

*Regional Politics, Ethnicity,  
and Custom in Fiji*

Nicholas Thomas

Most discussions of the Fiji military coups of 1987 and the subsequent political instability have focused on the question of ethnicity, particularly on the argument that indigenous Fijians have always been committed to retaining political control of their country and could not be expected to permit a government dominated or even partly controlled by Fiji Indians to remain in power. From this followed not only the first coup, but the process of constitutional review—whereby a new parliamentary and electoral structure will probably be implemented that will preclude any group similar to the ousted Labour–National Federation Party Coalition from gaining control again. The underlying concerns relate only partly to political power; it is also widely claimed that Fijians fear that an “Indian” government would permit Fijian land (83% of the country is under traditional clan ownership) to be alienated, inevitably creating much poverty and displacement among those who are now primarily subsistence farmers. Whether many Indians would have regarded a political challenge on this extremely sensitive matter as feasible or desirable is another matter, and the question reflects the interpenetration of mystification and actuality that always seems to have been a prominent feature of Fijian colonial and neocolonial politics: a fear that may have been substantially ungrounded becomes a “political fact” and subsequently an actuality and a cause.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the commentators interested in the Fiji situation looked for a broader range of causes for the discontent that led to the new Fiji Labour Party (FLP) being elected in coalition with the established, almost wholly Indian, National Federation Party (NFP), as well as for a wider field of causes for the coup itself. Corruption among the traditional chiefly elite was raised, and it was suggested that had the new government not been

overthrown, too much would have been exposed.<sup>2</sup> Attention was also paid to the involvement of American intelligence in the coup, but this mainly revealed that the habit of talking about superpower involvement, to the detriment of what actually concerns the inhabitants of a country and those engaged in a local struggle, is not exclusively a fault of right-wing political discussion (cf Halliday 1981). Reasonably enough, some sociologists associated with, or sympathetic to, the FLP wanted to get away from the question of ethnicity and relocate the conflict in a class analysis of Fiji's history. This in turn led to an interest in "internal colonialism" and a cultural division among Fijians that has often also been alluded to in journalistic accounts—western Fijians, or rather those on the western side of the main island of Viti Levu, are seen as having long opposed the paramount chiefs of eastern Fiji and thus as having become supporters of the opposition; they were seen as exceptions to the rule that indigenous Fijians solidly supported the coup leader, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, and the nationalist claims he so eloquently expressed.<sup>3</sup>

My argument here is that although there certainly has been opposition to the colonial and Fijian chiefly establishments from various parts of the interior and west of Viti Levu, the view that a range of protests over the last century somehow go together to constitute a persisting undercurrent of resistance neglects the specific nature of the various protests. The notion that the FLP could aim to "inherit the tradition of western discontent" (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988, 17) is theoretically and politically significant, since it postulates a regional rather than an ethnic basis for political interest and loyalty, and therefore a way beyond the dominance of ethnically based parties in postcolonial politics. If, however, the regional basis is less coherent than has sometimes been claimed, the reasons might reveal something more general about the nature of "ethnicity" as well as the constraints on political development in Fiji.

### A TRADITION OF DISSENT?

The analysis of "the east-west divide" begins with social diversity in pre-colonial Fiji: it is pointed out that in the small islands constituting the center and east of Fiji, hierarchical tribal confederations had developed, whose high chiefs later became closely involved with the colonial administration (and who in fact still dominate the conservative side of Fiji party politics)—while in the interior and west of Viti Levu, traditional political

leadership was far more localized. Given the British commitment to indirect rule, trouble would inevitably arise in the areas that were politically unconsolidated; similar difficulties were encountered in those parts of Nigeria where the chiefs were hard to find.<sup>4</sup> Just after the establishment of colonial rule (1874), there was a substantial rebellion of interior tribes that required organized military suppression. In the first few decades of the colonial period, politico-religious movements for such notions as immortality and an end to the government's taxation system had their strongest followings among the people of the interior, who had often been ruled by chiefs from other areas or white resident commissioners because their own leaders were regarded as too fractious or untrustworthy. These movements have sometimes been described as "cargo cults," a term that is misleading because it suggests that they were primarily concerned with the acquisition of European property, whereas the emphasis on the perpetuation of certain features of pre-Christian Fijian ritual and a political challenge to whites and the colonial social order were far more prominent in the demands and prophesies of various leaders (Worsley 1957; Scarr 1984, 92-93).

