FIJI
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BASIC INFORMATION

The Land

Set in 1.3 million sq km of the Pacific Ocean, the total land mass of Fiji is 18,333 sq km (Fiji Government 2003), making it the second largest island nation in the South Pacific after Papua New Guinea (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003). Comprised of around 330 islands of which about one-third are inhabited, Fiji has two major islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, which make up 87 per cent of the total land area (Fiji Government 2003; Norton, 1990). The capital city, Suva, is located on the south-eastern coast of Viti Levu.

Historically, the islands helped to shape the diversity of language, cultural and political forms because various incursions of people quickly became isolated from each other. While these differences were to some extent normalized during the colonial period they continue to play a role in contemporary society and politics (see sections below on language, land ownership and tenure, and government and politics). Perfect for tourism (which has now surpassed the sugar industry in its contribution to the GDP) (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003; Prasad et al 2003), the islands provide challenges with regard to the provision of basic services such as electricity and running water at a viable rate for local residents. Education has also suffered because of these challenges (Tavola 1991).

History

Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that the first group of people arrived in Fiji about 3,500 years ago. Lapita pottery found at Natunuku in Ba, Nasigatoka, Lakeba, Naigani, and also in coastal Vanua Levu, indicates that the first people spread from Indonesia or the Philippines through the Pacific with great rapidity. After reaching Fiji, their descendants moved on to Tonga in 1300 BC and Samoa around 1000 BC. Further changes in material culture are suggestive of successive waves of people arriving from the west into Fiji, including a probable major migration 900 years ago (Routledge 1985).

There is also evidence of a history of engagement, extending back at least a few hundred years, between Tonga and eastern Fiji. In some areas the contact involved political domination, as well as marriage and economic exchange (Norton 1990; Kaeppler 1978). Such relationships have resulted in distinctive differences between east and west, in both the physical attributes of the people and in the cultural organization of Fijian societies. Western Fijians lived in societies headed by a Big Man, similar to societies in Papua New Guinea, and tend to be glossed as Melanesian, while eastern Fijians are notably more Polynesian and lived in more hierarchical societies headed by chiefs (Khan and Barr 2003; Lawson 1990; Norton 1990).
As in much of the Pacific, first contact with British and other Europeans in Fiji was through itinerant sailors and whalers, explorers, fishers and traders of beche-de-mer (sea cucumber) and pearl shell, sandalwood cutters, 'blackbirds' (who were looking for labour for the Queensland plantations), beachcombers, missionaries, and, later, plantation owners. Of the first visitors, the missionaries were the most focused on intentionally changing local societies. The first missionaries to Fiji were Tahitians sent by the London Missionary Society. They were followed by missionaries from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, who arrived in 1835 (Thornley 1996).

By the middle of the 19th century, several great chiefdoms (matanitu) were prominent in the Fiji Islands. One was headed by a Tongan, Ma'afu, who began as leader of the Tongans resident in Fiji and became a chief of Fijians in the Lau group in the east. In central Fiji, the greatest rivalry was between Rewa, in southeastern Viti Levu, and the emerging power of Bau, based in the same area. The first attempt at a national indigenous chiefdom and aimed at protecting planters' landholdings in Bau, Cakobau's regime was established in the 1860s by European planters because of the fear that discontent between coastal and inland Fijians would lead to an all-out race war (France 1969; Norton 1990).

With continuing trouble between Fijians, and difficulties arising from increasing European settlement, Cakobau and 12 other chiefs asked Britain to intercede. This led to the signing of the Deed of Cession in 1874, which agreed that the islands would be administered by the British in consultation with a council of chiefs in a form of 'indirect rule.' The first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, governed Fiji with a benevolent paternalism. Concerned by the fact that between 25 and 40 per cent of the Fijian population had died in an epidemic of measles (figures taken from Naidu 1980:3, and Norton 1990:21 respectively), he did not want to see the Fijians "die out." On the other hand, the new colony had to be economically viable and Gordon had to find a way of filling the labour needs of the plantations. His response was to import indentured labourers from India, beginning in 1879. This led to a division between ethnicities that still exists today: indigenous Fijians continue to be collective landowners entitled to 'native land' while the descendants of the Indian immigrants are able to own only some of the small percentage of freehold land.

Fiji continued to be ruled by Britain as a colony until independence was conferred in 1970.

**Population**

The ethnic composition of Fiji has changed dramatically since colonization and has also become highly politicized. The perceived fragility of the Fijian race (see above) became a central motivation for the first Governor to import Indian indentured labour to meet the labour demands of the plantations. By 1921 there were almost 61,000 Indians, who comprised nearly 40 per cent of the population (Norton 1990:22; Khan and Barr 2003; Mangubhai and Mugler 2003). By contrast, Fijians, who numbered nearly 84,500, constituted only 54 per cent of the population (Tavola 1991:13).

Despite the fact that indigenous Fijians did not die out, their proportion of the population continued to drop, so that in 1936 Fijians numbered nearly 98,000 people but were 49 per cent of the population in comparison to Indians who were 43 per cent. By 1946, the Indians were 46 per cent of the population and outnumbered the Fijians who comprised 45 per cent (Tavola 1991:13). In 1966, while Indians comprised 50.5 per cent of the population, Fijians were 42 per cent, and in 1986 Indians were 49 per cent of the
population in contrast to Fijians who were 46 per cent (percentages calculated from figures provided by Norton 1990:179; cf Field et al 2005:38). Indians were thus perceived as a political threat.

However, the spread of Indian communities in relation to the Fijians has not been even across Fiji. In the 1986 census, 67 per cent of Fijians were recorded as rural dwellers in comparison to 59 per cent of Indians (Tavola 1991:48). Moreover, 42 per cent of Fijians live in south-eastern Viti Levu while 52 per cent of Indians live in western Viti Levu (Norton 1990:179), mostly in the sugarcane belt. Smaller islands such as Kadavu and those in Lau and Lomaiviti are almost totally Fijian in ethnicity (Ernst 1994). Overall, Fijians are the poorest ethnicity, but there is a small segment of the Indo-Fijian population that lives in extreme poverty, without the safety net of the Fijian-style extended families (Tavola 1991).

The 1987 coups dramatically affected ethnic composition in Fiji. While the figures at the end of 1986 show that Fijians comprised 46 per cent of the population and Indians were almost 49 per cent, the 1991 statistics show a reversal: Fijians were 49 per cent of the population and Indians were just under 46 per cent (Chetty and Prasad 1993). In short, the 1987 coups had the effect of ensuring that the indigenous population was larger than the Indo-Fijian population (for more on the coups, see chiefdom and politics section).

