development schemes.

The Director of Agriculture H.W. Jack wanted to do a lot more for Fijians in the late 1930s. He repeatedly pressed the case for a government marketing organization to eliminate the profits made by middlemen - £10,000 in 1936 from Fijian bananas where £2,000 would have provided the department with a fleet of punts and boats to do the same job. The department had successfully experimented with small export consignments of Fijian crops and saw no reason for not expanding its marketing activities. Jack used the example of a Tailevu man who had been offered 3s per bag of kumalas in 1936. He refused and asked the department to ship them to New Zealand on his behalf. He then realized a nett 10s 2d per sack:

The average Fijian has no idea of business, no organisation to dispose of his produce co-operatively, and his experience of middlemen is such that he regards most offers made to him with suspicion. Hence he has no incentive to produce the crops for which markets are undoubtedly available within limits.¹

A huge proportion of the 15,000 tons of Fijian copra produced each year went through small traders, mainly Chinese, at a low price. It was depressing on Viti Levu to see many individuals spending days bringing down a few bags of maize or vagona to hawk around a market centre when for a commission

¹ Jack to CS, 16 Nov. 1936, CSO F2/132.
of 2\(^{1/2}\) the department could transport and market produce in larger lots at a much higher price. The Colonial Secretary Juxon Barton rejected Jack's proposals as 'a form of state socialism' that would do 'nothing but harm to the future of an already lethargic race'.

The Agriculture Department had sound practical ideas for Fijian development but little patience for the repercussions on village society of its enthusiasm for galala exemptions - of which there were some 700 in 1939. Fijian leaders were often resentful that the villages were deprived of the labour of men who would doubtless return and be dependent on the village in their old age. In the meantime the galala were certainly the most productive Fijian farmers. On the Waidina river in 1938 there were 39 of them who supplied about 600 cases of bananas per man to the banana buyers, and some to the Agriculture Department. From the end of 1933 it was possible for an individual villager to obtain a licence to occupy a piece of mataqali land; and there was a small movement involving a few hundred at the most (392 in June 1936) to tauri gele, obtain land to grow crops and sugar cane under the guidance of agricultural officers.

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1 Barton, minute, 17 Feb. 1937, ibid.

2 H.C. Monckton to CS, 15 June 1936, CSO P50/32. For initiatives of the Agricultural Department see CSO 30/783, 30/1288 and F2/17.
(ii) to work out his individual salvation as a separate entity.

The most sustained effort to produce a new type of Fijian was made by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company following the Indian strike of 1921. When the trouble began in February of that year, the Company was left without any household or plantation labour. Hundreds of Indians moved into Fijian towns and were sympathetically received, especially in Sigatoka where some Fijians employed by the Company also left work. 'We white people recognised the peril', recalled the Rev. Stanley Jarvis a year later, and he and two colleagues, the Revs Wesley Amos and J.F. Long, stomped the countryside to persuade Fijians that sympathy for the Indian cause was disloyalty to the church and the government and against their own interests: 'I counselled them not to get entangled with the Indians and their lawlessness.'

The ministers, with the support of H.C. Monckton the Provincial Commissioner of Ba, arranged for Fijians to evict their Indian guests and feed the Company livestock instead, or weed the railway lines. Hundreds of Fijians left their villages to live in the old 'coolie' lines for 2s 6d a day and food. Jarvis was known as 'the CSR Chaplain' for his work; when the strike was broken the Company gave a dinner in his honour and a gift of £100. The Manager at Ba presented engraved walking sticks to Tui Ba,

1 A standard 1930s sentiment still heard in the 1970s, never spelt out in its ramifications for the structures of Fijian society - perhaps meaningless? - C.E. Pennyfather, minute [May 1930], CSO 30/590.

2 Jarvis to Small, 11 Feb. 1922, MM F/1/1922.
Tui Nadi and a chief from Nadroga for their 'loyal support in the time of stress'.

Two years later the General Manager of CSR in Sydney, acknowledging that the success they had had in securing Fijian labour during the recent crisis had been 'in large measure due to the friendly co-operation of Messrs Amos and Jarvis' approved a gift to the former of unused barracks to be used for a workshop at the Fijian School at the Nailaga mission station, Ba, and also a sublease of 48 acres for six and a half years to begin a training farm for Fijians. With CSR support the mission had decided to make a small start on the problem, as they saw it, of the 'mass of unskilled, unorganised, undisciplined manpower but half-employed in their villages'. The Rev. Arthur D. Lelean succeeded Amos in January 1924. Lelean was a powerful energetic man with a reputation amongst Fijians (and later amongst Australians in Ballarat, Victoria) for peculiar psychic powers of divination. Constantly in trouble with his superiors on account of his secretiveness

1 Amos to Small, 30 Aug. 1921, MM F/1/1921. One courageous missionary, the Rev. Richard Piper, deserves notice for his protests against his strike-breaking colleagues and their attitude to the Indian cause: 'now the indenture system is dead the Mission Board has bravely execrated the system' but previously the Mission had disassociated itself from his criticisms. One missionary, Cyril Bavin, had said in the press that Indians improved mentally, morally and physically during indenture - Piper to CO, Lelean, 15 May 1921, MM F/1/1921.

2 Note by the General Manager 10 Apr. 1923, CSR records, Sydney, F4.0, 14.

3 Amos to G.H. Allen (Manager, Rarawai), 9 Oct. 1923, ibid.
and habit of recycling vakamisioneri collections back into his own schemes for Fijian development, Lelean was the maverick of the Methodist Mission, held in universal affection by the Fijians he helped, but regarded with suspicion by the government and some of his colleagues. He had close contacts with the Apolosi movement. Patemo Vai, one of Apolosi's lieutenants, was Lelean's former head teacher at Nailaga. Lelean was fanatically devoted to the idea of individualism and to making Fijians an economic force in the colony. He had his opportunity in 1931 when Governor Sir Murchison Fletcher asked him to use his influence to have Fijian lands put under cane,¹ and he took up the cause with true missionary zeal.

Fletcher had appealed to the CSR managers in Fiji to help Fijians make the changeover from the communal to the individualistic mode of life, and I see no reason why, with sympathetic guidance, the Fijian should not make as good a peasant proprietor as the Indian.²

The Ba manager G.H. Allen was sympathetic to the idea; the Company was uneasy about its near total dependence on its 4,000 Indian sub-tenants and 4,500 small growers. After the collapse of the native taxation scheme between 1905 and 1908 it was not until about 1930 that Fijians again

¹ Lelean to McDonald, 5 Mar. 1931, MM F/1/1931. I am most grateful to Mrs A.D. Lelean for her reminiscences of her husband's unusual career.

² Fletcher to King Irving, 23 Feb. 1931, F2/121.
showed much interest in cane farming. Some villages began on their own initiative. In Bulu tikina, Ba, seven towns opened up 50 acres for cane and others followed suit, especially in Nadroga. By 1933 the Company had 411 Fijian growers supplying cane from their own matagali lands.

The Company also began experimenting in 1930 with Fijian tenants on its own estates. At Tavua (Toko) and Ba (Varoka) 500 acres were made available on exactly the same basis as to Indians - that is, 10-acre individual plots, with the Company field officers giving close supervision and training in the use of implements and horses: 'The scheme aims at making the Fijian self-supporting and developing the individual.' A third project was begun at Navakai, Nadi, with 235 acres set aside for 22 Fijian tenants, 12 of whom came from Nadroga. By 1933 one had been replaced but all were doing well; then in 1934 the whole of Nadi went football mad - there were 24 teams using the one ground - and some of the farmers became unsettled with their solitary work-days while the carnival spirit prevailed. They wondered whether in the search for freedom they had not found another bondage. In 1935 the scheme collapsed - only two men worked well, the majority not at all. Ten of the Nadroga men walked out leaving a

1 King Irving to SNA, 30 May 1934, CSO 30/590.
2 Pennyfather, minute [May 1930], CSO 30/590.
standing crop. Elsewhere the Company's efforts had also failed except at Varoko where eight Fijian tenants worked well under the more sympathetic leadership of a Mr Victor Clarke. Fijians did better as free labourers on the Company estates where they were provided with housing, land for planting root crops, and 1s 9d a day on an easy-come easy-go basis.