Although strongest before the Second World War, various movements oriented toward a "new era" continued to break out subsequently. In several cases these involved the abolition of traditional customs (such as respect for chiefs) that were seen as placing a burden on Fijian commoners anxious to put traditional agriculture on a more commercial footing. The political thrust was not against capitalism, so much as for the control of such things as credit, marketing, and to some extent production by cooperatives, long seen as the key instrument permitting poorer rural Fijians to resist exploitation by white or Indian market brokers. However, relatively straightforward commercial arrangements often were entangled with rather more complex religious and political agendas, calling for instance for the end of chiefly rule or the unification of Fiji's diverse denominations under a new Christian church. It is not especially surprising that one of these movements represented itself as a Communist Party,<sup>5</sup> and this has been cited with the implication that the trend was toward a more clearly politicized and class-based opposition in western Fiji. What might be called the next chapter was the formation of a string of small political parties, of which only the Western United Front (WUF), which contested elections in 1982 and 1987, ever achieved limited success (see Lal 1986; Lal 1983, 140-153). Because the WUF entered into a coalition with the NFP in

1982, it perhaps seemed that Fijian dissent had acquired a multiracial orientation—an alliance had been made with the Indians who had also been excluded from power by the eastern Fijian chiefly establishment. This would prefigure further evolution: by 1987 “Western discontent was no longer articulated solely through the WUF, its role had been inherited by the FLP in coalition with the NFP. The FLP was a national organization and more attractive politically than the small regional WUF. In addition its multiracial character made for even wider appeal” (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988, 17).

If the west in fact offered cohesive political resistance, Fiji would be more similar to certain other countries in the region, such as the Solomon Islands, in which a strong breakaway movement on the part of the Western Province at the time of independence in 1978 was linked with grievances about cultural stereotypes as well as the distribution of public expenditure (Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour 1983). The political dominance of regional loyalties is far from being restricted to the Pacific: there must be few postcolonial states from which a separatist movement of some kind is absent.

The Fiji case requires a little more scrutiny. In particular, it is questionable whether the “tradition of western discontent” can really be regarded as a unitary historical phenomenon. The 1876 uprising in the western interior did involve the issue of political autonomy, as well as that of religion (since there was an attempt to impose conversion to Christianity), but also reflected a long precontact history of tribal warfare. The Fijians who actually fought the war were enlisting the support of the government in fighting their own battles, rather than the reverse as imagined by the colonial administration. One of the primary axes of conflict was that between the Nadroga confederation, on the western coast and in the lower part of the Sigatoka Valley, and the “rebel” tribes of the interior. The division was thus within the west, one that persists in contemporary tribal affiliations and marriage patterns: the people in the upper part of the valley are closely related to other interior groups, but not to those of the coast.

The situation was complicated by the colonial administration, which regarded the *kai Colo* (as the “hill people” were derogatorily known) as troublemakers and attempted to contain the dissent by splitting this relatively cohesive cultural group into three provinces: Colo East, Colo West, and Colo North. Under a 1948 reorganization of the administrative system for indigenous Fijians, these provinces were each assimilated into

those coastal provinces that they adjoined: Colo East was joined with Naitasiri, Colo North with Ba, and Colo West with Nadroga to become Nadroga-Navosa. This amounted to splitting up kin and putting strangers together, and has led to dissatisfaction on the part of Colo people, who, being economically disadvantaged and regarded as backward, were persistently marginalized within the larger provinces.<sup>6</sup> They have an ambivalent or negative attitude toward the government, but are hardly likely to form a strong alliance against it with other western Fijians from coastal parts: some perceptions and interests may be held in common, but the association imposed by the provincial structure is part of the problem, rather than the basis for a struggle in some other domain. Concern about the dominance of eastern Fiji is not infrequently alluded to, but that is a national problem, not necessarily of such direct concern as the asymmetries within particular provinces.