At the last census, in 1996, the total population was recorded at 775,077. Indigenous Fijians were 51 per cent of the population, Indo-Fijians 44 per cent, and the remaining 5 per cent were of Chinese, European and part-European, Australian, Rotuman, or other origin. During the 2000 coup, the Indian population dropped again and continued to drop in the following years, while the Fijian population continued to grow. In all, population growth across Fiji is estimated at 1.6 per cent but is declining, largely due to international migration and the lower birth-rate among Indo-Fijians (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2005).

At the last count, the capital, Suva, is now a city with approximately 77,366 people and a further peri-urban population of 90,609 (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2005). One third of Fiji’s people live in Suva and this population counts as half of all urban-dwellers, which shows that Fiji is relatively highly urbanized. Moreover, since the 1980s there has been an increasing rural to urban drift, particularly among indigenous Fijians, which creates challenges with regard to issues such as squatters, urban poverty and youth unemployment. Indeed, using the 1986 census, Norton notes that “about 50 per cent of the Fijian unemployed in the urban areas of southeast Viti Levu were rural-born, compared to about 28 per cent of the Indians unemployed there” (Norton 1990:167 fn 72).

**Land Ownership and Tenure**

The contemporary system of land ownership in Fiji derives directly from the colonial administration’s division of land between indigenous Fijians and the planters. As a result, land today remains divided between native, freehold, and Crown land (renamed State land at independence). Since 1940, it has been administered by the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB). The 1980 statistics record that Fiji consists of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freehold Land</td>
<td>149,085 hectares</td>
<td>(8.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Land</td>
<td>172,606 hectares</td>
<td>(9.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Land</td>
<td>1,503,662 hectares</td>
<td>(82.37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(NLTB 1980:18)
In the 1990s, the percentage of native land further increased when a number of Crown leases reverted to native land. By 2002, 87 per cent of the land was categorized as native land (Halapua 2003:42).

For indigenous Fijians to have access to Native Land, they must be registered as owners with their kinship group, the mataqali. Due to the colonial administration’s decision that this was to be the land-owning unit for registration purposes, the mataqali continues to be the central land-owning unit for native land in contemporary Fiji. This decision was made despite the failure of successive land commissions to outline a transparent indigenous system of land tenure from the competing land claims that were presented to them. Three times in three years, the first Governor asked the Council of Chiefs to describe the traditional land tenure system, but all meetings were marked by differences of opinion and understanding over both the name of the land-holding unit and the composition of the unit. For example, while all the chiefs agreed they knew the term mataqali denoted a descent group, the extent of inclusion and exclusion varied, just as their ideas about land rights varied (France 1969). Finally, the Council resolved to register landowners in mataqali but to then subdivide the land into family lots to be held in hereditary succession. At the fourth Council, the chiefs were still arguing but registration of land was deemed desirable and they therefore decided that all Fijians should be registered in their mataqali and that it was unlawful for any mataqali to alienate its land. This was despite the fact that their decision was in complete contradiction to the way the chiefs had managed their own provincial chiefdoms just prior to colonization (France 1969).

Meanwhile, successive land commissions contradicted each other’s findings. In 1912, G.V. Maxwell was appointed Head of the Commission and in six months outlined a model that has been in use since. In Maxwell’s model, a vanua is made up of yavusa, which are subdivided into mataqali which are then further subdivided into tokatoka. The yavusa was defined as a kinship unit of brothers who shared descent from a single ancestor god. Despite all the contrary evidence recorded by previous land commissions, this model became orthodoxy (France 1969; Clammer 1975).

If the colonial administration institutionalized and normalized this particular model, it has had resounding consequences in terms of Fijian identity, in such a way that the relationship of Fijians with land is now fixed within a set of boundaries. At the same time, the absorption of Methodism into Fijian culture and vice versa has been such that the vanua has become a central part of Methodist theology in Fiji (Bush 2001).

**Languages**

The Fijian language belongs to the Austronesian language family (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003). The linguistic record suggests that the parent language divided into Fijian and proto-Polynesian about 3500 years ago. Later in Fiji’s history, the Fijian language broke again into Western and Eastern dialects (Routledge 1985). There are now about 300 communalects (a communalect is an internally consistent variety of language used across one to ten villages (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003).

The missionaries first began transcribing and interpreting any Fijian dialect they came across, but the cost of printing ensured that they had to choose one dialect above others. Because Bauan was selected and the Bible was translated into this dialect, it became both the literary language and the language associated with religion (Mangubhai and Mugler...
2003). The dominance of Bauan in primary schools has led to problems for children’s education in the parts of Fiji where Bauan is not the dialect spoken at home. For example, students in Solevu speak the Solevuan dialect, study in English and must also study Bauan Fijian (Veramu 1992).

Besides the numerous dialects, there are also context-driven variations of Fijian, i.e. Meke Fijian for poetry and song, Standard Fijian for diplomacy and trade, Colloquial Fijian — an informal, urban variation — and the old High Fijian formerly used by the missionaries. Pidgin languages based on Fijian, Hindi, and English also developed on the plantations and the first two are still used in rural areas and around town markets (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003).

While nearly all Fijians speak a Fijian dialect as their first language, the Indo-Fijian descendants of indentured labourers speak a local version of Hindi or Hindustani. Seventy-five per cent of the indentured labourers originated from North India and the remaining labourers came from the Madras Presidency in South India. The mix of dialects developed into a koine, a language that mixed the characteristics of several dialects and is known as Fiji Hindi or Fiji Baat (‘Fiji talk’). However, some descendants of Southern Indians still speak in Dravidian dialects such as Tamil and, after the First World War, the later Gujarati and Punjabi immigrants from Northern India brought their own languages. Those Indo-Fijians who are Muslims can also read and write and sometimes speak Urdu and Arabic. Other minority languages include Rotuman, dialects from Kiribati and Tuvalu, Cantonese dialects and Mandarin (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003).

While schools were run by the missions in the vernacular for the first 40 years of colonization, the Indian and Fijian demand for secondary schools in the 1930s and 1940s helped to make English the desired language for instruction. Since then, English has become the official language, partly due to its neutrality in pluralistic environments such as parliament, multi-ethnic church congregations and multi-ethnic audiences for television and other media. While English remains the official language in parliament, English, Hindi, and Fijian were all given equal status in the 1997 Constitution (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003).