In the Rewa delta there were 79 Fijian cane growers in 1931 producing 1820 tons of cane rising to 192 growers in 1933 and dropping to 123 in 1939. A great number of these growers paid Indians to do the work and assigned a 40%-50% share of the crops to them. Even though the Methodist Agriculture school at Navuso produced a few genuine cane farmers, the Nausori mill manager was inclined to dismiss the Fijian effort as negligible. They were too easily discouraged by the bad weather that finally led to the abandonment of cane-growing in that area.

In Ra province Fijians had little unleased land close to the tramlines and there were only 21 cane farmers

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1 A fuller analysis of the Navakai scheme at CSO F2/121. The Director of Agriculture urged 'persistent and sympathetic guidance...I have no doubt the proportion of failures will gradually decrease as the years pass, since there are many evidences that the Fijians are clamouring for freedom to lead individual peasant lives adjacent to congenial neighbours.' - Jack to CS, 23 July 1937, ibid.

2 'An amazing amount of jugglery goes on...' - A.J. Armstrong, diary, 23 July 1935, CSO F23/4. The figures given on Fijian cane farmers and references to Fijian settlements are compiled from many scattered references in annual reports and daily diaries of the DCs who often, however, did not have control or even knowledge of people's movements.
on 67 acres in 1939. In Macuata (Labasa) the Fijian contribution was from a handful of galala who do not seem to have received much encouragement from either the Company officials there or the Fijian Administration. Nadroga was different again. The poor resources of that province made cane an attractive proposition and every village that had suitable land was growing cane by 1931, some 1,000 acres in all, but generally in small patches and of poor quality. In contrast to the north-western provinces, Nadroga cane farmers were generally villagers using their own land and still living within the confines of the provincial programme of work.

However a large proportion of Fijian cane farmers in the 1930s - there were 686 of them in 1938, 134 on CSR estates - undoubtedly were seeking something of a new life-style and were probably influenced by the constant exhortations of government officials, company officers and churchmen to become 'individualists' and embrace the dignity of labour. Yet it is interesting to note that while many men moved as far as possible from their homes to take up their new way of life, they usually did so in groups. In Nadroga there were about 10 settlements of squatters. Near Sigatoka there was a settlement called Nadrala of 34 men from Maloku, Moala, who persevered for several years in the most squalid living conditions; further west there were about 200 men from Tailevu on crown land at Waqaliqali until they were asked to leave the district in 1936. At Vusama near Natadola harbour there was a settlement of
70 strangers with a group of people who had left their village a mile away. Another group of Tailevu men, most of the able-bodied men of Nasautoka village, lived near the Rarawai mill in Ba. Although they defied every effort to send them home, it is extremely unlikely that they or any of these new settlers broke all ties with their villages. The Maloku men at Nadrala, for instance, all returned home before the War when their leader was required in the village to give evidence before the Native Lands Commission.

Then again it is surprising that men from the sugar areas themselves should not choose land closer to their villages. In 1932 Koravatu and Vunayasi, near Nadi, were destitute of young men who went not to the adjoining CSR estates but to either Tavua or Sigatoka, while Nadroga men came into Nadi. Although the facts are not documented in detail, Lelean seems to have been the prime mover in most of these migrations. After he left the Colony in 1936 there is no evidence of movements on such a large scale, while many of the new settlements rapidly became villages and were incorporated into the Administration. Near Vatukoula there still live descendants of the large groups Lelean brought down from Nadrau and Savatu in Colo North to profit from the gold mining.

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1 See J. Goepel to CS, 15 Apr. 1935, CSO F20/2: 'The feature of native life that I notice most [Nadroga and Colo West] is the number of men who have left their villages and gone to other districts (or even within the district) either as genuine cane planters or as hangers-on, and the number of foreigners who have come in here to occupy lands.'

2 Interview, Ratu Saula Monovesi, Suva, 30 June 1974.
The Company was discouraged by its efforts to teach Fijians cane farming. The problem became entangled with the fear that if Fijians were given too much encouragement, they would be reluctant to renew the leases of the more reliable Indian growers. Depressing stories could be told of the history of pieces of land as they changed hands. The Manager sent the following extreme example to Sydney of 30 acres of land called Naikorokoro which under direct Company management produced 1,135 tons in 1929. It was handed to Indian sub-tenants in 1930 and then to Fijians in 1933. The figures speak for themselves.

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<td>30 acres plants</td>
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<td>1,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>12 acres ratoons</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>3 Indians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>18 &quot; second ratoons</td>
<td>3 Indians</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>12 &quot; plants</td>
<td>3 Indians</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>18 &quot; plants/ratoons</td>
<td>112 Fijian owners incl.</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>8 &quot; ratoons</td>
<td>40 ablebodied men</td>
<td>70 (estimated)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When experiments on the Company estates failed, such as when 21 Fijians walked off Maro estate, Nadroga, in 1934 after only two years, the Company officials argued that virtues such as punctuality, essential to the milling operations, were notoriously lacking in Fijians though in other respects, such as the handling of machinery, they had shown great

1 G.R. Robertson (CSR Manager, Lautoka) to Sir Philip Goldfinch, 11 Aug. 1934, encl. CSO F37.
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natural aptitude.
seemed insuperable.

In other words certain cultural problems
A Provincial Commissioner of Nadi

expressed the Company's frustration in 1935 when he wrote
of the ailing Navakai scheme:
It is degrading and ignominious that we
should all have to wait on the Fijian's
pleasure while he works spasmodically and
irregularly. Every time we are promised
that the estate 'will be clean next time'.^
The Company estimated that it lost £800 a year by allowing
Fijians rather than Indians to run the estate.
In July 1936 G.H. Allen urged the Company to
strike at the roots of the Fijian problem by taking in
boys and training them in a disciplined environment for
the skills and habits of regularity and discipline they
would need as cane farmers.

The General Manager Sir Philip

Goldfinch disapproved of the details of Allen's militaristic
approach (uniforms, bands, platoons, NCOs and a chiefly
'Adjutant') but sanctioned a training farm on Drasa estate
near Lautoka.

'The keynote', he demanded,

'should be

simplicity, work, cleanliness, religious advantages, clean
2

living - and a certain amount of sport'.

He rejected the

suggestion of the Education Department that cultural and
theoretical training should be included.
strictly relevant and practical.

Drasa was to be

And so it was for the

community of 80 lads under a Fijian Supervisor and European
Field Officer who took over Drasa in 1938 and worked from
6 a.m. to 3 p.m. learning every aspect of cane farming by

1

J.W. Gittins, diary, 19 Aug. 1935, CSO F19/5.

2

Goldfinch, minute [Aug.1936], CSR records, Sydney,
Rl-0, 1.


running the estate. The Company kept them in food, clothing and pocket money (6d a day for the first two years, 9d for the third)¹ and on their graduation gave them a lump sum of 5s for every working week in the hope they would be able to establish themselves. But here was the snarl. The boys went home at an age when they were too young to have a say in matagali affairs. Often they could not get a piece of land, while their small capital was invariably commandeered by their families for the welcome-home ceremonies. The Company had to try and place the graduates on its own estates (Waqadra, Sikituru, Navakai). After the war when further places were not easily available, only a minority of Drasa graduates remained on the land, though many of them applied their work habits to white-collar jobs.²

By the Second World War, then, Fijians had been given many chances to become cane farmers and several hundred individuals had successfully laid the basis for a

¹ These hours of work were later reduced, pocket money increased periodically, and a little more formal instruction given.

² In 1966 there were 2,417 Fijian canefarmers of whom 195 were ex-Drasa. By then 677 boys had been trained. Company officials now joke that Drasa produced the best waiters in Fiji - and some international footballers. The school suffered some adverse publicity in the 1950s and 1960s with students' walk-outs on a few occasions. Ex-Drasa farmers interviewed near Penang in August 1974 spoke with enthusiasm of their training and deplored the closure of the school in 1967. They insisted it was a happy place. Certainly a suggestion by one provincial council in 1966 that CSR used Drasa to employ Fijians as cheap labour was contemptuous. Company records suggest an annual loss of £3,000 to £4,000 on the enterprise - ibid.
renewed Fijian presence in the sugar industry. Many more hundreds of Fijians preferred easier ways of earning money. A man could earn 3s 6d a day on the wharves at Lautoka and Suva. The Emperor and Loloma gold mines opened in the mid-1930s and employed nearly 2,000 Fijians by the end of the decade. At the third annual general meeting of Emperor Mines Limited in 1938 E.G. Theodore noted that while Fijians had no strong necessity to earn wages and could return to their village at any time, they were happy in the larger community of the mining settlement provided they had adequate housing and food. As workers they were easy to teach and supervise, and showed commonsense. They were completely unorganized industrially: 'We are very happily situated' the shareholders were told, though occasionally provincial rivalries caused fights between the men.1 A smaller gold mine on Vanua Levu at Mt Kasi, Yanawai, provided employment for a constantly changing workforce of about 200 men. To a much greater extent than on Viti Levu, the men of the outer provinces preferred to work for short periods, to pay their taxes and often to raise money for a community project such as a church or school. The turnover at Mt Kasi was 30% each month.