To some extent a look at a map reveals the discontinuities between the various outbreaks of political dissent in the west. The 1876 war occurred mainly in the upper parts of the Sigatoka Valley. Although millennial cults and other nationalist and religious movements were strong in some of these areas, they do not correspond to the places of subsequent political development. The smaller political parties, as well as the Western United Front, were based in Nadroga, and attracted virtually no support from the people of the upper part of the valley, because of the lack of kinship already mentioned.<sup>7</sup> However, it was inevitable that the party's name would reflect political hopes rather than actualities, because it was based on a local dispute about pine plantations that was simply inadequate as a basis for broader support. Navatusila in Colo West had been the most notorious "cannibal" rebel tribe, and was later a center for millenarian radicalism, but in the elections since independence has voted strongly for the conservative Alliance Party. Similarly, although the area of Rakiraki on the north coast of Viti Levu was so intractable in the late nineteenth century that the administration deported part of the population to outlying islands, it is not a region that has been particularly associated with the opposition in the postwar political arena.

Much local variation and complexity is apparent: the area of Sabeto near the port and sugar city of Lautoka was the home and base of the former radical Apisai Tora, but is very close to Viseisei village, which always voted mainly for the traditional chief (Ratu Sir Josefa Tavaiaqia, the Tui Vuda), a minister in both the old Alliance government and the present

interim military and civilian council. Viseisei is itself split because it is the home of the deposed prime minister, Timoci Bavadra, who is supported mainly but not exclusively by his own (nonchiefly) clan. An assumption that seems to have been made by some journalists and scholarly commentators, that political support within particular groups or areas is relatively homogenous because tribal loyalties are still visibly important, is manifestly incorrect—anyone who has spent much time in a particular village will realize that there are different views among different households, just as there are in any Western country.

#### THE FOURTH CONFEDERACY

The lack of political cohesion emerges from a recent development that at first sight might be thought to bear out the thesis of a tradition of western dissent: the formation of a new confederation of tribes and polities on the western side of Viti Levu. To explain this, brief reference must be made to the nature of the three established confederations. In the precolonial period and the nineteenth century, Fijian tribal polities and federations were constantly engaged in political struggle, in attempts to extend quasi-feudal spheres of influence and tributary obligations. Along with considerable instability, there was a process of political amalgamation, whereby certain high chiefly groups succeeded in drawing lesser confederations and tribes into larger polities. With the Deed of Cession to Britain, the prevailing relations became frozen, and the structure of loyalties at a particular time was institutionalized in various ways in the native administration, which later developed into the existing Fijian administration. This continues to organize high chiefly councils and various other bodies through which chiefly precedence and specific relationships between areas are officially sanctioned and perpetuated. Under this scheme Fiji has been split into three large confederations, Tovata, Burebasaga, and Kubuna. Though connected with earlier power relations, these derive more from a war in the 1860s than from any traditional situation. However, they have been given enormous weight in the main proposals for constitutional reorganization since the coup, because a system of representation based on provinces and other “traditional” units rather than residential electorates is favored both electorally and in the Great Council of Chiefs. The council has been restructured so as to strengthen the traditional elite and exclude various eminent but nonchiefly Fijians who had been admitted earlier.