**Education**

Formal education in Fiji has always been closely linked with religion. The Methodist missionaries first introduced education in 1835. They completed a Fijian grammar by 1838 and were soon translating the Bible into Fijian dialects. Therefore much of their early work was conducted in the local dialects until the cost of printing forced the necessity of a single printing standard (see previous section). Mission schools expanded rapidly and were popular among the chiefs because they liked writing letters or hiring scribes to do so. In addition, in a culture that valued storytelling, the Bible was seen as a good source for stories. However, generally only four years of schooling were offered, with a limited curriculum of religious instruction, arithmetic, and personal hygiene. Literacy skills were thus usually minimal (Tavola 1991; Mangubhai and Mugler 2003; White 2001).

Within 10 years Roman Catholic missionaries were establishing Marist schools, which were highly centralized and more intensive than the Methodist schools. In contrast to the widespread use of Fijian teachers in the Methodist schools, white missionaries maintained direct control of the Catholic schools and English was the language for instruction (Tavola 1991; Mangubhai and Mugler 2003).
In the first 30 years of colonization from 1874, government schools were provided only for the children of settlers in Levuka and Suva, but because of the work of the Methodist missions there were schools in most villages in Fiji and therefore most children could read in the vernacular. At this stage, Fijians were well ahead of the Indian indentured labourer population, whose children had limited access to schools until the turn of the century when both the Methodist and the Catholic missions established schools for the Indian population. Fijians supported education to such an extent that they initiated provincial schools offering eight years of education to boys who showed potential. Founded in 1906 to train the sons of the chiefs in English, the Queen Victoria School was the apex of this system. The school was a basic primary school that emphasized agriculture and fitted into the notion that Fijians were primarily land owners (Tavola 1991). Its most successful graduates were groomed to be leaders in the Civil Service or attained scholarships for university education in Australia, New Zealand, or Britain (White 2001).

Anglicans, the Arya Samaj and Muslims established schools for the Indians by 1916, but Indians were largely seen as an unskilled labour force for whom education was undesirable. The government was slow to become involved in education, and not until 1916 was an Education Ordinance passed, offering a Grant-in-Aid scheme. It offered funds to schools that met prescribed standards, but by 1929 only 32 out of 700 Fijian schools received any assistance from this scheme. While many Indian schools were established under the scheme, the percentage of Indians attending school was still small (17 per cent) in comparison to whites (91 per cent) and Fijians (80 per cent). The effect of the Grant-in-Aid scheme was to create a dual-tiered system, in which most of the population were educated in voluntary schools while an elite few received government schooling (Tavola 1991).

The Methodist Church rationalized the number of Fijian mission schools in the 1920s. After the number peaked at 1,041 in 1909, they were reduced to 24 in 1934 (12 for Fijians and 12 for Indians), partly by transferring control of over 600 primary schools to local committees (Tavola 1991; Mangubhai and Mugler 2003). As local committees were barely equipped with the management skills needed to run schools, this had a crippling effect on Fijian education. However, whereas until then both Fijians and Indians had been taught in the vernacular, the transfer also increased the demand for instruction in English (Mangubhai and Mugler 2003). In the legislature, the subject of secondary schools was brought up sporadically throughout the 1920s for both Fijians and Indians, but it was felt that Fijians were not able to become educated in the same way as Europeans because they were at a lower stage of civilisation, and that it was therefore still appropriate to emphasize agricultural education. In contrast, the colonial government’s policy was to keep Indians as a working class with only basic education (Tavola 1991).

By the 1930s, the Indians had become more influential in politics, with changes in the structure of the Legislative Council and the enfranchisement of the Indians. While confrontational, the new political clout of the Indians resulted in better funding for their schools but also a relegation of Fijian education to the background. Thus, racial divisions were reflected in the development of education, with separate schools being maintained for the colonial community, the Fijians and the Indians. In the late 1930s, the Legislative Council accepted the need for Indians to be educated to matriculation standard but barred Fijians from the same access to secondary education. As a result, while Fijian children showed higher rates of attendance at school than Indians, their schools were poorer in quality (Tavola 1991). Further, it was generally accepted that only chiefly children should be educated to
tertiary levels. There was also a fear that overly educated Fijians would create a discontented class who would contest the traditional hierarchy, a fear that continues to have ramifications for Fijian education today (Tavola 1991; White 2001).

Education continued to be in demand into the 1960s and 1970s, with the result that schools with poorly qualified staff were springing up. However, access continued to differ according to ethnicity, with almost twice as many Indians attending secondary school as Fijians. Most of the new schools that sprang up to meet the demand were privately run and received Grants-in-aid from the government, which tied them to the curriculum standards and policies of the Ministry of Education. However, they remained relatively autonomous in decision-making about school management. Indeed, the Grants-in-aid scheme encouraged great diversity between the Christian, Hindu and Muslim schools, with regard to ethos, the enrolment of particular ethnic groups over others, size, location, and facilities (Tavola 1991). The demand finally slowed in the late 1970s to the point that there was a burgeoning excess of teachers in the 1980s. Many newly trained teachers were involved in hunger strikes. However, many also emigrated after the 1987 coup (Tavola 1991; Chetty and Prasad 1993).

If the political instability in 1987 exacerbated the distance between the humanistic ideals espoused in the curriculum and the traditional values held in the community, the plummeting economy forced many children to leave school or to delay examinations because their families could no longer afford the fees. As the uneasy socio-political environment continued into 1988, many schools were severely understaffed and children were kept home for security. Staff began to split into racial groups, which extended to using separate staff rooms and, in a few extreme cases, teachers of one race would not teach classes of another race. Indian teachers also became nervous about disciplining Fijian students. Within the year, education was also faced with a 30 per cent cut in budget (Tavola 1991). As a direct result of the coups of 1987, children suffered from gaps in their education to the extent that many of that generation found their literacy and their skills in mathematics severely compromised (Waqairagatu 2005, interview by author; Tavola 1991; Chetty and Prasad 1993).