Unquestionably the 1930s provided Fijians with greater opportunity and mobility than they had experienced before, and it was possible for a man to remove himself

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1 Report of the third annual general meeting of Emperor Mines Ltd, 11 Nov. 1938, CSO 136/39/1. On 9-10 Feb. 1936 a few hundred men from Ra and Tailevu were involved in several fights and the Tailevu men and their families fled the field. Theodore was advised to watch that Rewa and Verata were balanced against Bau - J.E. Windrum to CS, 18 Feb. 1936, CSO F50/53.
from obligations to his community and kindred for years at a time. Whether the net result was beneficial to Fijian societies depends on the value attached to such signs of 'progress'. Many individual Fijians had made particular choices that collectively threatened the viability of their local government institutions. Yet these alone ensured that there were wide areas of human life where Fijians were still masters of their destinies in a manner that could not prevail in the quarters - however congenial - provided by a foreign-owned mining company or a sugar mill or a copra plantation.

(iii) *if we washed our hands of you...*

There were also a few experiments within the Administration itself, undertaken in the belief they would facilitate a greater measure of responsibility and self-direction amongst individual Fijians. In some provinces European Provincial Commissioners although gratified by the lack of serious crime were wearied by the extraordinary number of petty prosecutions needed to raise taxes and get orders obeyed. Colo North was representative of the problem, including within its boundaries both remote hill people with scant resources and relatively wealthy coastal people with sugar cane land and a large rent-roll. In 1931 there 502 cases in the Native Magistrate's court and 106 in the provincial court, that is, 40% of the total male Fijian population of 1,587 passed through the courts in the space of a year. The following year 272 men were gaolled for
non-payment of taxes, about 20% of the taxpayers. The District Commissioner Stuart Reay met cool indifference when he preached self-help and urged a return to crops such as tobacco with which taxes had once been paid in kind. The wealthiest section of the province at Tavua lived in worse conditions than the people in the hills—a phenomenon that was not confined to Colo North. The higher the cash income of the village the more squalid its living conditions. (It is true today. To see an old-style village it is necessary to walk inland to a village such as Nadrugu in the Naloto range, Ba, a magnificent place, serviced by neither road nor river, with village organization intact.)

In June 1932 Reay distributed £700 in rents to the Tavua matagali and received £1 back for taxes. He fined 55 men for non-payment some short time later; they went to prison to pay half the debt and drew on a water supply savings fund for the other half. Again in 1933 Reay faced a depressing year of continuous prosecutions in Colo North and also in Colo East trying to maintain a minimal standard of hygiene and order. He concluded that the communal services regulation had become so irksome to the people that it was imperative a substitute be found. As an experiment he exempted the entire village of Saumakia in Waima tikina, Colo East, 'from the threat of the law and of official control' and invited them to manage their own affairs from the beginning of January 1933.

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1 Annual Reports of the DC, F13/1. There was no sense of degradation associated with gaol. Sometimes taxpayers found it easier to work off a short prison sentence on the roads than organize their own employment.

2 Reay to CS, 4 Apr. 1934, CSO F13/1.
Leadership reverted to the natural leaders of the villages. The experiment was a success. The people planted crops for sale and made a lot of money from bananas. Their village was one of the best-kept in Colo East in 1934.¹

Could the model be transferred? Reay chose the Tavua people, as they were chronically short of food, sodden with yagona, and resentful of authority. In March 1934 he took them to task:

Why should it be necessary for the Government to force you to maintain dry roofs over your heads and to cultivate your gardens? If we washed our hands of you and left you to your own devices would you let your houses fall about your ears and abandon your gardens so you starved?²

The Tui Tavua was so provoked that he challenged Reay to let them alone for a while and see the results. Reay accepted. Immediately in a fine speech the Tui announced that the lali drum would be sounded at dawn the following day and every day thereafter for the various mataqali to begin work. Waste land was to be cleared for cane, yagona was tabu for the young men and jaunts with taxi drivers tabu for the young women. Reay left the village feeling he had done his best day's work in years. Within three weeks Tavualevu was a village transformed. A new teacher's house had been built in two days whereas his predecessor's had taken three weeks and 15 prosecutions. The tabu was

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¹ Reay, diary, 7 May 1934, CSO F13/2.

² Reay, diary, 8 Mar. 1934, ibid. In the section following I have not multiplied references for every detail taken from these diaries, 1933-38, and the annual reports at CSO F13/1.
effective, and the Tui completely in control. Even after the first burst of enthusiasm the experiment went well for several months in the eight villages of the Tavua tikina.

In January 1935 the experiment was extended to the five villages of Nadrau, one of the tikina in Colo North that Lelean had stripped of most of its able-bodied men. The results were disappointing. The Buli and the Tui had to seek restoration of legal controls when they found that their moral authority was insufficient to persuade men to work. By contrast when Nakorovatu, Colo East, was exempted in February of the same year, within three months the village had repaired all its houses, dug a new latrine system and planted 12 acres of bananas. In May the other villages of Waima tikina were given the chance to emulate Saumakia and also the three villages of Lutu tikina. Soloira tikina was included at the beginning of 1936.

Signs of stress developed finally in Tavua where although the Buli had only retained his bureaucratic powers to convene the district council or sign lease applications and other documents, the Tui Tavua as hereditary chief wanted to displace him entirely. Then in March 1935 the Tui died and there was trouble over the succession. The quarrel was a classically Fijian one absorbing tremendous emotional energies while the mundane work of the community was virtually abandoned. A matagali in the Buli's town of Korovou had the right at custom to offer the yagona to the Tui Tavua at his consecration. The custom was ignored at the installation of the new chief and the Korovou party declared the rites invalid. In July the hundred days mourning feast (burua) was attended by Ratu Pope Seniloli and Deve Toganivalu. They intervened unsuccessfully to achieve a settlement. Reay resumed official control of the villages in August and
asked Ratu Sukuna to adjudicate. The Tavua people were asked to atone (bulubulu) to Korovou for the breach of ritual. They refused, so Reay declared the March ceremony invalid and ordered another to replace it on 28 November. The people sullenly refused to make the necessary preparations. In desperation Reay called in Ratu Sukuna again, and in this chief's presence on 12 December the two sides agreed to reinstall the Tui immediately. The ceremony took place in a grudging spirit, and Reay pondered the dilemma of the administrator forced either to use a strong hand to attain limited objects connected with hygiene - matters on which the Fijian conscience was silent - or to respect the autonomy of the people and allow traditional-type feuds such as this to consume what seemed a grossly disproportionate amount of their time and energy. Much depended on the quality of the traditional chiefs if Reay's scheme was to work.

A more serious objection in Reay's own eyes was that the system of exempted villages tended to reinforce the 'communal system' the government was pledged to reform. The only advantage of his scheme was that it was less oppressive for individuals. In the several villages where it was tried in 1935-1937 the final results were mixed. Some villages, especially in Soloira, went into immediate decline because the chiefs no longer had influence over the people. Others like Saumakia thrived. Elsewhere in Fiji there were no similar experiments except in Tailevu where Naila village was exempted in late 1931 and for several

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1 Reay to CS, 25 Mar. 1935, F13/1.
years grew fair quantities of rice and cane vakoro (the village working together). Daku was exempted in 1937 and did very well under its visionary chief, Ratu Emosi, although its main source of income was firewood. It was hard to generalize from these examples:

In some communities of Fijians we get as much and sometimes more from voluntary effort than can be extracted by compulsion; in others the little more we get by compulsion is offset by the discontent engendered; we have reached a stage in Fijian development when the individual will no longer submit without protest to the curtailment of his liberty and the planning of his time and work by others, and the Communal Services Regulation may be said no longer to have the sanction of the community, except possibly in the more out-of-the-way islands.\textsuperscript{1}

By 1937 Reay was convinced that a better solution to the problems of Fijian villages was their abolition. Communal and co-operative efforts, agricultural 'clubs' and the like had been tried and found wanting. Even at Naila, often held up as a showplace, nine men who were exempt individually as galala to work and live on their own land were much in advance of those working vakoro, as a village.\textsuperscript{2} Reay campaigned within the Administration for a relaxation of the conditions that made it difficult in practice for men to gain the galala exemption. If district councils were hostile they should be bypassed, Reay urged, and in 1938 it was made possible for a Fijian to apply directly to a DC for his exemption. Reay's enthusiasm for galala was based on a small sample of some 30 families

\begin{enumerate}
\item Reay to CS, 11 Apr. 1938, \textit{ibid.}
\item A.J. Armstrong to CS, 13 Mar. 1939, CSO F23/7.
\end{enumerate}
on Colo East and even fewer in Colo North who were already living apart from villages. They are frequently praised in his reports because all tended commercial crops, had well-kept houses and compounds, children who helped the family rather than run loose in the villages; they paid their taxes, were seldom in want, kept free of village intrigues, reduced their involvement in ceremonial observances, and appeared to Reay to be a lot happier.