The confederacies become crucial because it is proposed that the presidency of the Republic of Fiji, supposedly a nonpolitical head of state, should be circulated between the paramount chiefs of Tovata, Burebasaga, and Kubuna on a five-yearly basis. Under present arrangements the west is divided between Burebasaga and Kubuna, and there has been a strong feeling that the proposal would further marginalize the western traditional leadership. The main justification for a fourth confederacy was not related to any particular claim about traditional relationships, but based instead on the contribution of the west to the national economy: "We have the sugar, the tourism, the airport, the gold mine . . . we should have our own confederacy." The hopes of ordinary people were fairly straightforward, that a new grouping would enable the interests of the west to be better heard in Suva and perhaps lead to more money for roads and other such facilities in the area. The attitude of the government and the eastern-based political leadership to the proposal was ambivalent: they were manifestly reluctant to incorporate such a body into the new constitution or reorganized Great Council of Chiefs, but recognized that difficulties might arise if the move was rejected.<sup>8</sup>

The fourth confederacy is an expression of political dissent in only a very specific sense. It is not associated with the Fiji Labour Party, which received more votes from western Fijians than from others, and should not be regarded as some kind of historical successor to earlier challenges to the eastern Fijian hegemony, as becomes clear by looking at the chiefs involved. The first president of the confederacy is the high chief mentioned earlier, the Tui Vuda, who has been a long-standing member of the Alliance Party and is minister for forests in the current interim cabinet (which was set up by General Rabuka late in 1987). An adviser to the confederacy, Apisai Tora, is not a chief but is also a member of the interim administration. Both he and a senior chiefly woman from Nadroga, Eta Bulou, were involved with the nationalist Taukei Movement, which, after the army, was instrumental in opposing and destabilizing the Bavadra government before the military coup. (*Taukei* means "owner" [of the land] and has acquired the politicized meaning of "indigenous owners" in opposition to others, specifically Indians.)

Although some others involved, such as Ratu Osea Gavidi, leader of the Western United Front, had been opposed politically to the Alliance in certain contexts, the confederacy leadership is essentially progovernment. The draft constitution was endorsed by the confederacy, although certain

minor changes were proposed (*FT*, 25 Nov 1988). The constitutional question is the most fundamental issue for postcoup Fiji, and approval of a document that Indians have consistently denounced as racist, and "a joke and a shame," makes it clear that any kind of common struggle on the part of western Fijians and Indians is a long way off. The new confederacy is not specifically concerned with the interests of common people or urban Fijian workers: there is a consensus on the probusiness approach to economic policy that has always been pursued by the Fiji government. The western assertion thus has little to do with the sort of bid for autonomy and social change made by the "Communist" association of a few Nadroga villages in 1961.

An earlier instance of apparent political cooperation was the coalition between the WUF and the NFP in the 1982 elections, but it was not clear that there was much in common between the parties beyond their opposition to the Alliance. Although members of the NFP were no doubt concerned about the issue of inequity in resource distribution and eastern political dominance, they evidently felt constrained by the climate of opinion—the points that Gavidia had raised in the WUF party statement were not incorporated into the joint coalition manifesto (Lal 1983, 141; NFP-WUF 1982). The FLP represented the first genuine instance of a combined multiracial orientation and concern for western development (although political cooperation between Indians and Fijians had a long history in urban contexts, and particularly in trade unions).<sup>10</sup>

The fourth confederacy has not been effective in obtaining the support of traditional chiefs throughout the area. Although most of those in the large province of Ba have backed the new group, there have been a series of reports from lesser chiefs and the main leaders in Nadroga-Navosa, indicating that they do not recognize the new confederacy and will retain their ties with Kubuna or Burebasaga.<sup>11</sup> Given the ambivalent attitudes among the Colo people to the larger provinces into which they have been incorporated, it was no surprise that the Colo North chiefs said they could not follow the rest of Ba in supporting the group. Traditional tribal divisions, and divergent interests arising from colonial history, seem to preclude the degree of unity that would make the western confederacy into a cohesive entity that could engage effectively in regionally based politics.

The point here is not to dismiss either earlier or current political struggles of western Fijians. The politico-religious movements and agricultural cooperatives of the colonial period often effectively expressed grievances



and did as much as could be done to change things. The economic situation in certain villages no doubt did improve as a result of the measure of control created through the exclusion of intermediaries, opposition to government taxes in kind, and coordinated work for alternative local bodies. So far as later political development is concerned, the WUF was not successful beyond the immediate constituency, but did secure two seats in 1982 and thus gained parliamentary voices and could remind people that Fijians as well as Indians were opposed to the government. I have stressed that the fourth confederacy must be seen as something separate from the development of support for the Labour Party in the west, but its conservatism does not mean that it will not play an important role. It should, in any case, give western Fijians more pride in their region and diminish the sense that culturally the west is not on the same level as other parts of Fiji.

