The Advent of Methodism and the *I Taukei*: The Methodist Church

*In Fijian Nation-making*

Submitted by

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A thesis in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Reverend and Mrs Bob Sidal, Methodist minister, Ba, Fiji.
Dr. Robert Wolfgramm editor of the *Fiji Daily Post*, Suva.
Mrs Jan Bragg, Balwyn.
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<th>Bati</th>
<th>warrior mataqali</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bete</td>
<td>priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bose ko Viti/ Komiti ni Cakacaka Levu</td>
<td>Methodist Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bure kalo</td>
<td>temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girmit</td>
<td>indenture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gujeratis</td>
<td>free-born Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insaf</td>
<td>justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i taukei</td>
<td>owner of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Izzat</td>
<td>honour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i tokatoka</td>
<td>enlarged family unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i tutu vakavanua</td>
<td>position or rank according to the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalou-vu</td>
<td>eternal gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalou-yalo</td>
<td>gods who die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koro</td>
<td>village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotu</td>
<td>Christianity/Methodism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madu</td>
<td>shameful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana</td>
<td>supernatural power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mata-ni-vanua</td>
<td>chief’s official herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matanitu</td>
<td>political control/government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mataqali</td>
<td>branches of the yavusa (clan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narak</td>
<td>hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pet</td>
<td>livelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaravi kou vu</td>
<td>worship of the ancestral gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qoliqoli</td>
<td>sea-shore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sauturaga</td>
<td>secondary chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soli</td>
<td>gift to Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabacakaca</td>
<td>circuit of Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabu</td>
<td>forbidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talatala</td>
<td>lay preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turaga</td>
<td>chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turaga ni koro</td>
<td>chief of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakavanua</td>
<td>way of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakatawa</td>
<td>catechist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakavuvuli</td>
<td>pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vanua</td>
<td>land and people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vasu</td>
<td>mother’s brother’s son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vasu levu</td>
<td>mother and father are highly ranked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vasu i taukei</td>
<td>born in his mother’s village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vulagi</td>
<td>stranger or visitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasewase</td>
<td>division of the Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavusa</td>
<td>a number of mataqalis,clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavusa bete</td>
<td>priestly clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavusa turaga</td>
<td>chiefly clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaqona</td>
<td>ceremonial drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCF</td>
<td>Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTA</td>
<td>Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOG</td>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Citizens Constitutional Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMF</td>
<td>Christian Mission Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRW</td>
<td>Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Commonwealth Sugar Refiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECREA</td>
<td>Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Fiji Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMF</td>
<td>Foreign Military Financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMF</td>
<td>Flour Mills of Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLP</td>
<td>Fiji Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNP</td>
<td>Fijian Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNUF</td>
<td>Fijian National United Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Great Council of Chiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCBBF</td>
<td>National Council for Building a Better Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>National Federation Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLTB</td>
<td>Native Land Trust Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTC</td>
<td>Pacific Theological College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFMF</td>
<td>Royal Fiji Military Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>United Party of the Vanua Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT</td>
<td>Fijian Political Party Soqosoqo ni Vakavuleva ni Taukei (SVT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VKB</td>
<td>Vola ni Kawa Bula (Register of Fijian Births)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The Advent of Methodism and the *I Taukei*: The Methodist Church in Fijian Nation-making.

This thesis is an historical anthropology of the role of the Methodist Church in Fiji, from the arrival of Methodist missionaries in 1830. At that time Fiji was a fragmented society. Fijians lived in villages on various islands, so there was no cohesion within the society. The insertion of Methodism into traditional Fijian society irreversibly changed the society, and this thesis traces the key changes that occurred. The rise to prominence of Chief Cakobau from Bau Island marks the beginning of unification of a fragmented Fiji. He formed the first Fijian government in 1871. The British Colonial authorities and the Methodists were also centrally involved in unification and the development of a national society as they set up structures to govern and evangelise the Fijians. However, the thesis argues that with the arrival of Indo-Fijians as indentured labourers to Fiji in 1879, the seeds of polarisation were planted and Indo-Fijians were left out of the frame of Fijian society. The thesis traces the involvement of Methodism, always in close relationship with the state in the twin processes of unification and polarisation.