Health and Housing

In 1996, life expectancy was recorded at 64.5 years for men and 68.7 for women, regardless of ethnicity. The biggest health risks for both Fijians and Indians are firstly diseases of the circulatory system, followed by a class of conditions labelled ‘Signs, Symptoms and Ill-defined Conditions’, then hypertensive disease, heart disease and heart attacks. Other important diseases are diabetes, cerebrovascular disease and the cluster of diseases around nephritis. Fijians are more likely to die from all diseases and conditions than Indo-Fijians, except in the categories of heart disease and attacks, diabetes and cerebrovascular disease (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2005). Men have a significantly higher adult mortality rate than women, with the rate per 1000 standing at 275:173 (WHO 2005). While infant mortality has gone down over the years, it remains between 16 and 13 deaths per 1000 live births, ranking Fiji with Jamaica and Brunei (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2005; Geography IQ 2003). The age brackets with the highest mortality are the first 12 months of life (404 actual deaths in 2001) and from 65 to 74 years of age (WHO 2005).

Recently, there have been reports of a high number of gastroenteritis and typhoid cases, which indicates problems with the water supply (e.g. Fiji Times 21/7/05, 29/7/05). In terms of public health, 93 per cent in urban areas receive a piped and metered water
supply but only 31 per cent of rural households are piped and metered. In Fijian villages, a further 37 per cent share piped communal stands. Another 13.4 per cent of the water supply comes from bores, wells, rivers, and creeks. The provinces least likely to have piped water are Namasi followed by Kadavu and Bua (Walsh 2002:22–27).

While one half of the households in Fiji were without electricity in 1986, by the next census this figure had declined to one-third. The Fiji Electrical Authority (FEA) services 86 per cent of users. However, the communally owned generators run on diesel provide 32.5 per cent of all rural electricity used by Fijians, usually in villages. Electricity use is uneven by province and ethnicity. Between one-fifth and one-half of households use electricity in provinces such as Ra, Namasi, Cakaudrove, Bua, and all other island provinces except Rotuma. Despite the improving services, only 26 per cent of rural Fijians use electricity for lighting while 61 per cent still use wick lamps. The vast majority — 81 per cent — of rural Fijians use wood rather than electricity for cooking fuel (Walsh 2002:28–37).

The traditional Fijian house was the bure, but this is no longer very popular, decreasing from 17 per cent of dwellings in 1986 to 7 per cent in 1996 and now concentrated in Namasi. Instead, there has been a trend to concrete and corrugated iron dwellings for both ethnicities. While there is a trend towards nuclear families, architecture varies between ethnicities as Indo-Fijians prefer the privacy of more numerous smaller rooms, while Fijians tend to like bigger rooms for entertaining. However, some of these large extended or composite households which use space in a number of ways may be difficult environments for young children who cannot go to bed when tired or who may have difficulties studying (Walsh 2002:15–18).

While the figures from 1986 and 1996 cannot be directly compared, the number of squatter dwellings in Suva seems to have increased considerably in proportion to owned, rented, and other types of dwellings. Walsh points out that 3.4 per cent of Fijians informally occupy native land and more than 1 in 7 rural Fijians are not occupying land through their traditional rights (Walsh 2002:10–11). Many Fijian urban squatters informally occupy NLTB land and native land and may pay some rent (Walsh 2002). Although the census has had difficulty in capturing the number of squatters, other sources have suggested that the number of squatter dwellings in the mid-1990s was over 5000 (Walsh 2002:56). Squatter dwellings are inferior to other forms of housing: the 1996 census deemed 20 per cent structurally inadequate and noted that 40 per cent lacked electricity, 34 per cent used kerosene for lighting, and 31 per cent used pit-toilets, which are potential health hazards (Walsh 2002:67).

In 1996, 53 per cent of rural Indo-Fijians lived on land leased from the NLTB (Walsh 2002:11). Although the number is decreasing, 62 per cent of rural Indo-Fijians as opposed to 32 per cent of Fijian households are also likely to live in houses with a pit toilet or no toilet at all. In contrast with 13 per cent of urban Fijian households, 20 per cent of urban Indo-Fijian households were also without adequate toilet facilities. In terms of provinces, the Fijian villages in Bua have least adequate toilet facilities, but Ra, Macuata, Nadiroga/ Namasi, and Ba, which all have large Indo-Fijian populations, also all have a high proportion of households that do not have adequate toilet facilities. In many areas, over 30 per cent of households use pit-toilets (Walsh 2002:42–4).

With regard to ethnicity in relation to housing, Solomon Islanders tend to be the worst off of all ethnic groups in Fiji. Households headed by older women and particularly by women who are separated from their husbands are also more likely to be disadvantaged,
and these are more predominant household types among urban Fijians (Walsh 2002:62–64). It is clear that housing reflects ethnicity, gender and rural/urban differences.

**Economy**

In Fiji, the key economic sectors are sugar, tourism, and garment manufacturing. Tourism has recently overtaken the sugar industry in its contribution to the GDP, and garment manufacturing was extraordinarily successful for the years between the coups. While somewhat static, gold mining continues to be a major industry. However, despite the success of these industries, the government is still the largest employer, employing just under a third of all paid workers (Prasad et al 2003:90).

In the colonial era, a small number of Australian companies monopolized sugar, gold, manufacturing, and agricultural exports such as cotton, and many of the profits of these companies returned to Australia. For instance, the sugar industry, which was central to Fiji’s economy for 120 years, was controlled by the Australian-owned Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) for the first 90 years. Indeed, it was the sugar industry’s demand for labour that led to the importation of Indian indentured labour (Khan and Barr 2003). After independence, the CSR was taken over in 1973 by the government-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation, which continues to run 4 mills (3 of which are in west Viti Levu) and directly employs 2,900 to 3,600 people, depending on the season. As many as 20,000 cane farmers and 16,000 labourers are also engaged in the sugar industry. As a result, sugar has continued to contribute an average of 32 per cent of domestic income (Prasad et al 2003:111–113), despite its vulnerability as cane farmers leave their farms when leases expire.

Two other important Australian monopolies in the colonial era were Burns Philp and W.R. Carpenters, which invested in plantations, transport, hotels, insurance, manufacturing, wholesale and retailing, as well as acting as agents for shipping, heavy machinery, and motor vehicles and employed 10 per cent of the workforce (Khan and Barr 2003:14). While Carpenters continues to have active interests in many of these areas and now controls Morris Hedstrom’s chain of supermarkets (Carpenters n.d.), Burns Philp has now reduced its presence to controlling the Goodman-Fielder and Tuckers companies, which sell foodstuffs (Burns Philp 2004). Commercial and financial institutions such as banks, insurance companies, petroleum companies, and so on, have remained under expatriate control. Since the 1970s, Courts (now Courts Home Centres), which is still headed by an expatriate, has emerged as a major player (Courts n.d.). Locally owned stores have also emerged, including the bargain centre Rups Big Bear, and the Vinod Patel hardware stores established in the 1960s (Vinod Patel n.d.).