### FIJIAN IDENTITY AND ETHNIC POLITICS

Another reason why a regional political movement might fail to develop would be the strength of a broader kind of national identity. Despite the volume of talk about the "ethnic divide" and racial separateness in Fiji, there have been very few attempts to specify what Fijian or Indian ethnic identity specifically involves. The vague impression conveyed by newspaper reports is that each group has some generalized distaste for the other's customs and an insidious racism. But ethnicity does not always imply racism, or may at least be associated with a sort of mild chauvinism rather than a dangerous sense of superiority.

When they give an account of their society, Fijians, and especially rural Fijians, place great emphasis on certain features of village social life.<sup>12</sup> These include the wide-ranging and supportive character of kin connections, the ethic of sharing, practices of hospitality, and the ordering of behavior in the village by a range of customs of respect. It is often said that one does not let someone else walk past one's door without calling out and inviting them in for tea, for something to eat, or a bowl of kava. Village social life and practice are highly influenced by respect usages relating to the symbolic organization of space within houses—only higher-ranking people should sit at the "higher" end, that away from the end door—and taboos about what may be done inside the village fence. These ideas are not generally "traditional" in the historical sense but rather constitute a contrastive ideology. It is stressed that Fijians can go to other villages and

be welcomed by their “fathers,” their “mother’s brothers,” their “children,” and that this is not possible in “foreign” society (that is, among white people such as Americans or Australians), just as foreigners do not invite people in for tea: “instead, if you see someone coming, you shut your door.” The contrast is as much with Indians as with European foreigners, and reference is often made to the fact that while Fijians always work cooperatively in such tasks as house-building, Indians appear to work more individualistically and are oriented toward money rather than kinship. These constructs involve much stereotyping, but their salience is understandable, given that Fijians usually encounter Indians in the market (either literally or in the context of some other transaction) and that there are some striking differences between their ways of life: rural Fijians are generally grouped in villages, while Indians always occupy isolated homesteads.

To some extent such images of the other do have a negative character, but the stereotype is more important in the context of rhetorical claims about collective self-identity than in practice; the relationships sustained with individual Indians may be quite different, especially if there is some connection through intermarriage, which is uncommon but by no means unknown. The point is that the main element of the construction is a set of positive claims about the nature of Fijian social life—that it involves solidarity, is suffused by kinship and sharing as well as Christian kindness toward others, and is structured by respect toward seniors and those of high rank. Sometimes the contrast that animates this image is not with another race, but with urban Fijians who are thought to have given up the way of the land. Crucially, in this context, these claims about village sociality are always made about Fijians as a group, never about those occupying one part of rural Fiji as opposed to another. If, in the context of this type of discussion, one asks, “Are the customs different elsewhere in Fiji?” the answer will always be an emphatic no—the same ethic of sharing and hospitality, the same kinship prevails. Yet in other contexts more specific differences in ceremonies or respect usages are a topic for discussion, as are certain broader differences between, say, people of the Viti Levu interior and those of the small islands.

Despite soundly based grievances and a long history of dominance by a tight eastern-based chiefly elite, a unified western challenge is unlikely to arise. Older men in the interior villages sometimes say that there should really be a separate government for the west, with a separate army and separate police, but in practice they have never consistently supported the

political candidates who have been highly critical of conservative Alliance rule. Instead, pictures of Ratu Mara are seen in people's houses, and t-shirts featuring old Alliance candidates or General Rabuka are still seen far more often than those for Labour. However, the Alliance is said by former supporters to have "lost the path," and this sort of statement relates to another range of political concerns.