The coups that have changed the political landscape of Fiji served to alter the relationship between the Methodist Church and the state. A schism occurred in the Methodist Church following the 1987 coup, where violence against some ministers occurred, and the Methodist constitution was suspended. Members belonging to *i taukei* Methodist hierarchy who insisted on Fijian paramountcy to the exclusion of Indo-Fijians have been separated irretrievably from members of the Methodist hierarchy who believe in an inclusive society irrespective of race. Increasing diversity of socio-economic status allied with hierarchical divides and different interpretations
of the Church’s mission have generated conflict in the Church and society at large.

Diminution of the power of the Methodist Church in Fiji has occurred since 1987, and there are both internal and external factors at work which continue this trend. The various factors influencing the Church in the present along with its future prospects are discussed.
Statement of Authorship

(a) Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

(b) All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics Committee or authorised officer as appropriate: La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the role of the Methodist Church and i taukei (indigenous) Fijians in Fijian nation-making, from the arrival of Methodist missionaries in 1830. The focus is on the Methodist Church—its key role in the formation of Fijian national society, its consolidation as a central institution and, in recent times, the unravelling of its influence. Using an approach that can be described as historical anthropology, the thesis examines the Church’s history in Fiji and makes an anthropological analysis of its contemporary influence on political, economic and social life in Fiji, particularly in relation to the several coups that have had profound effects on the Fijian nation.

Using this approach I examine major cultural processes and changes that occurred in Fiji from the arrival of the missionaries to the early twenty-first century. The process of integration set in motion by the endeavours of the missionaries is outlined against the backdrop—briefly sketched—of the geographical, cultural and governmental fragmentation of Fiji in pre-contact times. The processes of integration created what is referred to as the vanua-lotu-matanitu complex, in which vanua (land and people), lotu (Christianity/Methodism) and matanitu (political control/government) became the foundations of national society. The Methodist Church has been the major integrative factor in the complex that has been foundational to Fijian national society. However, in each chapter of the thesis, the Church of integration is seen as contributing also to the racial polarisation that has plagued Fiji.

The seeds of polarisation were planted with the arrival of Indians as indentured labourers in 1879. I argue that polarisation of Fijian society occurred as Indo-Fijians were kept at the margins of Fijian society from colonial times to independence. I taukei and Indo-Fijians in many ways existed separately, and the identification of the Church with i taukei powerfully reinforced this separation and contributed to later conflicts. Among the several ways in which the Church has been a force for polarisation has been in forming what Benedict Anderson (1983) would call the
imagined Fijian community of *i taukei*—an imagined community radically different from the imagined community of the Indo-Fijians.

The story of the consolidation of the Methodist Church to a position of institutional pre-eminence in Fiji is many-stranded. In this thesis I draw on a variety of secondary sources, and interview data and a fieldwork journal to reconstruct the means by which the Church built and maintained influence from the village grassroots to the highest levels of government. These include the connections between the parallel structures of Church and state, the centrality of the local church in village communities, the influence of the Church in the Great Council of Chiefs and the Church’s dominant role in education from colonial times.

This historical account of the role of the Methodist Church in Fiji facilitates a deeper understanding of the reasons for the unravelling of its influence in recent years, particularly in the years leading up to and following the military coup of 2006. My analysis of the declining influence of the Church involves a discussion of factors both internal and external to the Church. I argue that the most important internal factor in the Church’s unravelling was its support for *taukei* principles to the exclusion of the rights and sensitivities of the Indo-Fijian population. This support led the Church to approve and even participate in the three coups from 1987 to 2000. The results have been catastrophic for Fijian society but also for the Church. Indo-Fijians have been terrorised, their property burnt, and the relatively peaceful co-existence between them and indigenous Fijians has been damaged. The Church’s moral authority has eroded and it has suffered schismatic division. *Taukei* principles still rule in Fijian Methodism, despite the opposition of a few members of the Church hierarchy.

External factors that contributed to the unravelling of the Methodist Church’s influence include the 2006 coup, in which the Church’s voice was initially silenced through fear of retribution and even today remains muted. Commodore Bainimarama, interim prime minister of Fiji at time of writing, is a determined opponent of the Methodist Church. He deports its support of *taukeism* to the exclusion of the rights of other races. He rejects the Church’s hegemony over religion and society.
Bainimarama’s attempts to dismantle the sources of the Church’s influence must be understood in the context of deep and extensive demographic, economic and cultural changes that have been undermining the Church’s influence at the grassroots since the 1987 coups. These changes are examined in the penultimate chapter of this dissertation; in the final chapter I draw together the arguments of the thesis to consider their implications for the future of the Methodist Church and the Fijian nation.