In 1938 Reay visited the Mogodro tikina of Colo West and was similarly impressed with 25 settlers near Bukuya, all in 'excellent' houses. They were typical of about a third of the district who had begun to move out onto their lands after 1935 on the suggestion of a former Buli. They grew large quantities of vagona for the Ba market:

I feel justified in claiming from the Mogodro example, and from the example of the many settlers I have studied in three other provinces, that in Viti Levu outside the cane areas — and no doubt in Vanua Levu also — where men can be induced to break away from the village in this way there is an overwhelming chance of success.¹

The Director of Agriculture gave the galala idea strong support. Jack had come to Fiji in 1934 after 14 years in Malaya where he had witnessed, he claimed, a highly successful and sudden changeover from an inefficient communal farming system to one of individual smallholders intensively cultivating up to three acres and living on their own land

in pretty solid comfort, while producing 40% of the world's rubber and 80% of Malaya's

¹ Reay, memorandum for DCs' Conference 1938, n.d., CSO F50/16.
copra: the Malay is now a man of independence and enjoys much more luxury than the Fijian and is far happier in appearance, manner, and mode of living on his little piece of land with his wife and usually 3-4 children or more.¹

There was no hope for Fijians, Jack and his supporters argued, until they became individual peasant proprietors with 'some security from the lazy and improvident'.²

The arguments failed to convince some of the DCs who valued the village as a centre of a polity that from its slender resources could provide all its members with mutual help in times of stress, a church, a school, a football ground or cricket pitch, a bathing pool, piped water, the opportunity to participate in councils or church assemblies, to be exposed to the advice of child welfare workers, nurses and medical practitioners. Did the proponents of village destruction see beyond the shortlived benefits of commercial production by galala to ask who would care for them in their old age or what would replace the civilizing and broadening influences of village life? 'Progress is a spiritual quality founded on civilization', insisted Ratu Sukuna, 'it will never take root in the bush in isolation'.³

The views of the 'individualists' were put to the test in Colo North about July 1937. Reay called

¹ Jack, minute, 7 Jan. 1936, CSO F20/2.
² ibid.
³ Sukuna, address to Council of Chiefs 1944, CP 10/45.
in the Qaliyalatina and Savatu people to Nadarivatu and persuaded them that they should abandon their villages and go out and live on their planting lands. Four villages in Waima tikina, Colo East, were given the same choice. According to oral accounts Reay used a great deal of rhetoric and even fear - that there be a great shortage of food - to obtain his way. He indicated that anyone left in the villages would bear the whole burden of the provincial programme of work. The Waima people were reluctant to move, hoping that the older experiment of village exemption would continue. Some had no suitable land away from the village. The men of Qaliyalatina, who had had no taste of village exemption, began building houses on their lands with more enthusiasm, some in remote glens up to 16 miles from the village. Reay assured Suva that the people were happy and that the women who might have been expected to miss village life the most were enjoying their freedom from the burdens of feeding visitors, and their greater degree of privacy and comfort.

Reay told the District Commissioners' Conference of 1938 that scattered hamlets were, in the recollection of some very old men of Mogodro, the usual mode of settlement in ancient times with occasional resort to fortified settlements in time of war. The centralized village was an aberration in the interior introduced by the Gordon system as a control device. The price paid by the people for settled government was a loss of individuality and independence. His experiment then was

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1 See Reay, diary, 21 Mar. 1938, CSO F13/2.
a harking back to a healthier state of society. DCs were not convinced by Reay's arguments, fearing with the Colonial Secretary 'a hurricane flood of detribalization at any moment'. They wanted social changes to 'evolve', to come 'from within'. Finally they arrived at a compromise formula stating that the 'rural system', an extension of village society to embrace some Fijians living in groups on their own land and farming it systematically, was the 'next natural step in Fijian development'. DCs were told to encourage men to seek galala exemptions and to intervene directly to persuade Provincial Councils to spend money on agricultural development. They were to support the efforts of the Agriculture Department to encourage new crops such as cotton rice and tobacco, the keeping of poultry and pigs, and the use of copra driers. In short DCs were to add to their many duties those which were to be given to Economic Development Officers appointed after World War II.

(iv) 'the village community is the basis of Fijian society'  

Ironically, there was a long way to go before Fijians regained the level of comfort achieved by the turn of the century through the native taxation scheme. A keen awareness of the contrast between past prosperity and present penury prompted Ratu Sukuna to attempt a revival of certain aspects of the former taxation scheme in Lau. The Lauans had been used to a high standard of living. Bread, rice,

1 J. Barton, minute, 9 Oct. 1936, CSO F13/2.
2 Proceedings of the DCs' Conference, 1938, CSO F50/16.
sugar, tea, coffee, tinned milk and meat, linens and silks were familiar household items early in the century, and it had been common sight in Levuka to see two or three cutters 'full of Lauans on a holiday to the old capital, and all with money'. But in the early 1930s a series of hurricanes, droughts, and a sharp fall in the price of copra on the depressed world markets caused the people to return to traditional foods and fewer trade goods: 'The life of luxury and ease has faded away and in its place we see rising the setting of an existence that is poor and hard. As for the thriftless native, we now notice him counting his pennies...' The products that were in daily use in the 1920s and earlier - when the income of Lau was four to 10 times higher than in 1933 - had 'not yet found permanent niches in the lives of the people'. Yet the people were embarrassed by their poverty, Ratu Sukuna admitted, 'like the noveau riche they love ostentation and revel in the impression that it creates in the simple.' More serious for the administration was the problem of collecting rates and taxes. The existing economic order could no longer meet the smallest extraneous demands.

It was then that Ratu Sukuna organized a return to the communal cutting of copra. The scheme functioned throughout the province and in Lomaiviti from 1934 with the

1 Sukuna to CS, 21 Apr. 1933, CSO Fl5/1.

2 Sukuna to CS, 29 Sept. 1934, CSO Fl5/1. Copra-growers received £20 a ton in 1929, £8 in 1933, £3 10s in 1935.

3 ibid.
temporary exception of Lakeba where the Tui Nayau, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, was smarting from his dismissal as Sukuna's assistant and not of a mind to co-operate with the pet projects of his cousin. The unit of assessment was made the village, investing the true chief of the village with the obligation to meet the quota, and relieving the Buli of the duty of hounding individuals:

The payment of the tax is now a family affairs...it is the Tribal chief that should conscript resources, make the biggest contribution, and organise the necessary labour. And the wise Buli works through his Tribal chiefs. Communal copra cutting...raises no conflict of interests in the native mind and so calls for no coercion unless official supervision by the Buli be so regarded.¹

Those who were landless cut copra on the lands of others. The copra was collected and transported to Suva for sale by auction where, as in the 19th century, the larger lots realized higher prices. The tabu on selling nuts prior to tax-making halved the business of local traders, who were in most cases customers of Burns Philp at Levuka. The manager A.J. Acton protested to the government that trade had been 'paralysed' by the tabu and storekeepers would go out of business,² to which Sukuna's reply was that storekeepers who bought from Burns Philp at a profit to the firm and then sold to the people at an inflated profit to themselves were providing a service of dubious necessity and

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1 Sukuna to CS, 14 Aug. 1936, CSO F15/1.
2 A.J. Acton to CS, 22 Apr. 1936, CSO F2/175.
questionable morality.\textsuperscript{1} Thurston's arguments had been the same.

