

Murmurs of Dissent: Non-Resistance on Fiji Plantations

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The history of the Indian indenture experience in Fiji presents us with an apparent paradox. On the one hand, Fiji was widely reputed to be one of the worst employers of indentured labor in the world.¹ Yet, on the other hand, throughout the entire period of indenture, between 1879 and 1920, the Indian indentured laborers mounted few organized protests against the oppressive conditions under which they lived and worked. It is impossible to know precisely why the Indian laborers acted the way they did since they have left behind few records of their own thoughts, perceptions, and experiences of indenture. However, by using existing documentary, oral, and some hitherto unused quantitative evidence, it is possible to suggest reasons for their motivations and behavior.

This paper examines the social, political, economic, and legal controls to which the indentured laborers were subjected, and argues that the primary reason for the paucity of active protest on their part was the authoritarian character of the plantation system in Fiji. The frequency and effectiveness with which the employers were able to prosecute their laborers, year after year, starkly underlined the workers' vulnerability and reinforced the futility of overt action. Nonresistance, thus, became a strategy for survival. But the indentured laborers' difficulties were also compounded by serious problems of organization within the nascent Indian community itself. Their diverse social and cultural background, their differing aspirations and motivations for migrating to Fiji, their varying individual experiences on the plantations, and the absence of institutional structures within the indentured community, that could have

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become avenues for mobilization, also helped to reduce the potential for collective action.

Fiji was, to some extent, unique among the plantation colonies of the Pacific; and contrasts with Hawai'i are particularly striking.² Unlike Hawai'i, the sugarcane plantations in Fiji, which generated the bulk of the colonial revenue, were run primarily by one company, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) of Australia. This monopolistic position enabled the CSR to exercise a preponderant influence in the affairs of colonial Fiji. Again unlike Hawai'i, which drew most of its contract laborers from China, Japan, the Philippines, and elsewhere, Fiji relied chiefly on Indian laborers to supplement, and eventually supplant, the dwindling supplies from neighboring Pacific islands. This recruitment pattern bequeathed a bi-polar demographic legacy which has long resided at the core of many problems facing contemporary Fiji. But while the contrasts are important, the basic experience of Fiji's Indian indentured laborers is echoed, in more or less degree, throughout all the plantation colonies in the Pacific and elsewhere. It is my hope that the argument and evidence presented in this paper will provide a basis for future comparative studies of the plantation working experience in the Pacific islands.

BACKGROUND: INTRODUCTION OF INDIANS

The introduction of Indian laborers into Fiji began in 1879, 45 years after the system of indentured emigration from India was first started in 1834 and five years after Fiji became a British Crown Colony in 1874.³ Reluctantly acquired, the new colony was expected to become economically self-sustaining in a short period of time. Yet, neither capital nor labor, the two obvious preconditions for rapid economic development, were readily available in the new colony. To obtain the former, Sir Arthur Gordon, the first substantive governor of Fiji, turned to plantation agriculture and invited the CSR to extend its operation to Fiji, which it did in 1882, remaining in the country until 1973. For a cheap and reliable source of labor supply, he turned to India which was already the supplier of indentured labor to British colonies scattered across the globe.

Altogether, between 1879 and 1916, when indentured emigration to Fiji was finally abolished, 60,000 Indian indentured laborers were imported into the colony, three-quarters from North India, and the remaining from South India after 1903. Internal migration was on the increase in the Indian subcontinent in the 19th Century, and

most of Fiji's migrants were a part of an already uprooted peasantry in search of employment in urban industrial centers such as Calcutta.⁴ Economic hardships caused by British penetration of the Indian countryside provided the primary impetus for migration, helped along by the recruiters' suitably embellished tales of opportunity and wealth awaiting the recruits in Fiji and other colonies.

Several factors in the laborers' background hindered the development of a cohesive Indian community in Fiji and severely undermined the prospects for united action against its adversaries. To start with, a very large proportion of the recruits were sojourners. Their sojourner mentality was manifested in several ways, most significantly in the yearly remittances to the family they had left behind in India. From Fiji alone, between 1889 and 1912, the returning migrants deposited £62,773 for transmission to India, while taking with them jewelry and other items worth £111,962.⁵ Forty percent of the migrants and their families eventually returned to India at the expiry of their contracts. The desire and the pressure to save, to abide by the rules, and to return to India at an early date were the primary considerations in the sojourners calculations; and they acted as powerful disincentives to any involvement in time-consuming and potentially costly struggles against the plantation authorities.

The diverse cultural and social background of the Indian laborers also hindered the development of common perceptions, interests, and values among them. The laborers came from all strata of rural Indian society. More than 300 different castes were represented in the emigrating population who originated from more than 250 districts in Northern India alone.⁶ Speaking a host of different tongues, worshipping a multitude of different gods, and occupying widely varying positions in the Indian social structure, they were initially brought together at the emigration depots in Calcutta and Madras, on the long sea voyage, and on the plantations where they lived and worked together for five years, at the very least. Emigration across the seas was a traumatic experience for a primarily inland people and fragmented the values of the "old world," especially those that emphasized adhering to tradition and maintaining group solidarity. New values, forged in the crucible of indenture, stressed new goals: individual achievement and personal survival. This transition from an emphasis on communal to individual values was not precipitous. Many social and cultural institutions survived the ordeal, but the fundamental change in the Indians' world view was unmistakable.

The collective age of the emigrating population was another factor

that worked against the laborers. The overwhelming majority of the migrants, both males and females, were young: 87 percent were under 26 years of age.⁷ This demographic pattern is not surprising. The planters wanted young workers, and in India, as elsewhere, these were the most mobile and adventuresome. But like their counterparts in other traditional societies, these young people did not enjoy a high status and were generally untutored and unskilled in deeper political and cultural matters and unprepared for leadership roles. The disruption of the institutions of religion, caste, and community, which accompanied emigration and indenture, further exacerbated their problems.

Furthermore, the laborers had little or no formal education, certainly not in English, and this placed them at a great disadvantage in articulating their grievances to the colonial officialdom in Fiji. The new kind of leadership that emerged on the plantations focused on the *sirdar*, or Indian foreman, and it did not serve, nor indeed was it designed to serve, the interest of the indentured workers. The new leadership was, in Hugh Tinker's apt phrase, "lackey leadership,"⁸ created and sustained by the plantation management to achieve its goal of exercising a tight control over the labor force. As we shall see later, the *sirdars* were chosen for their toughness and for their "ability to get the immigrants to complete their tasks in the field by methods which were anything but diplomatic."⁹ They often turned out to be the indentured laborers' worst enemies. "The sirdars were never with us,"¹⁰ recalled one indentured laborer, echoing the sentiments of many. The absence of good leadership, then, posed a major problem for the laborers in their struggle against the planters.