**Historical Anthropology**

The field of Pacific Studies has long been characterised by research that draws on both history and anthropology. James W. Davidson, who was founding professor of Pacific History at the Australian National University, was one of the first to appreciate the importance of doing ethnographic fieldwork as a means of collecting historical material. In 1938 he completed his Master’s thesis in history in New Zealand, on Scandinavian settlements in New Zealand. To research his thesis he “walked over the farms, which settlers had cut laboriously out of the Seventy Mile Bush, and talked to the remnants of the original migrants” (Davidson cited in Hempenstall, 2007p.7).

Davidson further developed the idea that both history and anthropology should be used in research on Pacific peoples while he was in Cambridge and London, where he undertook further study. He attended the London School of Economics, an important site for the development of British social anthropology in Pacific and Asian cultures (ibid.), and argued for a conjunction of historical and anthropological research:

> Pacific historians have framed hypotheses in established terms and sought to test them by established methods. But, when they have become aware that such an approach cannot lead them to an adequate explanation of the course of events, they have modified their lines of thought and investigation. The literature of the social sciences—in particular of anthropology—has been brought to account; and new primary sources—in particular, oral evidence and records in the vernacular languages of the islands—have been used. The problems of Pacific history, as they are at present conceived, represent an amalgam of these two sets of influences (Davidson, 1966p.1).

Davidson’s approach had a significant influence on Pacific Studies as is evident in the work of Pacific historians and anthropologists such as Greg Dening, Marshall Sahlins,
Historical research that drew on anthropological perspectives came to be known as “ethnographic history” (Douglas, 1992). At the same time, critiques of ahistorical functionalist approaches in anthropology led to a greater recognition of the importance of historical context and the emergence of “historical anthropology”. This shift in anthropological research extended beyond the Pacific and in his 1973 Frazer Memorial Lecture, “Clio’s task: history and anthropology”, Alan Macfarlane argued that just as anthropology could “help stave off ethnocentric biases” in historical research, “without historical material, anthropological speculation is shadow thin” (Macfarlane, 1977). Similarly, Nicholas Thomas—trained in both history and anthropology—argues that historical research is essential for anthropologists:

The view developed here is that historical processes and their effects are internal to social systems and that attempts to analyse societies without reference to history are likely to embody both theoretical errors and substantive misinterpretations. The misrecognition of consequences of colonial penetration as elements of a timeless “culture” exemplifies most directly the link between specific empirical questions and the deeper blindness of anthropological reasoning, but represents only one sort of effect that the combination of ahistorical theory and good or bad evidence may have in anthropological writing (Thomas, 1989p. 9–10).

To illustrate his point, Thomas discusses the distribution and use of whales’ teeth or tabua in Fiji. He points out that they were both precious and rare at the time of early contact in Fiji (1989 p.82). They were linked by hierarchy and particular elite exchanges. By the early twentieth century there were many whales’ teeth circulating in Fiji and also fake ones carved from elephant tusks (ibid.). Whales’ teeth are now available to commoners as well as chiefs, demonstrating that their special significance has changed over time.

Thomas’s work exemplifies the blending of historical and anthropological perspectives that is a feature of Pacific Studies, as does the work of anthropologist Matthew Tomlinson. In his paper “Sacred Soil in Kadavu, Fiji” (2002a), Tomlinson states that he has used both historical and ethnographic data to show how soil becomes
sacred in Kadavu. He argues that “mana is a continuing reality for people not only by
the continued circulation of discourse about rapacious outsiders and Fiji’s smallness
but also by rituals such as chain prayers” (Tomlinson, 2002a p.251).

This thesis continues this tradition within Pacific Studies of historically informed
anthropology, by examining the history of the Methodist Church in Fiji in order to
understand its role in contemporary Fiji. After wide reading on the history of Fiji, the
Methodist Church and recent changes in Fiji, I arrived at a focus on the twin narratives
of this thesis. The first narrative is of the rise of the Methodist Church and its role in
the achievement of national unity. The narrative concerns the unravelling of the
Church’s predominant position and influence in recent years. These foci implied a
research agenda under two broad headings—the heading of historical narrative, and
the heading of analysis and interpretation to clarify changes in the Methodist Church–
national society nexus.