Communal copra-cutting was tried also in Macuata, Cakaudrove and Kadavu with little success, suggesting that the vital ingredient in Lau and Lomaiviti was the personal inspiration of Ratu Sukuna himself and, in Lomaiviti, his younger brother Ratu Tiale W.T. Vuiyasawa (Native Assistant to the Provincial Commissioner). Despite record low copra prices the scheme reduced Lau's arrears in rates from £2,913 in 1935 to £800 in 1936; the otherwise universal problem of tax-defaulters was no longer found in Lau. For all this the scheme was regarded as 'iniquitous' by the Department of Agriculture - 'unfair to the individual who is anxious to better himself'.\textsuperscript{2} Nothing Ratu Sukuna could say or demonstrate visibly in Lau could convince men like Reay and Jack that in every Fijian there was not an ego enslaved. In vain would Ratu Sukuna show the particular land problems of individuals in Lau which his scheme had overcome, or appeal to the capacity of existing village communities to surmount their own problems. The colonial officials judged on a\textit{ priori} grounds. If Burns Philip profits were down, there had been an unnatural manipulation of the marketplace; if the chiefs were encouraging the pooling of slender resources that all might jointly prosper, then individuality had been choked. These issues, and the question of the future of the village in Fijian society, were far from resolved by the beginning of World War II.

\textsuperscript{1} Sukuna, 'The Tabu in Lomaiviti 1934-1936', n.d., \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{2} Jack to CS, 5 Aug. 1939, \textit{ibid.}, and minute, 15 Sept. 1939, CSO F15/1.
The war years made it patriotic for large numbers of men to leave their villages, especially after the huge influx of Americans in 1942 and the raising of Fijian battalions for overseas service. At peak strength in August 1943 the Fiji Military Forces included 6,371 Fijians, 1,070 Europeans and 264 Indians. Many more were employed in ancillary services; there were villages that had hardly a single able-bodied man left. The war years propelled Ratu Sukuna from the comparative obscurity of Lau to the top of the Fijian Administration. Sir Philip Mitchell who succeeded Sir Harry Luke as Governor in 1942 was thoroughly briefed by Ratu Sukuna on the nature of Fijian society and the importance of the village. Sukuna dreamed of a post-war regeneration of rural society in which larger amalgamated villages would remain

the most natural, the most convenient, and the cheapest unit of administration and for bestowing most effectively those inestimable gifts civilization can bring to a native race - medical attention, education in the broadest sense of the word, and religious teaching. This view

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1 See (1) R.A. Howlett, The History of the Fiji Military Forces, 1939-1945 (London, 1948); (2) Provincial council reports for social disruption caused by the war: e.g. 'At present the continual exodus of men is resulting in dilapidated villages with neglected women as the chief occupants. In one district there are only seventeen able-bodied men and in another the Buli inquired whether he might prosecute women for refusing to build houses.' - J.B. Windrum, minute, n.d. [1941], Cakaudrove Provincial Council Book.
does not exclude individualistic settlements by those who desire this form of life and have been fitted for it by training...¹

Mitchell decided to inspect Mogodro and Qaliyalatina to see how Reay's alternative scheme of individual settlement was faring. His reactions were read to the Council of Chiefs in 1944:

I have just ridden from Ba to Nadarivatu via Navala, Koro and Gatagata...and a melancholy wilderness it is. I hope we have heard the last of this policy and that it is generally recognized that the village community is the basis of Fijian Society.²

The exempted districts had become a byword for desolation and depression. Reay's glowing accounts of the benefits of the individualistic peasant existence had no counterpart in the actual experience of the people for whom there was more to life than digging on their own land or carrying produce to Ba. The young men found the isolation unbearable and fled to the coast to join the Army or get a job. The old and sick fended largely for themselves. The ministers could get no one to church; the schools were empty of children living too far away; village meetings and customary observances all suffered. As the chiefs had predicted at their first Council in 1875, life outside a strong communal organization became a struggle for subsistence devoid of stimulation; the deep valleys echoed to no laughter or song.

¹ Sukuna, 'Policy with regard to Fijian Communal Obligations', paper given to Administrative Officers' Conference, June 1944, typescript.

² Quoted Acting Governor's address to Council of Chiefs 1944, CP 10/45.
In the words of one informant they 'just went to sleep' until at the end of the war most of them were regrouped at Navala on the Ba River. Old men interviewed in Colo North had nothing good to remember about Reay's scheme, although there are survivors still scattered in the bush.

The Qaliyalatina-Savatu debacle provided telling empirical evidence that individualism was an alien emphasis in Fijian society and that administrative encouragement of the break-up of villages could be counter-productive. The reorganization of the Fijian Administration in 1945 was closely influenced by Sukuna's views, which in turn harked back to Thurston's. The principle that a Fijian was a member of the Fijian community first and of the Colony second was reasserted strongly. No Fijian could deny that he had certain obligations to his community, the specific form of which were shaped by tradition, the groups to which he belonged, and the special needs of a 'semi-feudal, semi-self-sufficing society' dependent on the co-operation of its members to maintain the generous standard of living Fijians had always taken for granted. Individuals still looked to kindred and village for help in every enterprise requiring the strength of several men, whether it be hauling a log or repairing a roof; for comfort, companionship and dignity in old age or sickness; for the care of their dependants after death. The disintegration of village life was to be halted as far as possible and villages strengthened by amalgamation and new facilities. Nothing in this programme, argued Ratu Sukuna, need deny individuals 'a proper scope for their natural development' but they ought not to think of themselves as 'exempt' from community obligations that were the lot of any citizen.
in any society albeit in different form.¹ In view of this principle the conditions regulating the commutation of these obligations were tightened. The absentee fee was raised from 10s to £1 and the same fee levied on all Fijians in other employment in recognition of their primary obligations to their village and province.² The 'rural system' as defined by the DCs in 1938 was adopted in preference to the 'individual system' - that is, group settlement on matagali or other lands near village sites was to be preferred to the indiscriminate occupation of random pieces of land by individuals without reference to their own community. The Department of Agriculture was to be kept firmly in line and not allowed to prevail over Fijian authorities or to
disfigure the countryside with indiscriminate, individualistic settlements, without thought or care as to suitability or markets, as to training or old age. A proposal so uneconomic and so unscientific is fundamentally dangerous.³

The spirit of Sir John Thurston, Na Kena Vai, had returned, it seemed, to counsel with the guardian deities of Fijians to protect the social groups that alone sustain a powerful Fijian polity.

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¹ Sukuna, 'Policy with regard to Fijian Communal Obligations'...

² Regulation 6 of 1948.

³ Sukuna, memorandum to DCs' Conference, 1943, typescript.
CONCLUSION

FIJI IS NOT A WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY (The Fijian members of the Legislative Council, 1935)¹

The realities of power in Fiji have been dimly perceived by most observers - understandably so when until the eve of independence it suited Fijian leaders to humour a small official establishment that cultivated a tremendous sense of self-importance and the familiar colonialist concern for white prestige. Ratu Sukuna once delighted the Defence Club in Suva with a pastiche of Fijian impressions of Europeans:

They are rich and excellent subjects for kerekere if only they had more understanding. They never soil their hands with manual labour; yet they are continuously urging us to do so from the Governor and the Director of Education downwards... They love money and save it but not to the same extent as the Jews who come from Palestine, a country which until the Great War some of us thought was away up in Heaven...

Europeans are clever with their hands and have good brains. They can do most things. Do not be surprised if some day you are told that they have conquered death. They belong, of course, to a different world from our own. Nevertheless they do some incredibly stupid things at time, even the best of them...

Of the household gods of the Europeans there is one they continuously serve and obey from the cradle to the grave. And that curiously enough is the thing they call a 'clock'...

Very few European women are really attractive being mostly thin and fragile. It is they,

¹ From the letter 'for and on behalf of the Senior Chiefs of Fiji' to Acting CS, 5 Nov. 1935, CP 47/35.
though, that rule the roost, the men waiting on them hand and foot. Like our women they love scandal...

It is only right Englishmen should rule over us, because it was to their Great Queen our Chiefs ceded these Islands. In appearance and manner they are cold and aloof; but our respect is due to them as they come direct from the country our fathers regarded as the 'Home of Men'. An Englishman is easy to detect. His colouring is fresh and his clothes are always neat. He is never flurried...