However, while these internal social and political constraints were certainly important, it should also be recognized that harsh as indenture was, for some immigrants, at least, it still represented an improvement over their position in India. This was particularly the case with the lower castes who were permanently consigned to the fringes of rural Indian society as untouchables, tenants-at-will, and landless laborers with little hope for betterment in this life. The relentless pace of plantation work was nothing new to them as strenuous physical labor was a daily condition of their lives in India. In Fiji, at least, their individual identity was recognized and their effort rewarded on the basis of achievement rather than traditional status. For them, the leveling tendencies of the plantation system heralded a welcome change that broke away from an oppressive past and promised a brighter future in which they and their children had

a place. Others, perhaps those who had been victims of natural calamities, such as famines and droughts, or of exploitative landlords, welcomed the peace and security which the new environment offered them. Indeed, for them indenture was better than the life they encountered after they became "free." Reflecting on his indenture days, one laborer told the anthropologist Adrian Mayer in the 1950s:

The time of indenture was better than now. You did your task, and knew that this was all. You knew you will get food everyday. I had shipmates with me, and we weren't badly off when there was a good sirdar and overseer. Of course, if they were bad then you had to be careful. But now what do I do? I have cane land, bullocks and a home. Yet every night I am awake, listening to see if someone is not trying to burn my cane, or steal my animals. In indenture lines [estate housing] we slept well, we did not worry.¹¹

People with such satisfying memories were probably in the minority, but they had little reason to fight the system.

Important as the above mentioned conditions were, however, it was the conditions within Fiji itself that posed the most serious obstacles to the development of organizational activity among the indentured laborers. Upon arrival in the colony, the laborers were allotted to employers on the basis of requisitions received by the Immigration Department. The laborers, of course, were not given a choice of employers nor, ordinarily, the right to change them on account of ill-treatment or any other reason. On the plantations the movement of laborers was controlled by the overseers whose decisions were guided not by humanitarian concerns but by the needs of the plantation management. Occasionally families were broken up and sent to different areas for long periods of time,¹² while on some estates laborers were constantly moved about from one place to another to prevent alleged breaches of the peace.¹³ Immigration officials, at the behest of planters, split up immigrants from the same districts of origin to prevent the possibility of "ganging." Older, more experienced immigrants were often made to work with newer arrivals to help them acculturate into the new way of life. The practice of breaking up old connections and creating and fostering new social groupings rendered the laborers vulnerable and thus more amenable to plantation control.

The laborers were further immobilized by the fact that the estates they worked on were widely scattered across the two main islands of Fiji, frequently separated from each other by rugged mountainous terrain, rivers, and generally poor communication. Thus, a very large number of indentured laborers in different parts of the island spent their entire indenture insulated from each other,

without the opportunity to develop and coordinate strategies for collective action.

Limitations imposed by geography were compounded by indenture legislation which severely restricted mobility. An ordinance passed in 1886,¹⁴ and in force for much of the indenture period, made it unlawful for more than five laborers employed upon the same plantation to absent themselves from employment for any purpose (such as for laying complaints) without the authorization of the employer. Anyone violating this law could be fined up to £2 or be imprisoned up to two months. Even laborers who had completed the required amount of work had to seek the permission of the overseer before they could leave the plantation. The law obliged the overseer to grant permission, but it could not compel him to issue the ticket of absence. Without this piece of paper, any person would be apprehended by the police or the overseers and convicted for desertion. In practice, for the most part, the movement of the laborers depended upon the goodwill of their overseers.

CSR AND THE COLONIAL OFFICIALDOM

The employers not only enjoyed great authority over their laborers but also exercised considerable influence on the colonial government. This was largely due to the dominance of the CSR in the colonial economy. At first only one among several sugar companies, the CSR was able, because of its more secure financial base and sound management, to withstand economic vicissitudes and edge others out of competition. By the turn of the century it was the dominant concern in the Fijian sugar industry, with investments in excess of £1.4 million and employing over three-quarters of all the indentured laborers.¹⁵ From 1924 to 1973 the CSR and its wholly owned Fiji subsidiary, the South Pacific Sugar Mills Limited, was the sole miller of sugar cane in Fiji. The revenue-minded colonial government had a keen appreciation of the role and the contribution of the CSR, and the company used its dominant position as a powerful leverage to obtain concessions and to "rely on government not to check illegal efforts of planters and its overseers to reduce the costs of labor."¹⁶

Furthermore, the colonial government consistently sided with the CSR in cases where there was dispute about work and compensation. In 1887 Bootan, an indentured laborer, lost his hand in a mill accident at Nausori.¹⁷ The CSR refused to pay the injured laborer his wages and rations on the grounds that it could not be "called upon

to help a man who will not help himself." Without his wages and perhaps with a family to support, Bootan would have to expend his meager savings, contract indebtedness, absent himself from work, and have his indenture extended. The Colonial Secretary endorsed the CSR position even while acknowledging that the injury had "not resulted from carelessness" on Bootan's part. He wrote: "The bare fact that a servant is injured whilst working for the master's benefit does not impose any obligation on the master."

The government adopted a similar position on the question of remuneration for incomplete tasks. When indentured laborers were unable to complete tasks which themselves were widely believed even by the colonial officials to be excessive, the CSR refused to pay them wages, even for the completed portion of work. The Attorney General of Fiji in 1886 offered an opinion that pleased the planters and sanctioned their practice: "It may be stated as a general legal proposition that if a person engages to perform a task, he forfeits all claim to the wage: for the performance of the task is the condition precedent to the payment of the wage."¹⁸ Later, in the 1890s, however, with mounting evidence of overtasking and the increasing misery among the indentured laborers, the colonial government was forced to require employers to pay wages proportionate to the amount of work accomplished.

Clearly, there was an identity of interest between the colonial government and the planters, but it would be misleading to suggest a simple collusion between the two. Some governors and immigration officials were more sympathetic than others. Under Sir John Thurston's tenure as governor (1888-1897), for example, initially there was an apparent unwillingness on his part to enforce the existing laws governing indenture. Thurston was faced, however, with an economic depression and a precarious financial situation in the colony, which weakened his hand in remonstrating with the CSR.¹⁹ And he appears to have shared the planters' view of the indentured laborers as lazy, improvident, and disinclined to work except under close supervision and strict discipline. He therefore came to sanction progressively more stringent controls upon the indentured population and new repressive legislation which stipulated severe penalties for even minor breaches of the labor laws.

An Ordinance passed in 1896²⁰ imposed fines of up to three shillings per day or imprisonment for three months with hard labor if the laborers were convicted for "unlawful absence," "lack of ordinary diligence," and "neglect." It was made unlawful for laborers visiting

their employers' office or house or the office of a Stipendiary Magistrate or any other public official to make complaint. The punishment for this offence was a fine of up to £1 or one month's imprisonment with hard labor. The indentured laborers could smoke outside their dwelling houses only at the risk of being fined 10 shillings or one week's imprisonment with hard labor. Further, it was during Thurston's tenure that the "block system" was introduced whereby indentured laborers could be required to work on different groups or blocks of plantations owned by the same employer. This practice brought much hardship to the laborers for it meant longer working hours with no additional pay, separation from friends and family, and general uncertainty. Sensitive officials said as much, but Thurston did not pay heed.