Methodology: Fieldwork

My field work was carried out in Fiji from February to May 2006. I spent 10 weeks in
the Pacific Theological College (PTC) guest accommodation in Suva. Three days
were spent on Bau Island staying with relatives of a woman at PTC. For two weeks I
stayed in Ba with a Methodist minister and his wife. Ba is in north-west Viti Levu, in
the sugar-cane growing area of Fiji. From PTC I was able to interview students at the
college, members of the hierarchy of the Methodist Church and other important
Methodists and members of non-governmental organisations. On Bau Island I
interviewed four Methodists and in Ba I interviewed 10 Methodists. I chose equal
numbers of men and women to get a range of views across the genders.

Interviews

Thirty-one interviews were conducted with three different groups, with somewhat
different purposes in mind. The first group of interviewees were or had been involved
in the central administration of the Methodist Church. I asked them questions about
their childhood, particularly their experiences of growing up as Methodists. I also
asked what they thought were Fiji’s greatest difficulties and how the Church coped with these. I asked how they were going to vote in the coming general election (May 2006) and what would influence their decision, and I sought their views on the influence of the 1987 and 2000 coups on the Church. My aim was to gain testimonies that would help me to understand the world in which Methodist leaders moved, and partisan points of view about the central issues and conflicts in the contemporary Church. In the following lists of interviewees the place and date of the interview is in parentheses following each person’s details.

The interviewees were:

- Reverend Tuikilakila Waqairatu, assistant secretary general of the Methodist Church (Suva 11/04/06, 12/04/06).
- Reverend Josateki Koroi, from Waidradra, secretary general of the Methodist Church in 1989 (Waidradra 03/03/2006).

Other interviewees wished to remain anonymous and are identified here by pseudonyms:

- Reverend Inoke, Pacific Theological College (PTC) (Suva 22/03/2006).
- Reverend Jovesa, PTC (Suva 29/03/2006).
- Reverend Ilisoni, PTC (Suva 24/02/2006).
- Reverend Jope of the Church hierarchy (Suva 23/03/2006).
- Reverend Vijay Khan (Ba 01/05/06).
- Reverend Smi (Ba 31/05/2006).
- Naiogabui, Bachelor of Divinity with an important administrative position at PTC (Suva 14/02/2006).
- Talei, deaconess of the Methodist Church (Suva 14/03/2006).

The second group of interviewees were academics in Suva with connections with the Church and or non-government organisations. I asked them to discuss the position of the Methodist Church in Fiji from the 1987 coup onwards. I also asked them to identify Fiji’s most difficult problems and to suggest solutions. I was particularly interested in their opinions of the progress and possible outcome of the May 2006 general election.
These interviewees were:

- Father Kevin Barr, member of Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy (ECREA) (Suva, 27/02/2006).
- Dr. Manfred Ernst, researcher, sociologist, and lecturer at PTC (Suva 28/02/2006).
- Dr. Robert Wolfgramm, anthropologist and editor of the Fiji Daily Post newspaper (Suva 16/03/2006)
- Reverend Akuila Yabaki, an activist at the Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) (Suva 20/03/06).

The third group were well-educated Methodists in Suva, Bau Island and Ba. They were all i taukei except for James Baghwan (see below), and were from the middle and lower classes of Fiji. I asked these interviewees questions about their experiences of growing up in Methodist families. I also asked about their connections with the Church in 2006, their experiences of the coups of 1987 and 2000, and whether they considered the coups and the role of the Church in them justified. I wanted to know how they viewed Fiji society in 2006 and who they thought would win the 2006 general election.

These interviewees were:

- James Baghwan, in Suva an Indo-Fijian completing his Bachelor of Divinity at PTC (Suva, 09/02/2006).
- Francis Waqa Sokonibogi, land activist supporting ownership of Fijian land (Suva 20/02/2006).

Other interviewees wished to remain anonymous and are identified here by pseudonyms:

- Adi, who assisted in the running of PTC accommodation for visitors (Suva 07/02/2006)
- Lupe, administration at PTC (Suva 14/02/2006).
- Aminiasi, trained as a lay preacher, steward in the Church on Bau Island (Bau 11/02/2006)
• Felise, actively involved in the Methodist Church on Bau Island (Bau 11/02/2006).
• Karolina, retired school teacher actively involved in the Methodist Church on Bau Island (Bau 11/02/2006).
• Emori, serving army officer and lay preacher in the Methodist Church on Bau Island (Bau 12/02/2006).
• Lemeki, working toward training for the Methodist ministry (Ba 22/04/2006).
• Lani, kindergarten teacher (Ba 20/04/2006).
• Frances, retired primary school teacher (Ba 20/04/2006).
• Flora, retired school teacher (Ba 21/04/06)
• Reape, active grass roots Methodist (Ba 21/04/2006).
• Leveni, welder (Ba 22/04/06)
• Manasa, builder (Ba 24/04/2006).
• Marika, teacher (Ba 26/04/2006).
• Penaia, motor mechanic (Ba 27/04/06).
• Leba, secondary school teacher (Ba 30/04/2006).