He gets to like us in the peculiar European way. For, however much you may admire, say his shirt, he never things of giving it to you...

Ratu Sukuna added at the close that the Fijian view of the European was 'critical but not hostile'; there was 'no envy and no malice', and indeed there were few places in the Empire where relations between governors and governed were better and more harmonious than in Fiji: 'Fijians say "carry on". ¹ Sweet music, this, in a British colonial club in 1939 as the men of the establishment, muzzy on a humid evening with beer and tobacco, roundly applauded the chief who spoke their language so well and told them pretty much what they had hoped to hear. Not that Ratu Sukuna was insincere. Fijians did have reason to be fundamentally satisfied with 65 years of colonial rule. Where once they had feared for their lands they could now afford the luxury of gentle irony and bemused tolerance of the whiteman's foibles. Ratu Sukuna tilts at the peculiar custom of 'toying with tea and cakes between the hours of 4 and 5 p.m.' or the absurdities of Government House

¹ Sukuna, address to the Defence Club, Suva, n.d. [1939], typescript by courtesy of Mr L.G. Usher.
receptions; ¹ the villagers of Colo North laugh at stories of Provincial Commissioner Stuart Reay's portable thunderbox carted before him from village to village; in Namosi they recall with mirth how G.K. Roth insisted that his water be brought to the yagona bowl in noble bamboos.

Roth's recently reprinted book *Fijian Way of Life* is the labour of a man for whom the friendly disposition and flattering attentions of Fijians to officials like himself encouraged an antiquarian enthusiasm for things Fijian and a sincere conviction that Fiji was for the British a continuous 'successful experiment in indirect rule'. ²

The difficulty with his book - sometimes taken to be a standard account of the Fijian Administration - is that he describes its hierarchical institutions as though they were a smoothly-working system removed from the common lot of human institutions in other societies and completely adequate, even in the 1950s, to meet the needs of Fijians as decided by the select few who know and love Fiji the best. He gives a museum-like air to a system that channelled considerable energies and possessed a momentum independent of the vagaries of British rhetoric or policy. It is not surprising that his brief survey of the 20th century up to 1945 causes him some embarrassment:

it was advocated that the individual should be encouraged to replace the social unit... as the practical administrative unit in the Fijian local government system... The advocates of the individualistic theory did not understand that their proposed policy...

¹ ibid.

² The subtitle of Roth's paper, *Native Administration in Fiji during the past 75 years* (London, 1951).
also involved the disintegration of the Fijian social structure, and the movement appears to have received no support...
from the Council of Chiefs.¹

Roth is glossing over the fact which, as a DC himself in the 1930s he must have known, that these 'advocates of the individualistic theory' included every Governor from Sir George O'Brien to Sir Harry Luke, and the majority of colonial officials. The practical effects of the absence of a clear Fijian policy other than resignation to the erosion of the status quo, were the difficulties Fijian leaders had in maintaining the quality of village life. On the positive side there were specific advances in village hygiene and medical care: the reduced incidence of hookworm infestation, ringworm and yaws; cleaner water supplies, concrete slab latrines, obstetric nursing and education in child care. The consolidation of village schools into district schools and the building of provincial schools led to small improvements in the standard of education. In the 1930s the Agriculture Department taught new skills and gave practical assistance to hundreds of individuals. Although the Fijian people were grateful for these improvements, in retrospect perhaps the greatest contribution of the British was that they did so little towards achieving their professed ultimate goal of bringing Fijians directly under the colonial legislature and English laws and institutions.

The tenor of this thesis substantially agrees with Professor Milner's assertion that the institutions of the Fijian Administration, more especially the old tikina,

provided Fijians with a 'social and political shell which enabled them to survive and to preserve their character and identity',¹ but after Thurston's death it is important to see this achievement less in Rothian terms of preservation through enlightened British policy and more in the light of the responses Fijians made to the severely limited opportunities given them during a long period of uncertainty and hollow rhetoric. By the conscious or unconscious assertion of their own priorities, which the survival by default of the 19th century institutions allowed them to do, Fijians had some control over the pace of social change. Although, as instanced in the fifth chapter, the older generation like older generations everywhere often lamented that things were not what they used to be or that the morals of the young were declining, the same complaint can be found for any year from Cession to the present day and need not be taken too seriously. To most observers on the eve of the Second World War Fijians seemed to have changed rather little.

Eight out of 10 Fijians were still living in villages and of the remainder the majority would have been in close contact with a village. If contemporary observation is any guide, even the 3,500 or so Fijians living around Suva would have mostly lived in settlements of extended households, their lives dominated by the demands of the groups to which they were affiliated at any particular moment. Similarly there were only some 7,000 Fijians (of a population in 1936 of 97,651) in paid employment, many of them such as

¹ G.B. Milner, introduction to 2nd edn, ibid., p.xxvi.
the 444 teachers, 469 clergymen and 311 carpenters in close contact with village society. The largest group, over 1,000 goldminers at Vatukoula, formed a special category but retained within the living quarters provided by the mining companies many aspects of village organization and ceremonial life. The 260 government officers - in 1921 only 85 Fijians had held clerical positions - formed the nucleus of an urban élite along with some teachers and medical practitioners. As yet no real power rested with them; Ratu Sukuna was the only Fijian who had risen near the top of the civil service outside the Fijian Administration. Still, many of them were of chiefly birth and recruited from a very narrow base - the Queen Victoria School in most cases, and perhaps five or six with overseas education. They were to become an influential group after 1945, not only as future leaders but in shaping the status aspirations of young people coming through the schools, and attracting to their urban ranks many of the natural leaders of the people who might have otherwise have been content to serve as Bulis or Rokos.

Villagers too were responding to new opportunities to earn money, generally on a casual basis, for taxes, school fees, clothing and certain basic items that had been adopted almost as soon as they had become available: kerosene, refined sugar, salt, tea, flour, tinned meat and biscuits. Professor Crocombe has rightly challenged the notion that the use of such items or of imported manufactured goods can in any sense be made an index of 'westernization',

1 See W.B. Burrows, A report on the 1936 census (Suva, 1936). Only 5.9% of Fijians said they could speak English.
whatever is meant by that term. At most it can be said that the Apolosi and Viti Caravou movements demonstrated a desire for expansion and the willingness of Fijians to learn commercial techniques and mount business ventures for which there were neither traditional precedents nor modern supporting services. These movements inflated the expectations of village Fijians for easy wealth to a degree that has never been satisfied. Nonetheless it was from a village base that Fijians still made their largest contributions to the modern economy, 92% of the fluctuating banana export trade worth £75,000 in 1938 and 60% of the copra exports that totalled £225,000 in the same year.

A uniform government tax of about 12s on some 18,000 taxpayers raised £10,000, while the provinces levied a further 30s to £2. Villages largely looked after themselves but the proportion of European officers engaged in provincial administration made it expensive to maintain; cost was one of the reasons Sir Philip Mitchell advanced for returning executive power to Fijians in the reorganization of 1945.

To apportion real costs between the central government and provincial authorities would be a complex exercise when, for instance, the latter were running their own vessels at a loss and providing carriers for the free transport of government officials by sea and land. The provinces largely maintained their own roads, schools, hospitals, office buildings and living quarters for officials with communal

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2 These and the following figures are taken from H.C. Monckton, minute, 17 Sept. 1939, CSO F50/6.
labour. Fijian purchases swelled the revenue from customs receipts and the profits of the trading firms.

Thus Fijian society was not a burden to the rest of the colony. Had all government services been withdrawn, the life of the majority of the people would have been little changed. Had all opportunities to earn money suddenly ceased, the flow of goods and services sustained by the quasi-traditional district organization would have left Fijians 'probably better off than scores of millions of people in more sophisticated monetised economies with low levels of money income and little or nothing else'.

Rising aspirations notwithstanding, there was no really sharp edge of necessity to compel them to enter the marketplace permanently at a gross disadvantage; there was always a living community to which in principle they could return. This is not to think of villages as paradisal retreats - official indifference to their difficulties has been frequently noted. By facile resort to the phrase 'time of transition' the colonial authorities avoided the responsibilities of analysis and policy, while the decentralization of provincial-level decision-making to the DCs from 1913 made for ad-hoc, inconsistent administration. Even so many high chiefs came to terms with the situation and provided their people with effective leadership. The tikina operated as they always had to regulate the daily lives of the people and to give them real participation in government.