But perhaps the governor's most serious act of disregard for the welfare of the laborers was retrenching the office of the Agent General of Immigration in 1888 and amalgamating it with the office of the Receiver-General. The services of the Immigration Department were curtailed at a time these were most needed. Inspections became infrequent and abuses went unrectified; and when some of these came to light, they were not mentioned in the *Annual Reports*, which themselves were not forwarded to India and to London for the fear that a knowledge of the conditions on the Fiji plantations might lead to the cancellation of indentured emigration to the colony.²¹

Other governors, however, were marginally more sympathetic to the plight of the indentured laborers, though they all were reluctant to inquire too closely into the affairs of the CSR. As Governor Sir Everard im Thurn said in 1903, "I was (and am) most reluctant to interfere with the Company's management of their own affairs, my view being that a Governor should not interfere except on urgent public grounds."²² In short, the colonial government did not take seriously its role as the trustee of the indentured laborers' rights, and this, as much as anything else, aggravated the laborers' demoralization and engendered a lack of confidence in obtaining redress for their grievances.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT: THEORY AND PRACTICE

In theory, the conditions of employment and the general provisions of indenture were clearly laid out. The "Form of Agreement for Intending Emigrants," which outlined the details, was distributed by recruiters and sub-agents in the districts of recruitment in India.²³ Among other things, it stipulated that indenture would be for five

years, that the immigrants would be required to do work relating to the cultivation of soil or the manufacture of products, and that they would work five and a half days a week (Sundays and holidays being free) at the daily rate of one shilling (12 pennies) for men and nine pennies for women. Further, the laborers would be given the choice of either time work (nine hours daily) or task work, the latter defined as the amount of work an able-bodied adult could accomplish in six and a half hours of steady work. The employers were to provide free accommodation as well as rations for the first six months at a daily cost of four pennies for each person over 12 years of age. Finally, the indentured laborers could return to India at their own expense at the end of five years, or at government expense at the end of 10 years of "industrial residence" in the colony.

By the standards of the 19th Century, when the very notion of a contract between an employer and an employee was largely unknown in many parts of the world, the Agreement was a truly remarkable document. Students of British imperial history have been at pains to point this out in an effort to provide a more sympathetic appreciation of the imperial position.²⁴ The critics of indenture, on the other hand, dismissed the document as inadequate and deceptive. For them, the real significance of the Agreement for the indentured laborers lay not in what was stated on paper, but rather in what was left unsaid—especially about the social and economic realities they would encounter in Fiji, the actual conditions of employment, and severe penalties for breaches of the labor ordinances. The critics asserted that deception, not voluntary agreement, had led the Indians to enlist for Fiji, and that, if they had been fully apprised of the conditions which awaited them in the colony, the recruits might not have migrated.²⁵ Deception was certainly present in the system, as it is bound to be in most systems of labor recruitment. But it was not the prime mover of people; the deteriorating economic condition of the Indian countryside was.²⁶ Would the emigrants have migrated had they been apprised fully of the conditions that lay ahead in Fiji? We can only speculate at the answer, but the fact that many saw emigration as a temporary strategy to alleviate some plight at home may suggest that a fuller knowledge of Fiji probably would not have played a decisive role in their decision.

A more serious breach of trust occurred after the indentured laborers arrived in Fiji where there was a great discrepancy between legislative enactment and its enforcement by the officials of the Immigration Department. In the first decade of indenture, a number

of *ad hoc* legislative measures were passed to govern indenture. These were consolidated into a single legislation for the first time in 1891.²⁷ With minor subsequent amendments, this law provided the basic framework of indenture in Fiji. It was a very thorough piece of legislation (of 64 pages) which defined all aspects of plantation life, from the general powers of immigration officials to the release of prisoners and their delivery from public institutions. In practice, however, the ideals enshrined in the legislation varied greatly from the realities which confronted the laborers in the field.

One of the most important provisions of the Ordinance was the creation of the Office of the Agent General of Immigration, known in some other colonies as the Protector of Immigrants. The AGI was required to look after the welfare of the immigrants and to ensure that the employers fulfilled their part of the contract. But while the AGI's responsibilities and powers were clearly defined, many factors combined to limit the extent of his effectiveness. The retrenchment of his office following its amalgamation with the office of the Receiver-General was a serious blow. Much depended on the energy, diligence, and attitude of the person who occupied the office. Some AGIs, such as Henry Anson and John Forster, were insistent that the planters honor their obligation to provide proper housing and medical facilities to the immigrants, even at the risk of inviting the wrath of their superiors. Most others, however, saw themselves as managers of the laborers rather than as their trustees. Moreover, many of them shared, with the planters, a deeply derogatory view of the indentured laborers. A. R. Coates, the Agent General of Immigration in 1911, penned a portrait of the laborers that reflected the racist ethos of the times. The Indian indentured laborers, he wrote, were a people "of emotional temperament [who] have low moral standards, [are] prone to trickery, and under certain excitement to crimes of violence, even under the discipline of continuous labor."²⁸

Such views blunted the sensitivity of those in power toward the laborers. Over and over again the indentured laborers were apportioned a large part of the blame for the social and moral ills of indenture, such as suicide, murder, a high infant mortality rate, and unstable family life.²⁹ There was also the tendency to see problems from the point of view of the planters. When in May 1886 indentured laborers in Koronivia struck because their tasks had been increased from seven to ten chains (one chain is 22 yards), J. C. Carruthers, the Sub-Agent, did not ask why the tasks had been increased but argued, as the planters did: "The men certainly had not the shadow

of a right to leave their work en masse and rush to Suva to complain, without so much as putting shovel to ground to see whether they could do the 10 chain task." Among the remedies Carruthers recommended for stopping future strikes were: a liberal use of corporal punishment (which "would no doubt have a marvelous effect upon habitual idlers"); infliction of heavier fines than the maximum three shillings provided by law; limiting the option of fine in favor of imprisonment; making prison work tougher ("let hard labor be hard labor"); and instituting a system of random checks for leave of absence tickets. The planters could not have asked for a better ally than Carruthers.³⁰

The AGI's main contacts with the indentured laborers in the field were the District Medical Officers (DMOs) and Inspectors of Immigrants. The Labor Ordinance required all planters to provide adequate medical facilities to the laborers under their control. The DMOs were expected to visit the plantation hospitals regularly and to inspect "the supply of water for and the rationing of any such immigrants in such hospital and the supply of clothing, bedding, furniture, medicine, medical comforts and medical and surgical appliances." They were empowered to impose a penalty of up to £10 on planters who failed to provide full amenities to the laborers.³¹ The reality was somewhat different. The *Annual Report* of 1894 noted:

The efficiency of the medical care required by the law is somewhat hampered by the expense (a serious one on small plantations) of maintaining a competent hospital attendant, the want of a working standard of competence and the absence of any control over this class of estate official by the DMO.³²

How effective were the occasional inspection visits of the District Medical Officers? One indentured immigrant recalled:

We were never told about the arrival of the big doctor. Once or twice a year, a new *sahib* would suddenly appear, peep into our rooms, shake his head, lift his nose to smell something, point to the overgrown grass to the accompanying *sahib*, talk very fast gesturing at our toilets, and then walk away smartly. Sometimes he would ask us whether we liked the place. We would complain about the overcrowded room, about theft, about heavy work, and other hardships. Once he was gone, our complaints remained only complaints and nothing came out of them.³³

The inspectors, whose job was to enforce the employers compliance with the provisions of the Labor Ordinance, also functioned with partial effectiveness. Again, much depended upon the integrity and diligence of the individual inspectors. Some were admirably persistent in investigating the laborers' complaints, but many were not. They came from the ranks of the CSR overseers and generally shared their

values and interests. K. L. Gillion, the historian of Fiji indenture, writes that the Indians had "no confidence in most of the inspectors." He goes on to argue:

... inspectors shared much of the outlook and attitudes of the overseers, and it is not surprising that the employers were generally satisfied with their work. Although there were several instances of friction between employers and inspectors, usually the Europeans of a particular locality belonged to the same social circle, the government officers being dependent on the employers and overseers for fellowship, and on the companies for meat, ice, and transport for their families. The road to ease and even promotion did not lie along the way of trouble-making.³⁴

Even the more assiduous inspectors conceded the hopelessness of their task. As one official noted in 1892, it was only a few cases in which the inspector could "induce the employer to give relief, knowing even then that the relief will only be temporary and his interference be bitterly though silently resented."³⁵ And there were many means by which the overseers could pressure their employees to withhold evidence from the inspectors. One indentured laborer recalled being told by an overseer:

You know, we white men can find out things quickly. But before we can find out, your sirdar will find out about your reports. He has got friends among you. You should be able to guess what the outcome will be if you pinch the serpent. You have to work under me all the time. Don't spoil your chances of survival in five minutes talk.³⁶

For many immigrants, then, the key to an untroublesome future lay in complying with the wishes of the overseers and *sirdars*, not in creating trouble for them.

Even magistrates showed a conscious or unconscious disposition to favor the planters.³⁷ They deliberately stuck to the letter of the law, even in circumstances where the evidence was far from conclusive. This was especially the case in complaints about task work. The Agreement which the laborers had signed in India had stated the possibility of both time as well as task work. But soon after the introduction of Indians into the colony, a change had been effected in Fiji which practically abolished the alternative of task work from the very beginning,³⁸ a significant alteration which was not brought to the attention to potential recruits in India. When the laborers sought a legal clarification of their understanding, they were fined for absence from work and had their indentures extended. As one magistrate in Lautoka stated in 1903: "I can only assume as before stated that they, one and all, perfectly understand the terms and conditions of their contract and pains and penalties attaching thereto for non-fulfilment."³⁹

Excessive penalties, too, were common. A. R. Coates wrote in 1910:

... instances have been brought to the notice of His Excellency the Governor of excessive or improper penalties being awarded for minor breaches of the Ordinance that by some magistrates views are held in regard to the position and liability of an indentured immigrant, that are not in accordance with the letter or the intention of the law.⁴⁰

The system of colonial justice, even government officials were forced to conclude, was double-faced for the indentured laborers.

LABORERS' COMPLAINTS AGAINST EMPLOYERS

Further evidence of this is provided in the startling discrepancy between the extent to which the indentured laborers and their employers were able to use the courts to enforce the Labor Ordinance. Table I,⁴¹ compiled by this author from figures in the *Annual Reports*, gives an indication of the nature and volume of charges the indentured laborers, both males and females, brought against their employers. Several things stand out. The first is the extremely small number of complaints which the laborers laid against the employers.

TABLE I
INDENTURED LABORERS' COMPLAINTS AGAINST EMPLOYERS

Complaints	Years									
	1886	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	Total
Assault and Battery	29	18	6	7	8	28	14	36	40	186
Non-Payment of Wages	—	3	6	7	12	10	25	15	19	97
Not Providing Tools	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	—	4
Not Supplying Rations	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Not Providing Work	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	3	6
Using Insulting Language	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	2
Requiring Work Illegally	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	3
Falsifying Pay-list	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3
Failure to take delivery of discharged prisoner	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Miscellaneous	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Overtasking	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Withdrawn	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	3	6
Dismissed	18	8	5	16	21	34	30	36	35	203
Convicted	12	13	7	1	3	7	15	18	32	108

Indeed, there were some years in the 1880s in which the laborers were unable to lay any complaints at all. The paucity of the complaints, however, was no indication of the plight of the indentured laborers. As one official noted in 1892:

That there are no or few complaints is no more an indication of perfect satisfaction than the paucity of departmental prosecutions of employers is an indication of a careful and conscientious observance of the law and their obligation by the latter.⁴²

Laying a complaint against an employer was a serious "offence" and entailed great risks for the indentured laborer. It involved absence from work and therefore loss of pay, the extension of indenture by the days the immigrant was absent, and the wrath of the overseers. There were also instances of laborers being prevented from reporting abuses to the inspectors. These were especially common in isolated areas such as Labasa where, wrote Sergeant Mason in 1897, "it is a usual thing for Indians to come to the police station between the hours of 9 and 12 at night to complain of the treatment they get on some of the plantations."⁴³ But perhaps a more important reason why the laborers reported so few complaints was the "uncertainty of relief":⁴⁴ after taking all the risk, to see the accusations against the overseers discharged or the overseers fined lightly, as often happened, or to witness the reluctance of the Immigration Department to press charges even in the face of solid evidence against the employers. Another striking feature illustrated by Table I is the surprisingly low conviction rate of the employers, which is in marked contrast to the conviction rate of the laborers, as we shall see later. The main reasons for this are not difficult to find: the laborers' ignorance of the law, inexperience in conducting their cases, frequently without any assistance from the Immigration Department, and, as mentioned above, the prejudice of the colonial judiciary in favor of the planters. Their cases also broke down because the overseers were able to bribe or coerce other laborers to give testimony in their favor.⁴⁵

Assault and battery were the major complaints of the laborers, accounting for 61 percent of all the charges. To some extent, this is not really surprising since violence, coercion, and control are an integral part of the plantation system. As Eric Wolf has pointed out, a plantation is "an instrument of force, wielded to create and maintain a class-structure of workers and owners, connected hierarchically by a staff-line of overseers and managers."⁴⁶ Race also contributed its own share, not so much in causing violence to the

indentured workers as in blunting sensitivity to it. All the planters and overseers were white, while the laboring force was colored, members of an assumed inferior race whose own best interests were served by being kept under white tutelage.