Participant Observation
As well as formal interviews, I was able to have numerous informal conversations while engaged in participant observation. These proved valuable for providing a broad range of people’s experiences and opinions. With the aim of increasing my understanding of the place of Methodism in the lives of Methodists at the grassroots level, I attended services at a number of different churches in Fiji. The morning service on Bau Island where I stayed for three days was taken in Fijian and was both long and formal. An attendant who could speak English was provided to help my husband and I participate in the service. The Methodist Church is the largest and most important building on the island, and there was a large attendance of indigenous Fijians of all ages. I discovered that it was difficult for residents not to be church-goers, and the week-by-week Church programme was designed to include all groups on the island. Church activities took place all day on Sunday for different ages and genders, and according to my informants, take place each day of the week.
In Ba, I attended a Methodist Church in the Indian Division of the Church. Both Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians attended, so Hindi and Fijian were spoken. Three indigenous Fijian children, beautifully dressed in white, were baptised by the Methodist minister, signifying their formal acceptance into the Church. The Church building here was a tiny, white, wooden structure which seated about 40 worshippers.

In Suva I attended a Christian Outreach Centre (COC) morning service in the Suva Town Hall in order to gain some feel for the appeal of a Christian church that is making inroads in former Methodist territory. The COC is a Pentecostal church attended by indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, and the service was held in English. People were keen to welcome me and expressed the hope that I would come again. After the formal Bible study, there were hymns and songs, accompanied by musical instruments and dancing on stage. The congregation joined in. This service was much less formal than the Methodist services. This was worship by a relatively undifferentiated congregation, rather than the clergy leading and the laity following, as in Methodist services.

**Meetings: Formal and Informal**

I was invited to attend a meeting of the Viti Land Resources Association (VLRA) at the Civic Centre in Suva with Francis Waqa Sokonibogi, an activist in support of Fijian land rights. I accepted his invitation to observe the discussion of Fijian land rights from the VLRA viewpoint. The hall was full of Chiefs, members of the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji (ACCF), which includes Methodists and Pentecostals, and *i taukei* Fijians. The VLRA was established to network with other organisations for the development of land and resource owners of the nation. The interim president of VLRA, Ratu Osea Gavidi, told the meeting that their titles and positions were ordained by God. The meeting was held in both Fijian and English, and Francis translated when necessary. He also introduced me to a number of members of the executive of the VLRA.

Following the morning Church service at PTC, I was invited to attend the women’s re-enactment of the Last Supper based on the Jewish Festival of Lights on Maundy Thursday. This was an opportunity to observe the fellowship of the PTC women’s
group and to gain some impressions of spirituality at the top levels of ecumenical Christianity in contrast to the grassroots spiritualities observed in Ba and at COC. It was a solemn occasion where the women sat in a semi-circle while the narrator read an appropriate scripture. In between, small amounts of traditional food were served. I felt privileged to be invited and included so warmly in this group, and it provided opportunities for informal conversations.

An opportunity to observe an ecumenical community at work came as my husband and I attended a farewell celebration for a staff member at the PTC who was going to work at the University of the South Pacific. About 60 people of all ages and nationalities from PTC attended. Each group did a national dance and presented ceremonial mats along with speeches. Food included a pig roasted on a spit, which is reserved for special occasions. As guests we were invited to approach the table first along with the academics of PTC. We were warmly welcomed as part of our hosting PTC community.

**Review of Literature: Issues and Narratives**

For the most part, relevant literature is reviewed in the appropriate chapters of the thesis. However, some issues in several categories of literature warrant noting in this introduction. The categories of literature are: the *vanua-lotu-matanitu* nexus; the salience of race in Fiji; theories of the formation of national society; the history of the Methodist Church; and general histories of Fiji and contemporary politics. There is no attempt at a comprehensive, critical review of each category. Rather, the focus is on issues that have a bearing on key concepts discussed in this thesis and on the sources of its central narratives.