### CUSTOM, POVERTY, AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE *Taukei*

The commitment to the customary ways of the land is marked partly because it is burdensome: generations of economic debate in Fiji about the "alternatives" of communalism and economic individualism have deeply affected the rural consciousness. Despite much actual interpenetration, ideology sharply polarizes adherence to tradition, which is seen to drain resources that might otherwise be put to economic advancement, and commercial farming, which is represented mainly as an individualistic activity that implies neglect of kin and customary obligations (see Thomas *n.d.a*; Toren 1984).

The high chiefs of the kind who have dominated the Alliance have long "had it both ways" (Ravuvu 1987) in the sense that they have made much of the cultural capital associated with traditional status and have also benefited from substantial investments in a range of businesses. This rests uneasily with the strongly dichotomized views held among rural people—chiefs, or at least certain chiefs, are seen to pursue the "path of money" to the detriment of the concerns of their people. Younger people, especially, are apt to make bald complaints about the discrepancy in wealth: "they get richer as we get poorer." The problem of poverty among ordinary Fijians in both rural and urban areas has become reduced to the specific question of Fijian participation in business, which has been intensively discussed in various contexts and in the press since the military coups. This may appear to be unrelated to the ethnicity issue, but the perception is that Indians dominate Fiji's commerce: their competence in "the path of money" corresponds to the Fijian weakness in that domain. There is both a notion of complementarity, that Indian people set an example or a standard which Fijians could attempt to match, and also a cultural preoccupation with features of Fijian society that supposedly inhibit such advancement. Although the notion of economic inequality may lead to some resentment on the part of Fijians, the political acts sparked off by this

form of dissatisfaction relate primarily to change within Fijian society—in some cases to rejection of chiefs or customary ways—or to attacks on the financial institutions that are blamed for the predicaments of some Fijian businesses.

This set of concerns, which figured prominently in Taukei Movement argument,<sup>13</sup> but were also addressed by the FLP, seem more fundamental for many Fijians than issues about political representation and ethnic power-sharing. The discord that emerges is within the Fijian community, rather than an ethnic conflict of any kind. The perception of the economy and the obstacles to development in Fijian society are topics that could be discussed at much greater length, but my point here is more restricted. The fact that the source of inequality is thought to be partly internal, and indeed intrinsic, to Fijian communities, leads to a series of dilemmas and options for Fijians that are not directly related to the political and constitutional issues, which have been overemphasized both within Fiji and in the overseas press. Oddly enough, the point was made most directly by Lee Kuan Yew, who visited Fiji in November 1988: "The constitution has not and will not resolve the basic problem which led to the coups, namely the disparity in earning power between the native Fijians and the Fiji Indians."<sup>14</sup> Of course the coups had more than one cause, and the economic gap that preoccupies Fijians exists between themselves and some of their chiefs, as well as between themselves and Indians. The implications for Indians and race relations emerge mainly from demands for various forms of positive discrimination in financial policies and education on the part of Fijians. These are sometimes opposed by the institutions involved, and by some Indians, but are defensible if one's political ideal is an equality of social outcomes rather than of opportunities.

Economic inequalities and discontent with the chiefly leadership are expressed unevenly across Fiji, and there is probably more concern on Viti Levu and the other large island of Vanua Levu than elsewhere. However, the political stance is not restricted to western Viti Levu, which further illustrates that the thesis of a persistent east-west divide cannot be sustained in any strong form. There is certainly dissent specifically related to the situation of western Fiji and the relative exclusion of western Fijians from the circles that exercise political dominance. But there are strong divisions of interest within the west, the most important of which relate particularly to the marginalization of the people of the interior within the west as well as within Fiji generally. Moreover Fijian identity is not con-

structured regionally: people certainly always have a strong conception of their provincial and tribal origins, even if they live and work elsewhere, but the most significant ideological construct clearly concerns the Fijian way, and there is no political elaboration of local customs or cultural identity. The most pressing political concerns, moreover, relate to a predicament of rural Fijians generally, rather than those who inhabit any particular region. The perception that there might be a regional or class-based struggle on the part of “the people of Fiji” against the wealthy Indian and Fijian chiefly elite is restricted mainly to Fiji Labour Party circles and, although it will no doubt gain support in unions and other urban groups, is unlikely to become prominent in the near future.