Since colonization, the biggest and perhaps most fleeting success story has been in garment manufacturing. The idea of a tax-free zone (TFZ) was first introduced in 1988 to counter the economic impact of the first coup, but because of difficulties implementing it, factories that would enjoy tax-free privileges for 13 years were initiated (Robertson 1995; Storey 2005). The resulting economic growth was astonishing, as employment rose from 3,000 to 10,000 jobs in the first four years (Storey 2005; cf. Prasad et al 2003). The garment industry also flourished under the conditions of SPARTECA, the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement, which provided the island countries of the South Pacific Forum with duty free access into Australia and New Zealand. Before the coup in 2000, the industry directly employed around 18,000 people (Storey 2005). After the
coup, however, some estimates suggest that as many as 8,000 people lost their jobs, most of the casualties being women. From 48 factories in operation before the coup, 30 survived. As Oxfam reported, “according to Ranjit Solanki, the industry was losing F$10 million (US$4.4 million) a month after May 2000… or about one-third of total exports” (Storey 2005:15). Further, with the Australian government’s decision to drop the ICS (Import Credit Scheme) in September 2000, many factories in western Viti Levu also closed down, especially those making polo shirts and track suits. Having lost a 15 per cent subsidy, these factories were no longer competitive (Storey 2005).

The biggest success for Fiji has been in tourism, although this industry too was badly affected by the 2000 coup and it has taken several years for the tourists to return and arrivals to surpass pre-coup figures. By far the largest number of visitors comes from Australia, followed by New Zealand. Half a million Australians visited Fiji in 1995. The figure rose to 777,000 in 1999, before dropping to about 300,000 in the year of the coup. Since then, however, Fiji has regained popularity as a tourist destination, with 1,092,000 Australians staying in hotels in 2004 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2005). Fiji’s popularity as a tourist destination for Australians is in part a result of broader regional concerns, namely terrorism and the impact of the tsunami on other popular holiday spots in Asia.

As a whole, industry in Fiji is strongly demarcated by race and gender. In the colonial era, government officials were British or Australian and the management and owners were often Australian, while plantation workers were Indian, and gold miners and landowners were Fijian. While tourism has since come to the forefront, many of the assets such as hotels and resorts and airlines are foreign-owned, as are banks and tax-free factories. By contrast, Fijian communities continue to own land and now work in government positions. Fijian men constitute 99 per cent of the military, 75 per cent of the police force, and 90 per cent of the Permanent Secretaries. Fijian women constitute 75 per cent of nurses (Prasad et al 2001:5) and they are hired to work on resorts as waitresses and cleaners. While there have been some attempts to move Fijians into investment, these attempts have not been very successful (e.g. Prasad et al 2001; Ratuva 2000). By contrast, where once Indian labour was used almost exclusively on the plantations, Indo-Fijians now invest and are involved in the local transport industry or in freehold property (Prasad et al 2001). Both Fijian and Indo-Fijian women provide cheap and docile labour for manufacturing (Storey 2005). Indeed, Khan and Barr claim that women, whether Fijian or Indo-Fijian, constitute 68 per cent of the working poor (Khan and Barr 2003:28).

Despite the economic growth between the coups of 1987 and 2000, 25 per cent of the population were recorded in 1991 as living in poverty and another 25 per cent as marginal. As 86 per cent of people are recorded as working, Khan and Barr point to the problem of extremely low wages (Khan and Barr 2003:18). Certainly, because of the lack of unionisation, factory working conditions and wages have been very poor. While 95 per cent of jobs in the garment industry are occupied by women (Phillips 1998:344), women are almost always hired as machinists and not employed in management. Yet, throughout the 1990s, factory wages were less than half of the minimum wage earned in urban areas (Storey 2005:27–31). When minimum wage regulations were introduced in 1992, women earned a base rate of about F$1.00 — which was about half the accepted manufacturing wage (Prasad et al, 2001:8). In fact, one estimate suggests that 80 per cent of factory employees are women whose wages are below the poverty line (Storey 2005:27–31).
Poverty has been further exacerbated by factors such as the introduction of VAT (Value Added Tax), the devaluation of currency, evictions of Indo-Fijians as their leases expire, increases in land rates, and the decline of the sugar industry. The 2000 coup had a severe effect on the economy and brought an increase in street-kids and squatters. While the urban poor are highly visible, two-thirds of poor households are in rural areas. Some provinces are faring worse than others, with Lau recording the lowest average household income. In Fijian families, some mataqali also have less productive land than others. In all, average household incomes are 13 per cent lower for Fijians than for Indo-Fijians (Khan and Barr 2003:27–28). Indo-Fijian tenant farmers growing sugarcane have become vulnerable to poverty too, with land rentals trebling between 1987 and 1999. In the year leading up to the coup of 2000, an estimated 1,200 Indo-Fijians did not have their leases renewed, which led to large-scale displacement. As a result, one UNDP report stated that 50 per cent of households living below the poverty line were Indo-Fijian. In addition, Prasad, Dakuvula and Snell argue that because Indo-Fijians have little access to land for the production of subsistence crops, those who are living below the poverty line are more prone to ill-health and malnutrition than Fijians (Prasad et al 2001:6).

**Government and Politics**

At independence in 1970, the Fijian government was structured according to the Westminster system. Parliamentary politics were dominated by two parties: the ruling Alliance Party with its largely Fijian following but originally with an Indian component also, and the National Federation Party, whose supporters were mostly Indo-Fijians. The ethnic division inherent in the parties also reflected land holding patterns, in which the Fijians are collective landowners and the Indo-Fijians are the lessees (Prasad et al 2003; Norton 1990; Halapua 2003). While the major parties originated in the 1960s, other parties were formed in the 1970s and 1980s, including an off-shoot of the Alliance Party called the Fijian Nationalist Party. Later, the Fiji Labour Party was formed out of the trade union movement (Norton 1990; Halapua 2003).

The 1970 Constitution divided the 52 seats in the House of Representatives into 27 communal seats and 25 national seats. Of the communal seats, 12 were reserved for Fijians, 12 for Indo-Fijians, and 3 for "general electors." Of the 25 national seats, the Indo-Fijians and Fijians were allocated 10 each, with the remaining 5 reserved for "general electors" (whites, part-Europeans and others). Prasad, Dakuvula, and Snell argue that this allocation of separate seats for Fijians, Indo-Fijians and "general electors" entrenched the racial separation of the parties (Prasad et al 2001:4).