Various methods were used to obtain information on the substantive issues for the thesis. Initially I read a great deal of secondary literature, books, journals and papers, then I examined primary sources. The Victorian State Library holds an extensive collection of letters, reports and papers related to the early missionary ventures from Great Britain to Fiji. The Fiji Archives hold copies of letters and land contracts (1936–8) that passed between the missionaries, civil authorities and lease holders regarding
Methodist land at Davuilevu in Viti Levu. These documents enabled me to gain a picture of the influence the Methodists had in Fiji before and after colonisation, and the Church’s involvement in early land transactions.

**The vanua-lotu-matanitu nexus.** The making and unravelling of this nexus, and the role of the Methodist Church in both processes are central to this thesis. The narrative and interpretations in which reference is made to the nexus owe much to the debate about cause and effect among the constituent elements of the nexus.

As noted earlier, Matthew Tomlinson argues in his paper “Sacred Soil in Kadavu, Fiji” that soil of the *vanua* has become sacred in Kadavu, because it has been invested with *mana* (supernatural power). “It has earned *mana* because of long-term, generative friction between the fields of *lotu* and *vanua* in Fijian social life” (Tomlinson, 2002a p.251). Tuwere also writes of the importance of the enabling role of the *vanua* as Fijians accepted the *lotu* following the advent of the missionaries. (Tuwere, 2002 p.52).

**The concept and salience of “race” in Fiji.** The word “race” is commonly used in Fiji instead of “ethnicity” to distinguish between indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and other elements in the population. Tomlinson, along with other social scientists (Kaplan 2004, Norton 1986, Premdas 1980), argues that the discourse of “race” is connected to the *vanua*. Indigenous Fijians belong to a *vanua* while Indo-Fijians do not. Indigenous Fijians are *i taukei* in contrast to Indo-Fijians who are *vulagi* (strangers or visitors) (Srebrnik, 2002 p.189). Changes may occur as anthropologists like Norton start to use the classifier “ethnic” (Norton, 2007).

Whatever the classifier used, there can be no doubt that racial/ethnic difference has been a more important element in social identity than class. This is especially apparent at election times; this is discussed in chapter 5. Walsh (2000) notes the phenomenon of indigenous racial ethnic identity and solidarity apparently obviating the development of class consciousness among disadvantaged indigenous Fijians.

There is a body of literature that provides ideas and concepts about the construction of a national society in Fiji, although it does not specifically address the role of
Methodism in state formation and government policy. Benedict Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities* informs my discussion of how indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians imagine their communities differently. The idea of an imagined community is a pivotal concept in this thesis as it underpins arguments about the reasons for the 1987 and 2000 coups. Robert Foster, editor of *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia* (1995), suggests that Anderson’s imaginative construction of “the nation” can be thought of as a narrative or story that links people to a state (1995: 8). Foster argues that rhetorical devices are used to persuade people that the narrative is true, but that success depends on who performs it. Performers, whether individuals or institutions, always remain vulnerable to challenges posed by other, competing narrators or narratives. These ideas are useful for reflecting on how Methodist Christianity has been foundational in the development of taukei nationalism and how Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians view their nation differently.

**The History of the Methodist Church in Fiji**

Primary source material enabled me to understand how carefully and systematically the missionaries reported on their work to their colleagues. Church reports, school reports and Sunday school reports were written in separate documents and included statistics concerning Church members, people on trial and baptisms. This material, though useful, is likely to be biased in favour of publicising the heroic job the missionaries thought they were doing in evangelising and “civilising” Fijians. No negative impact on the Fijians from missionary activity or teaching is mentioned. Likewise, sources that have the characteristics of both primary and secondary sources must be read with care. For example, Reverend Thomas Williams’ (1858) book *Fiji and the Fijians* is informative about Fijian religious beliefs and customs. As a missionary interested in the Fijians, Williams presents a historical narrative and descriptions of early Fiji. However, the book is biased against the “uncivilised” behaviour of the Fijians and unequivocally supports the missionaries’ rationale for evangelising. The views of indigenous Fijians are not taken into account, or even given a voice in the narrative. On some matters, I was able to use primary and secondary materials to cross-check information.
Four particularly useful secondary sources on Church and society include three by Andrew Thornley. These are *The Inheritance of Hope: John Hunt Apostle of Fiji* (Thornley, 2000); *Exodus of the I Taukei: The Wesleyan Church in Fiji 1848–74* (Thornley, 2002); and *A Shaking of the Land: William Cross and the Origins of Christianity in Fiji* (Thornley, 2005). Thornley’s work carefully documents the early years of the Methodist Church in Fiji and provides a wealth of detailed information about that period. The fourth text is Right Reverend Dr. Winston Halapua’s book *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism* (2003), an informative book on the historical development of the military and the *lotu* and their present-day relationship. These sources are referred to in greater detail below.