The suggestion that the regional division must be seen as less significant than some have claimed does not, however, indicate that the fundamental opposition in Fiji is an ethnic one. The question of poverty is related to ethnicity but cannot be subsumed by it. Fijian society has long been understood in a neotraditional way as being structured by values that invert those of Indians and foreigners. The sense that certain changes are desirable is interconnected with a cultural logic, with a series of oppositions that represent Indians negatively and in some cases lead to racist proposals such as one for the “repatriation” of Indians to a country most of them have never known.<sup>15</sup> Such issues have been raised mainly at the national political level, which is mostly at a great remove from rural life. Notions of western separatism and such radical action against Indians are both remote and abstract, and therefore of limited interest to people who are basically peasants and have many more immediate political concerns of the “roads and bridges” kind. In the cultural construction of politics, questions about Fijian identity and the opposition between the way of the land and the path of money are more pressing and poignant than those to do with ethnic relations. The questions that matter to Fijians have simply not been addressed in most journalistic accounts or scholarly analyses of the continuing crisis. The sharp dichotomy between custom and commerce glosses over a dense if uneven interpenetration between spheres, and Fijians are practically engaged in a process of social transformation rather than an all-or-nothing choice. Talking about Fijian politics means talking about mystifications, but these have such practical force that one must get one’s mystifications right.

BRIJ LAL’s *comments on a draft were helpful.*

## Notes

In this article the standard Fijian orthography is used: c = th, b = mb, d = nd, g = ng (as in singer), q = ngg (as in finger).

1 This is not the place for a full review of recent Fijian political history, but Norton 1977 and Lal 1986 provide the general background. On the military coup and subsequent crisis see Robertson and Tamanisau 1988; Scarr 1988; and Lal 1988*b*.

2 The process of the election campaign and debates are discussed in the books cited in note 1, and in Lal 1988*a*.

3 The fullest exploration of this argument is in Durutalo 1985. The argument is followed by Robertson and Tamanisau (1988, 14–17), and since this seems to reflect broader perceptions I have referred to this more accessible work, rather than Durutalo's original analysis.

4 See Achebe 1974 for an amusing account.

5 *FT* (12 Aug 1961) discussed in Durutalo (1985, 406–409—where some of the newspaper citations are wrong or mistyped), and also Robertson and Tamanisau 1988, 16.

6 On the maladministration of Colo see Thomas n.d.*b*. The debate over a new constitution has provided a context for many skeletons to come out of the closet so far as the Fijian administration is concerned, and the desire for autonomy on the part of the Colo people has been no exception. One chief, for instance, demanded that five old provinces, including the three Colo provinces and two others in western Viti Levu, should once again be recognized and directly represented through the proposed province-based electorates (*Fiji Post*, 10–11 Nov 1988). On the representation of interior people, and development problems in old Colo East specifically, see Ravuvu 1988.

7 The Fijian National Party and the Western Democratic Party, which both existed in the early 1960s, were also based in coastal areas—Nadroga and around Nadi respectively.

8 The proposal to form a fourth confederacy was raised at the time of a Great Council of Chiefs meeting in May 1988 (*FT*, 4 May) but was not actually put into effect until November. (For reports on the event and various reactions, see *Na Lalakai*, 17 Nov 1988; *FT*, 15 Oct, 17 Nov, 21 Nov, 22 Nov, 25 Nov 1988, etc; *Fiji Post*, 18–21 Nov.) The issue prompted some vigorous correspondence—see *Na Lalakai* and the *Fiji Times*, especially for late November and December 1988.