Employer violence was rampant in Fiji at the turn of the century. Governor Sir Everard im Thurn noted in 1907 that "the habitual attitude of many of the overseers towards the immigrants under them is, to put it plainly, brutal,"⁴⁷ and he legislated stiffer penalties for the "ill-use" of immigrants. A few years earlier an official had noted that if "assault convictions mean that a man is a bad character then nearly all the officers of the company (CSR) are bad characters."⁴⁸ It was on mechanically-run CSR plantations in such remote areas as Labasa and Ba that overseer violence was especially bad.

The overseers were assisted by *sirdars*, described by one scholar as the "lynchpin of the system."⁴⁹ As already mentioned, the *sirdars* were chosen for their unquestioning loyalty and willingness to serve the plantation management. The relationship between the overseer and his *sirdar* was one of mutual self-interest. An effective overseer needed a loyal and strong *sirdar*, while the latter needed the ear of his master. The threat of dismissal or relegation to field labor was a powerful incentive to please the management. The position also brought power and influence in the indentured community, and the *sirdars* used these effectively to enhance their own interests. They were allowed to own stores on the plantations, and, as one official pointed out, "to those who have a knowledge of the conditions on the plantation, it is unnecessary to state how pressure can be put on an immigrant by the *sirdar* to compel him to deal at his store."⁵⁰ They extorted money from immigrants and even forced laborers in their charge to work free for them on Saturdays and Sundays.⁵¹ Many interfered with indentured women, and some even engaged in sexual trafficking.⁵² There was at least one instance when a *sirdar* participated in the murder of a man who had caused trouble for his overseer.⁵³

The indentured laborers found it extremely difficult to obtain convictions for assault and battery despite clear evidence of physical injury inflicted by overseers. A case in point is overseer H. E. Forrest's assault on his cook, Thermadu, because the breakfast curry had not been prepared to the overseer's satisfaction.⁵⁴ Thermadu had evidence of physical injury on his body: a black eye and a long cut over his left temple. Forrest, of course, denied the assault, and was able to call two *sirdars* to support his evidence. His counsel "practically put the words into the mouths of all the witnesses for the

defence who were not cross-examined nor examined by the court." The charge was dismissed, despite the fact that Thermadu's testimony was "sound and practically unshaken by rigid cross-examination by counsel and court." This was not an isolated incident. As John Forster had correctly remarked seven years earlier in 1900:

There have been too many cases where the complainants have the evidence of violence on their bodies and yet could not prosecute successfully. It is obvious that where violence is resorted to on a plantation and goes lightly punished, the victims might often be unable to prove their case and are under strong inducement to abstain from complaint or to withdraw complaints made.⁵⁵

While the assault and battery cases were very difficult to prosecute, it was especially difficult to convict European overseers. As figures in Table II show,⁵⁶ only one-third of the overseers were successfully prosecuted. Even when the overseers were convicted, the penalty was light. They usually escaped with small fines, hardly ever imprisonment, especially before the turn of the century. Some employers even thought the transfer of the offending overseer to another estate was a sufficient punishment in itself.⁵⁷ The *sirdars*, too, got away with light fines, and some even with a history of previous

TABLE II
CONVICTION RATE FOR EUROPEAN OVERSEERS

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Charges</i>	<i>Convictions</i>	<i>Withdrawn/Dismissed</i>	<i>% Convicted</i>
1897	64	32	32	50
1898	7	4	3	57
1899	10	4	6	40
1900	2	—	2	0
1901	5	1	4	20
1902	14	6	8	43
1904	37	9	28	24
1905	20	4	16	20
1907	35	8	27	23
1908	30	8	22	27
1909	29	7	22	24
1910	39	5	34	13
1911	48	14	34	29
1912	62	22	40	35
Total	402	124 (30.8%)	278 (69.2%)	Av. 28.9

convictions were re-employed, in spite of the remonstrance of the Immigration Department.⁵⁸ In open defiance of the law, some overseers publicly returned their *sirdars'* fines, and the "fact of such return has been made known to the immigrant laborers,"⁵⁹ further undermining their confidence in the efficacy of colonial justice and reminding them, if, indeed, any reminder was needed, of who had the last laugh.

The nonpayment of wages constituted the second largest ground for the laborers' complaint against the employers. The Agreement the indentured laborers had signed in India had promised a daily wage of one shilling for men and nine pennies for women. This was the maximum pay the laborers could make under ideal conditions, but these hardly obtained on the Fiji plantations. In fact, it was not until 1908, 28 years after indenture had begun in Fiji, that adult males were able to earn an average wage of one shilling per working day.⁶⁰ Sickness, absence, non-completion of tasks, and other such factors explain why the indentured laborers were unable to earn the maximum pay for such a long period of time.

The greed of the planters also played a part. Some of them devised their own tactics to retain a portion of the laborers wages as punishment for absence without their approval. In some places the planters used the practice of "double cut" by which they docked two days pay for each day the laborer was away from work. Others disregarded the rules for the time when the wages had to be paid. The Immigration Ordinance required the payment of all wages on the Saturday of each week after noon, or, if this was not possible because of bad weather or public holidays, on the first available working day of the following week after working hours.⁶¹ In practice, however, different estates paid their workers at different times, depending on the convenience to the employer. On some estates only fully earned wages were paid weekly, others being paid at the end of the month. Thus, an immigrant who had a dispute about the amount of work completed in the first week had to wait until the end of the month before he could take any action. His disadvantage vis-a-vis the employer increased with each day. Inspector Hamilton Hunter noted:

This delay confuses the immigrant as to time, and he has merely his own vague recollection of day and date to lay before the courts, whereas the employer has his field book and paysheet to produce, and these are taken in evidence that the task was either badly done or not completed.⁶²

Once again, the powerlessness of the indentured laborers was starkly underlined.

It is remarkable that for the years included in Table I, in only one year (1892) was there a single charge for overtaking laid against the employers. This is especially surprising in view of the universal complaint of overtaking among the laborers.⁶³ Overtaking was the major cause of the Koronivia strike of 1886. A task, it will be recalled, was supposed to be the amount of work an able-bodied laborer could accomplish in six and a half hours of steady labor. In practice, as the Immigration Department officials themselves conceded, tasks were frequently set by overseers on the basis of the amount of work a few hand-picked men could do.⁶⁴ As one official wrote in 1886:

I believe that they are being pushed too hard and think that a proper man should pass the greater part of his time on the river and go about constantly and examine all tasks and assist Indians in prosecuting employers.⁶⁵

Yet prosecutions for overtaking were virtually non-existent. The main reason for this was the absence of a precise definition of what constituted an acceptable amount of task work. Wrote one official:

The indefiniteness of the legal definition obviously leaves the limits of a fair task entirely an open question and a matter of opinion, and supposing a prosecution for overtaking can be and is instituted, the weight of opinion is found on the side of skilled evidence the employer can bring forward in his favour as against the evidence of an ignorant coolie. The court has to decide on evidence not on the private opinion of the presiding magistrate.⁶⁷

The "ignorant coolie," of course, was fully aware of this reality. When redress could not be obtained for overtaking, it was pointless to complain.