The major source on Fijian society and the early Methodist missions written at the time is *Fiji and the Fijians* (1858) by Reverend Thomas Williams, missionary from 1840 to 1853. Although this book is written from a Eurocentric viewpoint, Williams’ observations of Fijian life are intelligent and detailed. He is one of the few missionaries who, while undertaking evangelical work, also recorded observations about social organisations and practices in different areas of Fiji. His book is particularly useful for its insights into the fragmented nature of Fiji prior to the changes introduced by Methodist missions and colonial government.

Andrew Thornley is a Christian academic who admires the work of the missionaries who came from Britain to evangelise the Fijians. He argues that despite considerable disruption to village life, the advent of Methodism was advantageous to Fiji. The missionaries brought British education and rudimentary health care. John Hunt translated the New Testament from English into the Bauan dialect, which became the Fijian language. Copies of the New Testament were printed on Viwa Island and distributed to the missionaries for teaching purposes. The missionaries “civilised” and therefore prepared Fijians for governance by the British colonisers. Unlike Williams, Thornley includes the voice of *i taukei* to a small extent, but the narrative is mostly told from a European viewpoint.

discusses Fiji-Indian and Rotuma missions. These books present a historical account of the Methodist Church’s work among the Fijians, up to 1975. It is important to note that they were written by an Australian Methodist who was a missionary to Tonga from 1924 to 1937, whereas Wood’s experience in Fiji was limited. Thornley’s books are researched in greater detail than Wood’s volumes, but the latter provide information on the ways in which missionary work contributed to overcoming social and cultural fragmentation in the nineteenth century, and the role of the established Church in the racial polarisation of Fiji. Another difference between Thornley’s and Wood’s work is that Thornley concludes his history at Cession in 1874 while Wood continues for another 100 years.

Where Thornley and Wood helped to establish how the Methodist Church countered social fragmentation through its organisational scope, school network and cultural transformations, Henry Srebrnik’s (2002) article “Ethnicity, Religion, and the Issue of Aboriginality in a Small Island State”, focuses on the role of Methodism in the development of taukei nationalism. Srebrnik argues that the Methodist Church exerted a strong ideological influence on the shaping of an ethnic Fijian consciousness, and directly influenced government policy and the modus operandi of governing institutions. He describes the religious (Methodist) underpinnings of the Taukei Movement, which espouses indigenous Fijian paramountcy and played a significant role in the events culminating in the coup of 2000 and the formation of a new political party, the Conservative Alliance, which fared well in the 2001 general election.

Reverend Iliata Tuwere’s Vanua Towards a Fijian Theology of Place (2002) describes the Fijian way of life in which the vanua, lotu and matanitu are linked. Tuwere looks at Fijian life from a Methodist perspective. He argues that on the one hand the i taukei attachment to their vanua is a vital part of their identity, but on the other hand they must remember that they are living in a multi-cultural society. His work provides valuable contextualisation of the more recent events in which the Methodist Church’s influence diminished as the vanua, lotu, matanitu nexus unravelled under political, economic and demographic pressures.
General History of Fiji and Recent Politics.

R. A. Derrick’s (1946) *A History of Fiji* covers the period from pre-colonial times until the signing of the Cession to Britain on 10 October 1874. It provides descriptions of fragmented, pre-colonial Fiji and the making of the Fijian nation-state, from colony to republic. Derrick covers the wars between the Fijian chiefs and their clans until one chief Cakobau becomes the *tui viti*, the dominant chief. The advent of Methodist missionaries and the changes that occurred in Fijian society in preparation for British rule are discussed in great detail.

Deryck Scarr’s *Fiji: A Short History* (1984) concerns the period from the establishment of Chief Cakobau’s government of 1871 until the general election of 1982. Particular emphasis is given to the influence that Indo-Fijians had on Fijian society during and after the indenture period, and during World War Two. As the title suggests, it is a shorter and less detailed history than Derrick’s, but makes useful background reading, particularly because it puts Indo-Fijians back into the story of nation-building in Fiji.