Unlike the traditional Westminster system, however, the government is advised by the Great Council of Chiefs or Boise Levu Vakaturaga (BLV). While "a loose communal network of some chiefs" existed just prior to Fiji’s cession (Halapua 2003:7), the Great Council of Chiefs was institutionalized by Governor Gordon in 1875 in order to address customary rights and leadership challenges (see France 1969; also Prasad et al 2001). At independence, it became closely associated with the Alliance Party (Halapua 2003).

Another important aspect of politics in Fiji is the role of the military, which is almost exclusively indigenous Fijian. As the contemporary soldier is deeply associated with the traditional elite warrior or bati of village society, acceptance into the military is considered prestigious for Fijians. With independence, the Fiji Military Forces also became closely
allied with the Alliance Party. According to Halapua, “this role led to a rapid transformation of the military’s role from one of protecting the nation against foreign aggression, to protecting entrenched power groups within the country...” (Halapua 2003:50). In his view, the military is structurally inclined toward supporting one section of a highly diverse population — the chiefly oligarchy and its economic interests (although the military played a very different role in the 2000 coup from the one that it played in 1987 — see below). Further, Halapua argues that the tie between the military and the chiefs ensures that Fijian villages all have connections with the army. In the 1980s select schools (Ratu Kadavulevu School, Sila Central High School, Queen Victoria School, Ratu Sukuna Memorial School, and Natabua College) introduced military cadet training, thus creating a direct career path for indigenous Fijians into the military from high school and further entrenching both the indigenous nature of the military and the position of the military in Fijian society (Halapua 2003).

Since independence, the constant issues faced by the government have been in relation to land and race, race being deeply entwined with economic interests in land (Halapua 2003; Norton 1990; see section on economy). The popular head of the Fijian Nationalist Party, butadroka, was particularly outspoken inciting landowners to intimidate Indo-Fijians, protesting against perceived Indo-Fijian privilege and proposing in parliament that the British should pay for the Indians to be “repatriated” to India (Norton 1990:114). Moreover, just prior to independence, the Agricultural Landlord and Tenancy Ordinance (ALTO) had been passed, guaranteeing 30 year leases of Fijian land to Indo-Fijian tenants with the provision of renewal every 10 years if both parties consented. In 1976, ALTO was replaced with the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act, without taking the Indo-Fijians’ preference for 99 year leases into consideration. Thus, race and its economic relationship to land was the central and polarising issue between Fijians and Indo-Fijians as landlords and lessees in the 1982 elections (Halapua 2003).

With the economic downturn in the 1980s, it was clear that Fijian youth with poor educational backgrounds, especially those from rural backgrounds, were disadvantaged and more likely to suffer unemployment. Rural villagers, who had once supported youth by granting neighbours access to land when needed, were now becoming interested in commercial success through cattle and cash cropping. The new economic differentiation between villagers began to create resentment, especially among youth. The chiefs were viewed as serving themselves rather than their people. In response, and with rising rates of delinquency and crime among Fijian youth, Fijian elders began to construct youth as having lost their roots, as not knowing their culture and as having lost their traditional values. Because of the association between the Alliance Party and the chiefly system, the increasing distance between some chiefs and their communities contributed to the downfall of the Alliance Party in the 1987 elections (Norton 1990).

The Fiji Labour Party won the 1987 elections in coalition with the National Federation Party. The new government was led by Timoci Bavadra, an indigenous Fijian but a commoner from western Viti Levu. In contrast to his predecessors, Bavadra sought to reinforce the trade union movement, nationalize sectors of the economy, and implement progressive taxation (Prasad et al 2001:4). In the meantime, land ownership had been politicized to the point that a Tautakei (Landowners) movement emerged in western Viti Levu, with the claim that “the Fijians appear to have lost their country” (quoted in Norton 1990:137). Some of the chiefs in the east also believed that “the chiefs and their people are being ruled by vulaqo [foreigners]” (quoted in Norton 1990:137). A week after the swearing-in of the government
and protests outside parliament, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka and 12 masked men staged the first coup (Norton 1990).

Religion has played an important role in all three of Fiji’s coups. Because Methodism is the dominant religion in Fiji, especially among indigenous Fijians (see next section), and because most of the chiefs are Methodist, Christian imagery is an effective way of mobilising indigenous Fijians. It was readily deployed in the rhetoric used in 1987 by the leaders of the two coups of that year, by the military, and by some of the church leaders. For instance, Rabuka (himself a Methodist, a commoner, and high in the military) promoted himself as Moses of the Chosen People, gave a speech associating the chiefly system with the land and Christianity, and proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of Fiji (Ratuva 1999; Norton 1990). Rabuka was further quoted as wanting to convert Indo-Fijians to Christianity because “we will go that way or they convert us and we all become heathens” (Ernst 1994: 274). Religious imagery from the Old Testament such as the lost tribes of Israel was used to endorse the claims of the landowners and to emphasize the importance of the continuation of Fijian culture and faith.

A dominant faction of the Methodist Church was also directly involved in Rabuka’s government. Key meetings were held in the home of a Methodist minister (Field et al 2005:39) and in the offices of the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC), of which the General Secretary at that time was a minister of the Methodist Church (Bhagwan 2002, interview by Ernst; Ernst, 1994). Rabuka and the Taukei movement had attracted high-ranking members of the Methodist Church, including the General Secretary, the Rev Manasa Lasaro. With Lasaro’s influence, the military imposed the Sunday Decree, which declared that no work could be done on Sundays. When, at the end of 1988, the interim government reinstated Sunday bus and taxi services, conservative Methodist groups set up Sunday roadblocks at 70 places throughout Suva in protest (Halapua 2003; Ryle 2001; Ratuva 1999; Ernst 1994). These actions also caused a split within the Methodist Church and the ousting of the church’s President, the Rev Josateki Koro, a moderate who was critical of the coups, in favour of the Rev Isireli Caucau. According to Ryle, the schism reflected provincial politics as much as different religious interpretations of the relationship between Fijians and their vanua — land and community (Ryle 2001).

As the crises settled, the non-elected interim government introduced changes to the Constitution with the aim of ensuring Fijian paramountcy. In the Lower House, 37 of the 70 seats were now reserved for indigenous Fijians, an action that provoked inter-ethnic rivalry. In the late 1990s, affirmative action measures for indigenous Fijians were also introduced but only a few who were well-connected benefited from them (Prasad et al 2001:15).