EMPLOYERS' COMPLAINTS AGAINST LABORERS

In contrast to the indentured laborers, the planters enjoyed astounding success in prosecuting a very high percentage of their workers. Every year, as Table III shows,⁶⁷ they laid complaints against a very large proportion of the indentured population. Both men and women were complained against, though in a number of years proportionately more women were complained against than indentured men. Women constituted a more vulnerable segment of the indentured population. They absented or were forced to absent themselves from work more often than men on account of the pressure of domestic work, pregnancy, child rearing, and sickness, and thus accumulated a higher rate of complaints against themselves.⁶⁸ Some areas were worse than others. Labasa stands out, as it did in many other respects also. The situation there was especially bad during the 1890s. In 1895, 96 percent of the total indentured

TABLE III
PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS COMPLAINED AGAINST

Year	No. Males and Females/100 Adults		No. of Total Charges	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1897	73.8	26.2	65.2	34.8
1898	74.3	25.7	69.4	30.6
1899	73.9	26.1	67.3	32.7
1900	73.9	26.1	61.7	38.3
1901	72.8	27.1	56.2	43.8
1902	72.7	27.3	70.3	29.7
1903	74.2	25.8	75.4	24.6
1904	72.0	28.0	76.8	23.2
1905	73.5	26.5	76.0	24.0
1906	73.4	26.6	73.5	26.5
1907	74.7	25.3	70.5	29.6
Average	73.6	26.4	69.3	30.7

population was complained against; in 1896, 68 percent; in 1898, 90 percent; and in 1899, 68 percent. Most of the complaints were successfully prosecuted. Ba was a distant runner-up. The highest percentage of complaints ever laid there was in 1895, or 50 percent.⁶⁹ The reasons for the differences among the different districts are not explained in the *Annual Reports*, but they are not difficult to guess. Labasa was far away, on the island of Vanua Levu, inspections of plantations were less frequent there, and the planters exercised much greater control over their laborers.

The Labor Ordinance provided a very large number of offences for which the employers could prosecute their laborers. The offences for which the most number of convictions were obtained are shown in Table IV.⁷⁰ In the light of what has been said above, most of the charges are unexceptional, though the fact that the employers were able to obtain convictions in 82 percent of all the charges they laid while the indentured laborers were able to obtain convictions in only 35 percent of the cases (Table II) starkly underlines the inescapable conclusion about who held sway on the plantations.

In many instances the indentured laborers were convicted for trivial offences, many of which they probably had not heard of until

TABLE IV
EMPLOYERS' COMPLAINTS AGAINST INDENTURED LABORERS

Year	Non- Performance of Tasks	Nature of Complaints						Breach of Hospital Discipline	Others	Total	Convicted	Percent
		Unlawful Absence	Damaging Property	Want of Ordinary Diligence	Desertion	Committing Nuisance						
1885	344	3565	30	774	94	63	24	207	5101	4140	81	
1886	52	7121	15	1200	272	10	40	143	8853	6680	75	
1887	358	1814	41	1308	162	6	9	122	3820	3124	82	
1890	376	969	25	29	106	5	9	50	1569	1282	82	
1891	596	955	16	5	87	18	2	118	1797	1602	89	
1892	793	1125	4	6	82	10	—	133	2153	1825	85	
1896	734	973	18	6	45	167	114	234	2291	1952	85	
1897	83	802	45	694	29	41	83	134	1911	1603	84	
1898	1080	813	75	35	36	60	142	386	2627	2046	78	
1900	881	625	91	20	92	59	151	258	2177	1895	87	
1901	1007	567	111	59	152	146	137	289	2468	2202	89	
1902	717	619	110	30	120	111	113	314	2134	1814	85	
1904	820	947	112	171	243	90	115	304	2802	2404	86	
1905	625	671	54	216	324	42	76	326	2334	1875	80	
1906	305	378	74	164	226	106	47	277	1577	1315	83	
Total	8771	21944	821	4717	2070	934	1062	3295	43614	35759	82	

they were brought before the courts. The prosecution for "committing a nuisance" (defecating) underlines the point well. The Labor Ordinance provided:

. . . any person who shall commit any nuisance [i.e., defecate] within sixty yards of any stream running through or any thoroughfare running through or adjoining any plantation shall on conviction in a summary way forfeit any sum not exceeding ten shillings [more than a week's pay] or be imprisoned for any term not exceeding one month.⁷¹

Were the indentured laborers ever notified about this provision? What was the nature of the "evidence" presented in court? The record is unclear on this point. But even if we accept that the laborers heeded the calls of nature in the open fields, it is still astonishing that the employers were able to lay complaints under this category, while the indentured laborers were unable to lay charges for overtasking. It is difficult to believe that planters who laid such complaints were serious in their intent to prosecute and obtain charges. In the context of the plantation experience in Fiji, it was more likely a tactic to harass and intimidate those indentured laborers whom the overseers could not prosecute under any other category.

Many other provisions of the Labor Ordinance were also vague and placed a great deal of power in the hands of the planters. The indentured laborers could be prosecuted, fined, or imprisoned for using "Threatening and Insulting Language;" for "Threatening Behaviour;" and for "Refusal and Neglect to Go to Hospital" (laborers were not paid while they were hospitalized). Many were convicted for "The Want of Ordinary Diligence," which was decided by the overseers who set excessive tasks in the first place. The planters viewed the laborers who did not complete the assigned work as malingerers who needed to be worked through firm discipline. Were these workers really as lazy as the planters made them out to be? One official noted in 1882:

The fact remains that cases were brought to notice, and more possibly escaped notice, in which immigrants were committed to prison for the non-performance of acts that they were not capable of performing, and in more than one instance the condition of the immigrants was found to be such on entering gaol as to necessitate their speedy relegation to hospital.⁷²

Unlawful absence by far comprised the largest source of planter complaints against the indentured laborers. It was defined as absence by truancy, detention in gaol, and even attendance at court. It is doubtful that the indentured laborers deliberately absented themselves from work, knowing that it meant loss of pay, fine, or even

imprisonment. It is more likely that they did so because they were unable to work due to sickness, debility, and hospitalization. Perhaps many were also marked absent because they turned up to work late: a normal working day began at the crack of dawn. Desertion was narrowly defined: absence "without lawful excuse for three whole days exclusive of Sundays or lawful holidays." A deserter was subject to arrest without warrant wherever he or she was found, and faced a penalty of fine up to £2 or imprisonment not exceeding two months. The alternative of imprisonment was abolished in 1912, though a person convicted three times for desertion could face a fine of up to £5 or three months of imprisonment.⁷³