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1 E.K. Fisk, 'The Traditional Economy as a Basis for Rural Development', typescript courtesy of the author, based on a paper given in Lae, Feb. 1974. Fisk was using the example of the New Guinea highlander in the 1930s 'as poor as could possibly be' in money terms.
The narrative of these years lends no support to the idea pervasive in recent literature that within this fairly secure Fijian world the chiefs constituted a 'sheltered aristocracy', or that constant emphasis led to 'an abstract loyalty in vacuo'. There is certainly truth in Spate's observations in the same context that the people were 'conditioned' to wait for a lead from above. It seems to be one of the distinctive features of Fijian group dynamics that leadership must come either from or through chiefs. Prominent Fijian commoners, with rare exceptions, identify with the chiefly order to gain acceptance for their ideas. Even Apolosi had to make himself a chief. Nevertheless the chiefly order was neither co-extensive with the establishment, nor particularly sheltered.

When C.S. Belshaw in *Under the Ivi Tree* speaks easily of 'the establishment' and even attaches by way of an appendix a genealogy (erroneous in parts) entitled 'The Fijian Establishment', he seems to have in mind a closed club perpetuating itself on lines of descent. One can prove nothing by selective genealogies; they omit so many high-ranking individuals who did not in any sense wield effective power or constitute part of the establishment. For almost any Fijian in power it would be possible to deduce, as Belshaw does, interesting or 'revealing' kinship connections. Fijians do so amongst themselves as a primary means of relating easily to one another, and their classificatory


kinship system casts a wide net through an indefinite number of parallel generations of 'brothers', 'fathers' or cousins. The men who comprise the establishment, or those actually in power at any one period in Fiji, are usually of chiefly birth – but the term establishment is misleading if it is meant to imply that membership is more or less automatic, or that rank outweighs education and talent. It is always likely that the hierarchical nature of Fijian society will propel various sons of chiefs ahead of their commoner peers, still only a few of them will achieve power and influence. In the period under review three high chiefly lines - Roko Tui Dreketi's in Rewa, the Qaranivalu's in Naitasiri, and Tui Namosi's - were out of favour for 30-40 years because the leading members were judged to be unsuitable for government office. Since then all these families have become more influential while others have lost ground. The fact that not even customary office was guaranteed to any particular chief allowed a measure of uncertainty and insecurity which sparked the full political gamut of speculation, ambition, intrigue and compromise. Particular individuals like Ratu Aseri Latianara, Deve Toganivalu or Ratu Sukuna came forward to comprise an establishment of sorts, but their security depended on their personal qualities of leadership at a time when the government was at best half-hearted in its commitment to chiefly rule.

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1 E.g. the position of Tui Cakau, the high chief of Cakaudrove, can go to any one of a number of contenders in the large Valelevu mataqali of Somosomo. On the death of Ratu J.A. Rabici in 1925 the succession was disputed by his nephew Ratu G.W. Lala and his successor as Roko Tui, Ratu Epeli Ganilau, and only resolved in favour of Ratu Lala after the death of Ratu Epeli in 1932.
Another pervasive idea in the literature is that while Indian leaders were clamouring for political changes the Fijian leaders 'remained content to allow British Governors to decide on the pace of political development'\(^1\) - the implication being that Fijians were political innocents if not socially retarded. The British are charged with failing to prepare Fijians for democratic institutions.\(^2\)

J.S. Whitelaw wrote in 1965 that the continuation of a dual administration had meant that 'the rural Fijians political experience has been sadly limited' and he wondered whether Fijians could 'acquire enough political experience in the short time left to them before further changes at the national level overtake them'.\(^3\) Belshaw saw indirect representation as 'an insultingly patronizing approach to Fijian capacities or an archaic conception of the realities of Fijian society and politics'.\(^4\) Such observations seem to presume the inherent superiority of the political processes involved in western democratic politics. In a recent address to the Royal Commonwealth Society, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara remarked: 'I am always amused when people come to the islands and talk about politics as if this was new and something we had to learn. To some extent this is true of modern party politics, and it is certainly true


\(^2\) ibid., p.177.


\(^4\) Belshaw, *Under the Ivi Tree*, p.228.
of parliamentary procedure, which no one in any case seems to have learnt fully or agreed about. But politics themselves are as old as man and well known in the islands.¹

As was illustrated above in Chapters Three and Five, Fijian politics were not essentially different but had their own frame of reference, their own style, and their practitioners skilled in the art of dissembling their true objects from colonial authorities. So skilled were they, it seems, that the strange idea has in some instances gone abroad that the imposition of British control 'froze' the social, economic and political pattern of Fijian society.² It is surely more realistic to think of the institutions of the Fijian Administration as cramping the style, so to speak, of Fijian politics, confining its participants to the pursuit of power within certain limits and giving a particular institutional shape to the resolution of inter-group rivalries. The changing of administrative boundaries, the discrediting of an ambitious chief by attacking his government position, the NLC classification of communal units, even petitions to the Secretary of State were some of the means noted above by which Fijians could fight feuds not essentially different in character from the issues Fijians fought over before Cession.

Similarly Fijians are sometimes described in the secondary literature of Fiji as running a bad third to the Indians and Europeans: 'The old order was weakening;

¹ News from Fiji, XXIX, 7, 16 May 1975.
² Francis West, Political Advancement in the South Pacific (Melbourne, 1961), p.22.
the new unsuccessful. The Fijians were in an inferior position compared with the other racial groups, although politically their interests were still officially paramount. Unless it can be shown that the dominance of Fijians in government since independence is a wholly recent transformation, hindsight suggests that the earlier seeming disinterest of Fijians in the wider affairs of the colony ('the Fijians had been mainly spectators...') was a calculation on their part of the security of their interests under the British. When the prospects of independence compelled Fijians to enter a wider political arena they did so with startling success. They negotiated for a constitution that guaranteed the primacy of Fijian interests enshrined in several previous acts of parliament. A three-quarters majority of both houses is now needed before these acts can be amended. The consent of six of the eight senators appointed by the Council of Chiefs must be obtained to amend the laws regarding Fijian custom and land. The protected measures include the Fijian Affairs Ordinance (the charter of a separate Fijian Administration), the Native Lands Ordinance and Native Land

1 ibid., pp.22-3.

Trust Ordinance safeguarding Fijian land rights. Fijian leaders, all of them trained in the Fijian Administration, dominated the ranks of the multi-racial Alliance government that took Fiji through independence.

Again, why was the fourth anniversary of independence celebrated on 10 October 1974, the centenary of the day the chiefs ceded the group to Queen Victoria? There is no anomaly in this for the Fijian community. The colonial period did not affect their power as the only community in the colony able at any time to mobilise quickly under their leaders and impose their will, forcibly if needs be, on their neighbours. The recognition of this power unsettles the Indian community whenever extremist Fijian sentiments are heard publicly, and Indian leaders have generally found it prudent to acknowledge the paramountcy of certain Fijian interests while hoping to secure a better basis for their own security.

To say then that Fijians were in an inferior position at any period since Cession is only admissible if a

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1 See Milner, introduction to Roth (1973), p.xxxv. The Council of Chiefs appoints eight members of the Senate, the Prime Minister seven, the Leader of the Opposition six and the chiefs of Rotuma one. Although appointments have not been made by either party on strict racial lines it seems impossible for Fijians not to have the required numbers in the Senate if the communal roll system was abolished in favour of another system that threatened their control of the House of Representatives. The composition of the Senate was not in the terms of reference of the Royal Commission into the electoral system that began its hearings on 5 August 1975 in fulfilment of an agreement by all parties prior to Independence to review voting procedures before the next elections - Fiji Times, 6 Aug. 1975.
certain type of entrepreneurial participation in the commercial economy or the level of cash income is proposed as the sole determinant of influence and power. The development writers of the 1960s were preoccupied with the problems of economic development; the old prescriptions of individualism, with more than a touch of the protestant ethic, enjoyed a new vogue. Just as im Thurn had urged the Fijians to become as white British subjects are, and May had wanted them to become peasant proprietors of small farms, and Reay had extolled the virtues of the galala, so Spate saw a clear-cut choice between developing 'a rigid closed system of authoritarian or bureaucratic control over every aspect of Fijian life' and fostering individualism as 'the road forward and the highest priority'. The difficulty with his attractive scenario of a community of independent farmers living around a common centre is his association of the notion of independence with 'the view of people who know what they are about', who were 'almost alone in the countryside...not divided in their minds' and 'clear that this was the right life for a man, that this was the way forward for the Fijians'.