Rabuka publicly stepped away from coups as a valid mode of political action after 1987, but another commoner, George Speight, who was educated as a Seventh-day Adventist, executed a third coup 13 years later, aiming specifically to remove the first elected Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry. The motivations behind this were multi-faceted, as evidenced by rumours that Indo-Fijian business interests financed the coup (Field et al 2005; MacWilliam 2002). Prior to the coup in 2000, the Chaudhry government had also made several decisions that particularly upset conservative Fijian interests, many of whom responded by participating in street demonstrations, including one on 19 May. At the same time on that day, George Speight led a small group in plain clothes into parliament and held government members hostage (Field et al 2005; Tarte 2001). Rioting, looting and arson ensued to an extent not seen in Fiji before.
For Fijians, one of the shocks that resulted from the coup in the year 2000 was the realization that Fiji was split not only by race and religion but also by major political divisions between Fijians at the national level. This has been interpreted variously as Eastern chiefs versus Western chiefs (Norton 1990; Field et al 2005), as regional rivalry between families of paramount chiefs (Field et al 2005; Ryle for the 1987 coups), as class warfare between newly bourgeois chiefs and commoners who had become critical of their new wealth (Halapua 2003), and as the military forces’ perception of their role as being analogous to that of the warrior clan in traditional village society, who had the power to install and remove chiefs — or in this case, the Prime Minister (Halapua 2003).

As the hostage crisis continued, landowners in Naitasiri began to react to the Monasavu hydroelectric dam project, which had been built on their land but which was failing to provide any benefit to locals. During the 2000 crisis, landowners took over the dam and shut down the generators, thus cutting off the electricity supply to the capital, Suva (Field et al 2005). Clearly, the timing of the 2000 coup corresponded with the surfacing of many of the tensions in the socio-political structure.

However, while Speight’s interests in 2000 were expressed similarly to those of Rabuka in 1987, there were significant differences in the outcomes of the two coups. Speight was perceived by many as not knowing what he was doing (Field et al 2005; Kurulo 2005, interview by author). So disorganized was he that it led to speculation that this was simply the first stage of the coup — and that the second, real, coup would be led by someone like Rabuka and enacted in the guise of saving Fiji from the first coup leaders (Field et al 2005). Rev Suliasi Kurulo, head of the Christian Mission Fellowship (CMF), argues that while normally the CMF would abstain from political involvement, it became aware that George Speight and his team could not agree on any solution and the military had been neutralized. Moreover, people, especially farmers, were suffering from the financial impact of the coup and children were not going to school. Kurulo wrote to Speight, demanding the release of the hostages (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

According to Kurulo, when 14 pastors then came together to pray, God spoke to all of them with the same message: that the reason the nation was in chaos was that the church was in chaos, and if the nation was to be united the church had to be united. As an outcome of this prayer meeting, a large meeting was called at the Christian Mission Fellowship’s World Harvest Centre for the families of the hostages and the shopkeepers whose shops had been looted (Kurulo 2005, interview by author). The meeting involved 12 churches — the CMF, the Evangelical Fellowship of Fiji, the Potter’s House Christian Church, the Church of Christ Raima, the Brethren Churches of Fiji, the New Life Church of Fiji, Grace Baptist Church, Suva Pentecostal Church, Christian City Church — Suva, Ambassadors for Christ and the Fiji Baptist Mission (Fiji Times 12/6/2000:2; 16/6/2000:3). Guests included a representative from the Great Council of Chiefs, Mahendra Chaudhry (the ousted Prime Minister), and Himmat Lodhia from the Chamber of Commerce, among others (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

Looters were told that they must return whatever they had looted and that the military must go back to its barracks. In Kurulo’s words, as representatives of the nation the religious leaders asked God for forgiveness, and also for forgiveness on behalf of the people in parliament including George Speight. In an emotional service, they knelt down to Chauchry and the Indian community in the same way that they would kneel down to a chief. Thus, the meeting offered both a practical and spiritual solution (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).
When Speight and his colleagues heard about the meeting, they called the CMF, saying they wanted a reconciliation meeting to be held at parliament. A group of pastors went to parliament to speak to Speight and other leaders and then visited the hostages. According to Kurulo, the coup had not gone according to plan and the coup leaders were becoming aware that they had to act to bring the nation together (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

While a number of churches were quick to denounce the coup by taking out advertisements in the Fiji Times and the Daily Post, the Methodist Church was very slow to distance itself from what had happened. Eventually, the President of the Methodist Church, Rev Tomasi Kanailagi, took out a full-page advertisement to say that the Methodist Church in Fiji did not support Speight because of his terrorist activities and would support the interim government because all of Speight's objectives had been met (Fiji Times 17/6/2000:44). The viewpoint expressed here was reiterated at various times by various individuals throughout the period of the coup (Field et al 2005).

In November 2000, a mutiny erupted at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks, with the intention of killing the head of the military, Commodore Bainimarama. In the fighting that followed, 30 soldiers were wounded and eight soldiers were killed, some with evidence of torture. However, Bainimarama escaped. Captain Shane Stevens, the head of the mutineers, and Ratu Inoke Takiveikata, a paramount chief from Naitasiri and the planner of the mutiny, are both serving life sentences, although the latter appears to be continuing to serve as a senator (Field et al 2005; Halapua 2003; Wilson, 2004; Parliament of Fiji, 2003).

After the 2000 coup, the government headed by Laisenia Qarase, himself a respected Methodist layman, created a special department called the Ministry of Reconciliation and Unity. This office aims to make connections across denominations and across faiths, and between the vanua (Fijian village communities), the private sector, and the NGOs. However, because it is headed by Methodists, events organized by the Ministry, such as the National Day of Prayer, are seen to prioritize Christianity over and above Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, and Bahá'í — the main religions practised by Indo-Fijians — despite efforts to be more inclusive (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author; see section on Government below).

Ultimately, the violence of the coup and the subsequent mutiny mobilized the Christian churches into action — although with quite different intentions. While the Roman Catholic Church was involved in reconciliation meetings between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians around the nation, a group of Protestant churches led by the Methodist Church began conducting reconciliation meetings to heal the rifts between Fijians. In Suva, this resulted in the formation of the ACCF: the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji. When it was formed in 2001, the ACCF consisted of 14 denominations in total. Although the Methodist Church instigated this development, it is still the only mainline church in the organization, which is, by and large, Pentecostal in nature (see section on the ACCF).