Immigration officials always saw desertion as a deliberate act of defiance. It was seen in 1885, for example, as a tendency "on the part of a limited number of dissipated, dissatisfied and vicious coolies to desert from indentured service in order to indulge in gambling, prostitution, or seclusion and idleness."⁷⁴ Desertion was, indeed, a strategy some indentured immigrants used when other means of seeking redress had failed. And they did so in the open. As the Immigration Inspector in Ba reported in 1900:

The intention of desertion has usually been avowed beforehand, at the time of making the complaint in the most stubborn and determined manner . . . it was planned and systematized protest against assault [by overseers and *sirdars*].⁷⁵

Whether the desertions were deliberate or unintended, the fact that it was so pervasive made a serious indictment of the indenture system. The Immigration officials, of course, rarely thought that the indentured laborers might have a genuine reason for deserting their employers.

Indentured laborers convicted of breaching the Labor Ordinance could either be fined or imprisoned. Neither, however, was the end of punishment for the indentured laborer, for the planters were legally entitled to recover lost work by extending the contract of workers by the number of days they were absent from the plantation. The extent to which the employers were able to use this provision is shown in Table V.⁷⁶ The indentures of both men and women were extended, though there was a decline in the proportion of extensions over the years. Around the turn of the century proportionately more women than men had their indentures extended; however, the extensions for men were for a much longer period. These extensions pointed to the same general conclusion as the high prosecution rate of the indentured laborers, the violence of the

TABLE V
EXTENSION OF INDENTURE FOR MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE CONTRACT EXPIRED

Year	Women				Men			
	Total Expired	Extended	%	Days	Total Expired	Extended	%	Days
1898	145	67	46	1213	363	169	47	6705
1899	183	69	38	1690	491	176	36	6835
1900	277	127	46	1984	739	315	43	16417
1901	251	141	56	3293	660	252	43	11454
1902	309	148	48	2976	798	321	40	11208
1904	211	111	53	2399	564	169	30	11085
1905	524	276	53	6097	1254	500	40	32404
1906	587	169	29	2336	1385	539	39	31581
1908	358	125	35	1577	1014	386	38	31851
1909	204	40	20	779	630	178	28	22925
1910	577	129	22	2581	1648	437	27	19917
1911	445	88	20	1819	1379	303	22	22859
1912	407	76	19	2814	1314	333	25	36748
1913	415	45	11	291	1259	316	25	8694
1916	682	38	5	783	2061	287	14	20516

overseers, and the indifference of the colonial government did: protest did not pay.

This paper has attempted to highlight those factors that stifled protest in the Indian indentured community. It has focused especially on the actions of the planters and the colonial government, which were the primary deterrents of collective action in the Indian community. But to leave the impression that there was no protest whatsoever would be misleading. Powerless as they were, the indentured laborers did resist, in their own ways, undue pressures that were put on them, though a full discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper. There were two strikes in the Rewa region in the 1880s and one in Labasa in 1907, the latter led by Punjabi immigrants. Some laborers attempted desertion, as we have seen, hoping perhaps to submerge themselves in the free Indian community slowly emerging on the fringes of the plantations. Some vented their rage on the crops and tools of the employers, feigned illness, and absented themselves from work in protest against the system. Others, fed up with the constant drudgery of work and the hopelessness of their situation, took their own lives through suicides, while a few avenged

acts of injustices against them by murdering their overseers and *sirdars*.

Such acts of violence might strike temporary terror in the hearts of the overseers or raise concern in official circles. But they posed little threat to the planters and the colonial officialdom. In the end, the Indian indentured laborers chose nonresistance as their method of coping with their situation. This was not as strange a strategy as it might appear at first glance, for as Eugene Genovese has written of the slaves in America:

If a people, over a protracted period, finds the odds against insurrection not merely long but virtually uncertain, then it will choose not to try. To some extent this reaction represents decreasing self confidence and increasing fear, but it also represents a conscious effort to develop an alternative strategy for survival.⁷⁷

NOTES

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¹ K. L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants: A history to the end of indenture in 1920* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1962) 93; C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, *Indian Indentured Labour in Fiji: An Independent Enquiry* (Perth: Independently published, 1916) 29; K. O. Laurence, *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th Century* (Kingston: Caribbean UP, 1971) 74. For other comparative studies of Indian indenture, see: Alan H. Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1981); Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export Of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Oxford UP, 1974), and several studies in Kay Saunders, ed., *Indentured Labor in the British Empire, 1834-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

² Two recent studies of the Hawaiian plantation experience which provide ample material for comparative purposes are Edward D. Beechert, *Working In Hawaii. A Labor History* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1985), and Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1983).

³ The background to indenture is treated fully in my *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History Monograph, 1984), and in Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*.

⁴ This is discussed at length in my paper, "Peasants on the Move: Circulation and the Migration of Indian Indentured Labor," 15th Pacific Science Congress, Section C (Geography), Dunedin, New Zealand, 2-8 Feb. 1983.

⁵ The amounts annually remitted to India are noted in Agent General of Immigration, *Annual Reports* (Suva: Dept. of Indian Immigration, Government of Fiji), hereafter cited as *Annual Report*. For a summary of the amount sent to India for the period 1907-1917, see Fiji Legislative Council Paper (Suva: Government of Fiji) 48/1917. See also James McNeill and Chimman Lal, *Report of the Government on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in Four British Colonies and Surinam*. Command Paper 7744-5 (Simla: Government Printer, 1914), Appendix.