9 Balwat Singh Rakka, the NFP president, in the *Fiji Post* (11–13 Oct 1988).

10 Although A. D. Patel and certain other NFP figures were supportive of western Fijians' aspirations, lack of solidarity is illustrated by the fact that Jai Ram Reddy, then NFP leader, supported a 1982 parliamentary motion to allocate a substantial sum of money for the renovation of the small chiefly island of Bau

(off the southeastern coast of Viti Levu). He no doubt did this because a similar motion had originally been supported by Patel, but this certainly isolated the few Fijians who were opposed. "What about the West?" complained Ratu Napolioni Dawai of Nadi, who was provoked to resign from the Alliance party, "are we being treated as second class Fijians or third class Fijians? . . . We must look at the West too because the West generates the national revenue of this country. We did not sign the deed of Cession [to Britain in 1874] and yet we have been treated in this way" (Fiji Parliament, 24 Feb 1982).

11 See particularly "West divided on 4th confederacy," (*FT*, 17 Oct 1988), and "Ra chief pledges loyalty to Kubuna," (*FT*, 24 Nov 1988).

12 The statements made here are based on various conversations in the western interior of Viti Levu during anthropological fieldwork, June to December 1988, and various other sources.

13 Ravuvu's work (especially *Development or Dependence*, 1988) provides important insights into the concerns of some of those involved in the nationalist Taukei Movement, although the texts mentioned are anthropological studies and not official statements of any kind. The Taukei Movement has always been internally diverse, and it should not be assumed that the statements of any one writer reflect widely held positions. In late 1988, Ratu Meli Vesikula and some others associated with him claimed that the Taukei Movement was "defunct" and went over to Bavadra's Labour Party. This puzzling shift from former extremism may have been connected with Vesikula's exclusion from the interim regime. This contact initially took the form of traditional presentations to seek forgiveness for what they had done earlier, and then a series of prayer meetings.

14 Quoted in *FT* (12 Nov 1988), under the headline "Bridge economic gap, says Lee."

15 Sakiasi Butadroka and his Fijian Nationalist Party made this proposal in 1977, and on various subsequent occasions, such as in April 1988.

## References

Achebe, Chinua

1974 *Arrow of God*. Revised edition. London: Heinemann.

Durutalo, Simione

1985 *Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: The Case of Western Viti Levu*. MA thesis, University of the South Pacific.

Fiji Parliament

1982 *Debates*. Suva: Government Printer.

*Fiji Post*

*Fiji Times*

Halliday, Fred

1981 *Threat from the East?* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lal, Brij V.

1983 The Fiji General Election of 1982: The Tidal Wave that Never Came. *Journal of Pacific History* 18:134-157.

1988a Before the Storm: An Analysis of the Fiji General Election of 1987. *Pacific Studies* 12:71-96.

1988b *Power and Prejudice: The Making of the Fiji Crisis*. Wellington: New Zealand Institute for International Affairs.

Lal, Brij V., ed

1986 *Politics in Fiji: Studies in Contemporary History*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

*Nai Lalakai*

NFP-WUF (National Federation Party-Western United Front)

1982 *Election Manifesto*. Lautoka. (Copies in USP library.)

Norton, Robert

1977 *Race and Politics in Fiji*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Premdas, R., Jeffrey Steeves, and Peter Larmour

1983 The Western Breakaway Movement. In *Solomon Islands Politics*, edited by Peter Larmour and S. Tarua, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies.

Ravuvu, Asesela

1987 Fiji: Contradictory Ideologies and Development. In *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, edited by A. Hooper et al. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies.

1988 *Development or Dependence: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies.

Robertson, R., and A. Tamanisau

1988 *Fiji: Shattered Coups*. Sydney: Pluto Press/Fiji Independent News Service.

Scarr, Deryck

1984 *Fiji: A Short History*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

1988 *Fiji, Politics of Illusion: The Military Coups in Fiji*. Kensington: University of New South Wales Press.

Thomas, Nicholas

n.d.a Contrasts: Marriage and Exchange in Western Fiji. Manuscript.

n.d.b Sanitation and Seeing: The Creation of State Power in Early Colonial Fiji. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. In press.

Toren, Christina

1984 Implications of the Concept of Development. In *The Effects of Development on Traditional Pacific Islands Cultures*, edited by C. Clerk. London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

Worsley, Peter

1957 *The Trumpet Shall Sound*. London: MacGibbon & Kee.