More recently, there has been major discussion and dissension with regard to the proposed Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill. The most contentious element of the Bill is the amnesty clause, which decriminalizes political acts and provides amnesty. The proposed legislation also calls for a Commission, designed to offer a space for people to come forward about their motivations and activities during the 2000 coup (Bale 2005).

Proponents of the Bill see an analogy between the Commission hearings and the Fijian tradition of bulubula, which requires dialogue between the perpetrators and the victims and the offering of a whale's tooth as a measure of reconciliation (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author; Kurulo 2005, interview by author; Prime Minister Qarase in Fiji Times 30/7/
05:2). According to Rev Ratu Epeli Kanaimawi, head of the ACCF, some of the perpetrators of the coup were given sentences that are turning them into hardened criminals, contradicting Fijian traditional practice in which people who committed offences would be supported by their village throughout their punishment and then welcomed back into the community with a feast. For him, the aim should be to reform those who participated in the coups, rather than to alienate them for ever (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). In the Bill, reconciliation is expressed in terms of restorative justice rather than retributive justice (Bale 2005).

Another aspect of the Bill is the increased power given to the Great Council of Chiefs. In Kanaimawi’s view, this logically supports the tendency of the public to look to the Great Council of Chiefs whenever there is a coup or disaster. Currently, the Great Council of Chiefs appoints the President, but it could be more active in responding to coups and resolving community tension. Kanaimawi agrees that some of these informal processes should be made legal, and customary law should receive more recognition in the statute books. If the Bill is administered correctly, then, it might meet the needs of the nation in such situations (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

Underlying the ideas of the proponents of the Bill is the view that reconciliation between Fijians “is probably of paramount importance to the country for the long-term stability of the nation” (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). In Kanaimawi’s view, the grievances of the 1987 coup leaders are still unknown, although it appeared that the motivations were political. Conducted by Fijians, the 2000 coup resulted in just as much Fijian suffering as the suffering of other ethnicities. According to this view, the Bill will facilitate access to the reasons behind the coups because the Commission will allow people to respond truthfully without any fear of recrimination. To refuse to allow such a process, then, will mean that the reasons behind the coups have not been addressed, and therefore that further coups are likely to ensue (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

Critics of the Bill, the most vocal of whom has been Commodore Bainimarama, fear that this will allow the coup leaders to escape justice, will weaken the role of the military and the courts, and therefore will encourage a culture of coups (Fiji Times 30/7/05:1). They also argue that both retributive and restorative justice are needed, and that reconciliation cannot be legislated (Baravi 2005, interview by author; Mataca 2005, interview by author; Fiji Times 30/7/05). Some also suggest that there is a tendency to cut the bulubulu short and to forget the need for time and dialogue (Mataca 2005, interview by author).

**The Evangelization of Fiji**

**The Introduction of British Protestantism**

In Fiji, Christianity — especially Methodism — has been closely aligned with the indigenous political structure since the conversion in the 1850s of the high chief, Cakobau. The first Methodist missionaries, William Cross and David Cargill, and their Tongan teachers, had arrived in 1835 (Thornley 1996; Halapua 2003). The Tongans also brought their word for religion, *lotu*, which has been used ever since as an allusion to Christianity, and, in particular, Methodism (Halapua 2003).

The conversion of Cakobau led to an enthusiastic and widespread acceptance of Methodism by lesser chiefs and all their communities. Because of this, chiefs still say that “the *lotu* belongs to the chiefs” (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). The spread of
Methodism resulted in a transformation of much of the social system. Practices such as cannibalism, the strangling of widows, and infanticide were outlawed. Fijians were also expected to assume a modest demeanor and cover their bodies. As it became common for Fijian men and women to wear the sulu when they became Christian, the expression “taking the sulu” was related to the act of conversion (Thomas 1992b:381). Moreover, as lotu became closely associated with vanua (land and community) and matanitu (chiefly system), it became central to the dominant indigenous Fijian identity (Tuwere 2002).

The efforts of the colonial administration to undermine the role of priestly clans in the installation of chiefs in much of Fiji, it has been argued, resulted in the emergence of a number of cargo cults, some of which had their roots equally in indigenous tradition and in Christianity. Local leaders such as Navosavakadua reworked Christian themes to contest the claims made by the administration, by identifying the Christian God as god of the land and by locating Christian sacred sites in local mountain ranges. Such cults were considered subversive and therefore suppressed (Kaplan 1995).

Nonetheless, indigenous Fijians continued to appropriate Christianity in imaginative ways. One instance of this was the myth of the Kauniton migration, a story which began to circulate in the 1890s. The Kauniton legend traces the migration of ancestral Fijians from Teheran in the Middle East, through Iraq, across the desert and the Red Sea, and through Ethiopia to Lake Tanganyika, where they are said to have settled. According to the story, they then moved to the coast where they built canoes out of driftwood and sailed via Madagascar to New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomon Islands. From there, they landed at Vuda and travelled round Viti Levu and the rest of the group of islands that make up Fiji. Basil Thomson, head of the Native Land Commission at the time, claimed that he was told about the boat, the Kauniton, which first brought people to Fiji, by an informant from Beqa Island, and published it. The tale regained significance 70 years later, in the 1960s, when the paramount chief of Verata presented the same story in a series of radio broadcasts. The narrative was further disseminated by the Methodist Church and by the government, which published it in its newspaper, Na Mata, at a time when Fijians were searching for a national identity (Tuwere 2002).

Methodism dominated the religious scene, but Fiji’s religious landscape was to become highly pluralistic. Catholic missionaries came to Fiji in 1844 but tended to go where the Methodists had little influence. Later, Anglican and Presbyterian churches were established for the white settlers. A mission that contrasted in style and doctrine with the British mainline churches was the Seventh-day Adventists, who began in Fiji in the 1890s (Seventh-day Adventist n.d.). During the period of indentured labour (1879–1916), Indian immigrants brought Hinduism and Islam. Then, in the 20th century, American missionaries brought revivalist Pentecostal sects. While the Assemblies of God have been in Fiji since 1926 and are therefore a well-established church, many of the Pentecostal churches were begun by American missionaries only after Fiji’s independence in 1970. Indeed, it can be said that the introduction of specific types of religion is associated (with exceptions) with three historical moments: the introduction of the mainline churches before the beginning of British colonization; the introduction of Hinduism and Islam with indentured labour; and the introduction of American forms of Protestantism after independence. Since then, the emerging trend has been the increasing growth and proliferation of Pentecostal churches, especially after the 1987 coups.