Do Fijians really think in those terms? In the Waidina valley the anthropologist Henry Rutz has lately been surprised to discover that present-day staunch village agriculturalists have often been galala for various periods of time in the past. Existing galala, far from cutting themselves off from villages and choosing a new life style,

1 Spate, *The Fijian People*, pp.94-6.
2 ibid., p.91
actually seek out wider interpersonal and intergroup relationships, deriving from them direct economic benefits. Like all men, they want the esteem of their community and strive for a status that derives more from their ability to meet group needs than from their own state of self-sufficiency or productivity. Their involvement with various local groups and kinship relationships gives them the security they need in times of sickness, natural disaster or just the everyday situation requiring the labour of more than one man. Rutz concludes that becoming a galala is just one approach to increasing personal and family income; it is usually a particular factor such as the proximity of his land to the road and not a desire to cut loose that influences a man to move out of his village. ¹ Rutz's acute observations must raise doubts about the force of the contrast between the 'static authoritarian aristocratic' view allegedly enshrined in the Fijian Administration² and the view of the development writers or earlier government officials who thought that the dismantling of the communal aspects of the Fijian Administration was the necessary prerequisite for the emergence of a new type of Fijian, liberated from 'the burden of obligations'³ and free to 'get on' in life.


3 The heading of Spate, The Fijian People, part V, pp.22-6.
In fact many of the changes urged by the critics of the Fijian Administration were adopted in the 1960s with the approval of the Council of Chiefs. The communal services regulation was repealed in 1962. Democracy came into its own with direct elections to the Legislative Council for the first time by Fijians in 1963 and likewise for provincial councils in 1967. The post of Buli and the tikina system were abolished in 1967 and the individual villagers left entirely free to use their time as they wished. With every vestige of 'communalism' swept away, were Fijians better off? Apparently not. If Fijians grumbled about the burden of obligations before, they now complain of neglect. Despite the existence of an elaborate development bureaucracy sending fieldworkers directly into villages, physically villages have never been in a sorrier state. The Minister for Fijian Affairs, Ratu William Toganivalu, said in September 1974 that they needed 'a drastic soul-searching shakeup'.\(^1\) The basic maintenance tasks once achieved by the programme of work - which Belshaw described as a 'dangerous farce'\(^2\) - now feature as 'rural development priorities' in village submissions to central government authorities.\(^3\) Health and hygiene regulations are not enforced. The next census is expected to show a great

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2. Belshaw, Under the Ivi Tree, p.238.
3. For this information and many insights into contemporary Fijian provincial politics I am indebted to discussions in 1975 with Mr John Nation while he was writing a thesis on the subject for submission to Monash University, clarifying my own observations of 1973 and 1974.
exodus of young families from the rural areas - urbanization without industrialization, without jobs. The level of rural destitution and malnutrition would have been unthinkable 40 years ago or even 20, and in all but a few areas such as Lakeba the contemporary observer could be excused if he regarded 'The Fijian Way of Life' as a bad joke.

Whereas the old tikina operated as a forum that contained fierce parochial rivalries while enabling a united front to be presented at provincial level, villages now compete with villages in a scramble for the slender resources of the central government and pursue their rivalries right up the line. Nor does direct election of representatives to provincial councils give the people the sense of participation in government they once had. Some councils have to make a practice of seconding to their ranks the natural leaders of the vanua so as to satisfy older ideas of representation. All the provincial councils have extreme difficulty collecting taxes. Collection rates are believed to be about 20% - certainly too low for figures to be made public. Yet the people give huge amounts on occasions such as the charity queen festivals. The Lauans raised over $70,000 this way in August 1973.¹ The Methodist Church has never been short of funds either, and district school

¹ I attended this festival with a friend from Moala who personally gave over $60 when his island appeared to be slipping behind others in the level of contributions. He claimed never to have paid provincial rates for years - this was different; the honour of his tikina was at stake and no sacrifice too great. The excitement of these occasions is built up weeks in advance, and the competition between tikina is intense.
boards raise large amounts in both fees and capital contributions from the people.

These successful activities have one thing in common: they are organized on the basis of the old tikina suggested in Chapter Five as a vital institution in the survival of a distinctively Fijian heritage. Now from the people comes an apparently retrograde demand - to reconstitute these old (pre-1945) tikina as a unit of administration and especially as the channel for development funds loaned to individuals. It is argued that an individual entrusted by his tikina with funds for a project will hold himself far more accountable to the community for the use of his time and money than he will to a loans officer in Suva - especially if his default in repayments would diminish the share allotted to his tikina in the next round. In May 1974 the Tailevu Provincial Council discussed a notion calling for provincial revenues to be split 40% to the provincial office and 60% to the old tikina. Another motion was approved asking that the old tikina be represented on provincial council as before.

Doubtless there will be observers who see these moves as further proof that Fijians are politically underdeveloped - should they not be moving towards larger units and multiracial local government? On the other hand if the central government, the development bureaucracies and the organs of local government are to become responsive to Fijian opinion, then should they fear to question the dogmas of liberal democracy when the people believe, and demonstrate in other areas of life, that better models are available from Fijian tradition? The fact that Fijians are able to turn back with confidence to traditional ways of leadership and cooperation to devise new solutions for
their problems and are selective in accepting the advice of experts is one of the phenomena that support Milner's belief that Fijians demonstrate a 'modest, unassuming, though unmistakable self-confidence, this silent, amiable though eloquent protest against the monotony and the impersonal universalism of the Western world...a cultural achievement of the first order'.

There is no confidence without dignity and autonomy, and in the Fijian experience these feelings are grounded in the insight that historically the taukei, the owners, have not been dispossessed. The Fijian political experience reconstructed in these pages constitutes the mainstream of the history of the group. There are, it is true, substantial islands in the stream sending out conflicting eddies and currents, the islands of Indian and European commerce. Most Fijians have given them a wide berth though some have been attracted to them and been content to live a while on their fringe. The sweep of the stream has brought its own satisfactions. If navigation has become tedious at times, it is because the clear channels that with Fijian advice Gordon commissioned and Thurston dug have silted up. Some of them may yet be worth dredging. If significant numbers of Fijians ever feel that the stream has ceased to carry them and that they really are marooned in stagnant pools with no sense of where they have come from or where they are going, then the world is full of precedents for a future too painful to suggest.

The thesis is almost wholly based on the following enormous series of files:

(i) Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office 1897-1940

(ii) Records of the Secretariat of Native Affairs 1918-1935

Note: For the CSO series prior to 1930, regrettably, it is not possible to direct the reader to files collected under subject headings - they once were so organized for administrative use but later the bundles were broken up. And so, for example, to write the story of the beginning of the Apolosi movement in 1913 there is no collection of Apolosi files to consult; it is necessary to sort through 10,535 files for 1913 that have been re-shelved in their original numerical order in 21 large bundles - perhaps 30 feet high if stacked - and similarly through the years to 1929. Letter registers and subject indices describing individual files have to be used by anyone whose time is limited, but they are never fully reliable or consistent. From 1930-1940 the CSO files (but not the SNA files) are collected much more conveniently under broad subject divisions prefixed by the letter F and a number, e.g. F50 is the prefix for all files on Fijian Affairs; F50/6: the Council of Chiefs papers 1931-1939; F50/13: correspondence relating to sorcery, and so on.

Other important collections are:

(iii) Provincial Council Records Books (incomplete)

(iv) Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs

(v) Despatches to and from the Secretary of State for the Colonies

(vi) Methodist Mission Collection

Note: I was given access to all but a few confidential files and to all open records prior to 1940. The records of the Native Lands Commission were not open to scholars at the time of writing - and are not likely to be opened when the owners themselves have no access. Finally I could not see important minor material from provincial
offices such as District Court records going back to the late 19th century. They lie in Suva in unsorted bundles. Until resources can be allocated for their proper shelving and indexing, local scholars will be deprived of some of the best sources for detailed provincial histories - especially for the years after decision-making processes were decentralized around 1915.

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Native Regulations 1912, 1928, 1945
Report of a Commission of Enquiry appointed to enquire into the Decrease of the Native Population, 1896

3 IM THURN PAPERS, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Microfilm, Research School of Pacific Studies, Canberra

4 RECORDS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION, SUVA

A few of these were consulted in the original, most on microfilm, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Canberra: PMB 435, 452-5, 458-9, 466

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