- ⁶ For a complete list of all the castes and districts of origin, see my "Leaves of the Banyan Tree. The Origins and Background of Fiji's North Indian Indentured Migrants, 1879-1916," diss., vol. 2, Australian National U, 1981, Appendices IV (12-28) and VIII (82-100).
- ⁷ Lal, *Girmitiyas* 103.
- ⁸ Tinker, *A New System of Slavery* 226.
- ⁹ Adrian C. Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific: A Study of Fiji Indian Rural Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 5.
- ¹⁰ Ahmed Ali, ed., *The Indenture Experience in Fiji* (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1979) 10.
- ¹¹ Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific* 5.
- ¹² Minute paper 1050/86, National Archives of Fiji, Suva. All unpublished documents cited in this paper are located in this place.
- ¹³ Colonial Secretary Office file 3517/14, hereafter cited as CSO; Minute paper 457/13.
- ¹⁴ Ordinance XIV of 1886.
- ¹⁵ See *Annual Report* 1899: 9; 1900: 10; 1902: 10; 1905: 10. See also Jay Narayan, *Political Economy of Fiji* (Suva: South Pacific Review Press, 1984) 42.
- ¹⁶ Michael Moynagh, *Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar, 1873-1973* (Canberra: Pacific Research Monograph, 1981) 59.
- ¹⁷ CSO 1591/87.
- ¹⁸ CSO 443/87.
- ¹⁹ This is the view of Deryck Scarr, Thurston's biographer. See his *Viceroy of the Pacific, The Majesty of Color: A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston* (Canberra: Pacific Research Monograph, 1981) 192.
- ²⁰ Ordinance XIV of 1896.
- ²¹ Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants* 89.
- ²² Governor im Thurn, Dispatch to Colonial Office, 11 Aug. 1903, CO 83/77.
- ²³ Lal, *Girmitiyas*, Appendix 1, 36-41.
- ²⁴ See, for example, I. M. Cumpston, *Indians Overseas in British Territories, 1834-1854* (London: Oxford UP, 1953) 174, and George R. Mellor, *British Imperial Trusteeship, 1783-1850* (London: Oxford UP, 1951) 223.
- ²⁵ See generally the works of Tinker, Andrews, and Ali, cited above.
- ²⁶ For a fuller discussion, see my *Girmitiyas*, chap. 3.
- ²⁷ Indenture Ordinance no. 1 of 1891 (an Ordinance to amend and consolidate the law, relating to Indian immigration).
- ²⁸ CSO 3027/11.
- ²⁹ For a discussion of this, see my "Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 22, (Jan.-March 1985): 55-72, and "Veil of Dishonour: Sexual Jealousy and Suicide on Fiji Plantations," *Journal of Pacific History* 20 (1985): 135-155.
- ³⁰ Minute paper 3481/86.
- ³¹ Indenture Ordinance 1 of 1891, part XI, section 141.
- ³² *Annual Report* 1894: 29.
- ³³ Shiu Prasad, *Indian Indentured Workers in Fiji* (Suva: South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1975) 9-10.
- ³⁴ Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants* 111.
- ³⁵ CSO 1955/1892.
- ³⁶ Prasad, *Indian Indentured Workers* 19.

- ³⁷ Ali, *The Indenture Experience in Fiji* xvii, as well as studies in Saunders, ed., *Indentured Labor in the British Empire* (for example, M. D. North-Coombs' contribution on Mauritius, 97).
- ³⁸ On many estates the change to task work, without the option of time work, took place in the early 1880s. The *Annual Report 1882* noted that "the change has not been brought without the expression of great dissatisfaction on the part of the immigrants."
- ³⁹ CSO 4705/1903, cited in my "Veil of Dishonour."
- ⁴⁰ Governor im Thurn, Dispatch to Colonial Office no. 277, 23 Dec. 1910, CO 83.
- ⁴¹ I have compiled these figures from the *Annual Reports* of the following years: 1886: 16; 1890: 39; 1891: 29; 1892: 28; 1893: 34; 1894: 33; 1895: 35; 1896: 31; and 1897: 30. I have grouped together some similar complaints.
- ⁴² CSO 1955/1892.
- ⁴³ CSO 1315/1897; 3237/1900; 4215/99; and 4224/95.
- ⁴⁴ CSO 1955/92; *Annual Report 1893*: 32.
- ⁴⁵ CSO 5579/14.
- ⁴⁶ Eric Wolf, "Specific Aspects of Plantation Systems in the New World: Community Sub-Cultures and Social Class," in M. M. Horowitz, ed., *Peoples and Cultures in the Caribbean* (New York: Natural History P, 1971) 163. See also George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1972) for an extended discussion.
- ⁴⁷ CSO 800/07. Penalties for assault on indentured laborers were stiffened by Ordinance VI of 1907, with fines of up to £3 or two months imprisonment with hard labor.
- ⁴⁸ CSO 5064/99.
- ⁴⁹ Ali, *The Indenture Experience in Fiji* xxiii.
- ⁵⁰ CSO 1045/06. This practice was barred by Ordinance II of 1912.
- ⁵¹ Ali, *The Indenture Experience* xxiii.
- ⁵² Andrews, *Indian Indentured Labor* 36; *Annual Report 1909*: 23.
- ⁵³ Walter Gill, *Turn North-East at the Tombstone* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1969) 44. Gill was an overseer in Fiji during the last days of indenture, and his book is a vivid account of the conditions under which the indentured laborers lived.
- ⁵⁴ CSO 4012/07.
- ⁵⁵ CSO 3491/1900 and 3237/1900; *Annual Report 1901*: 25.
- ⁵⁶ Figures in this table derived from *Annual Reports of 1902*: 27; 1904: 24; 1905: 24; 1907: 25; 1908: 26; 1909: 24; 1910: 18; 1911: 19; and 1912: 16.
- ⁵⁷ CSO 4412/02; *Annual Report 1901*: 25.
- ⁵⁸ CSO 4412/02 and 2555/93.
- ⁵⁹ CSO 3121/97.
- ⁶⁰ Wadan Narsey, "Monopoly Capitalism, White Racism and Superprofits in Fiji," *Journal of Pacific Studies*: (1979) 86.
- ⁶¹ Indenture Ordinance I of 1891, part VIII, section 116.
- ⁶² CSO 2315/88.
- ⁶³ CSO 2315/88; 86/511; 1955/92; and 3481/86.
- ⁶⁴ *Annual Report 1886*: 15.
- ⁶⁵ CSO 1800/86.
- ⁶⁶ CSO 1955/92.
- ⁶⁷ Figures in this table have been derived from *Annual Reports of 1897*: 20; 1902: 26; 1904: 25; 1905: 26; 1907: 26; 1908: 24; and 1910: 17.

⁶⁸ For a fuller discussion, see my "Kunti's Cry."

⁶⁹ *Annual Reports* of 1897: 20 and 1902: 26.

⁷⁰ Figures in this table have been taken from *Annual Reports* of 1885: 16; 1886: 17; 1887: 11; 1888: 35; 1889: 29; 1890: 38; 1891: 46; 1892: 29; 1893: 33; 1894: 32; 1896: 30; 1898: 34; 1899: 36; 1900: 39; 1901: 42; 1902: 37; 1905: 39; and 1906: 37. Some similar complaints have been grouped together.

⁷¹ Indenture Ordinance I of 1891, part VII, section 92.

⁷² *Annual Report* 1882: 30.

⁷³ *Annual Report* 1912: 17.

⁷⁴ *Annual Report* 1885: 13.

⁷⁵ CSO 3237/1900.

⁷⁶ Figures presented in this table have been derived from *Annual Reports* of 1898: 19; 1899: 11; 1900: 12; 1901: 13; 1902: 12; 1904: 13; 1905: 12; 1906: 12; 1908: 13; 1909: 12; 1910: 8; 1911: 10; 1912: 9; 1913: 6; and 1916: 6.

⁷⁷ Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution. Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1979) 7.