Peter France’s (1969) *The Charter of the Land* focuses on the imposition of the colonial government’s ideas of land ownership on indigenous Fijians. The author writes with sympathy for the indigenous Fijians whose world is significantly altered by British rule. France argues that the British disrupted Fijian notions of ownership of their *vanua* by forcing them to replace traditionally loosely held views of ownership with *mataqali*, a confected ownership classification. This book presents meticulous, ground-breaking research into land policies in Fiji and is used by many commentators on the subject.

One of the most prolific writers on the current history and politics of the Fiji Islands is Brij V. Lal, professor of Pacific and Asian history in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University. Lal is an Indo-Fijian who was a member of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission whose report forms the basis of Fiji’s multiracial constitution. In the course of arguing against Mahendra Chaudhry’s removal as prime minister in the 2000 coup, Lal (2000) connects that event to the disintegration of traditional Fijian rural society, which he documents. In his article *Heartbreak Islands: Reflections on Fiji in Transition* (2003b) he discusses the tragedy
of modern Fijian politics following the 1987 and 2000 coups, constituted by rising militant nationalism, increasing poverty and crumbling infrastructure. He places the contemporary tragedy in the historical context of the arrival, problematic settlement and political exclusion of Indo-Fijians, for whom he has open sympathy.

The collection edited by Jon Fraenkel and Stewart Firth, From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 Campaign and its Aftermath (2007), is the most recent book on Fijian politics. In his introduction, Fraenkel argues that the formation of a power-sharing cabinet held out the possibility of peace following the 2006 election. (Fraenkel, 2007 p.xx). This power-sharing did not succeed because Commodore Bainimarama, head of Fiji’s military, seized power in the name of “anti-corruption”. The book was the first available analysis and discussion of the 2006 general election, covering a diverse range of topics surrounding the election, including Newland’s chapter “The Role of the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji in the 2006 Election”, which argues that politics and religion are intimately related in Fiji, and that indigenous Fijians can be motivated by fear of losing their paramountcy and their relationship with their Church (Newland, 2007 p.301). She illustrates this with the fact that in advertisements, the ACCF—constituted by the Methodist Church and the Pentecostal Churches—persuaded Church members to vote for Qarase’s Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) party; United Party of the Vanua (ibid.).

Fraenkel and Firth’s book includes chapters by a number of politicians who were involved in the election, including Qarase and Chaudhry. Since they are political foes, the themes of their chapters oppose each other. Qarase argues that the 1997 Constitution (which sets out how elections should be held) should remain, and that as the winner of the 2006 election, he should establish a multi-party cabinet (Qarase 2007: 337). Chaudhry’s chapter, entitled “Tainted Elections”, argues that he does not believe that Fiji can ever hold free and fair elections (Chaudhry 2007 p.347). Fraenkel’s addendum, on the 2006 coup, discusses conflicting interpretations of the coup. This book has been criticised by Shaista Shameen of the Human Rights Commission in Fiji for arguing that the coup was illegal prior to its legality being tested in the law courts (Shameem, 2007), but that criticism does not reduce the immense value of the book for an outsider attempting to grasp the intricacies of
contemporary politics in Fiji. Where newspapers and on-line sources provided plenty of trees, this book allowed views of the wood.

**Media Sources**

Media sources included newspapers, and on-line reports of current events. Newspapers were a useful means of obtaining up-to-date information such as the events and aftermath of the 2006 coup. However, the reports have to be used with care, since fear dictated what information was provided by Fijian newspapers after Commodore Bainimarama introduced media censorship following the 2006 coup. Newspaper reports and opinion pieces were often anonymously written for this reason.

Notwithstanding the limitations of Fijian newspapers, they were a source of reports on daily events. Media sources were a most important means of gaining information while I was doing field-work in February–May 2006. I watched the television news each night and as I was there during the pre-election build up in 2006, I was able to compare the different parties and their messages.

I bought the three English-language newspapers each day: *The Fiji Times, Fiji Daily Post* and the *Fiji Sun*. After leaving Fiji, the online versions of these newspapers were a necessary means of obtaining information. Online newspapers obtain their information through their own reporters who attend meetings of parliament, non-government organisations, sporting groups (rugby and soccer) and Church services, particularly those of the Methodist Church. Political leaders, especially Commodore Bainimarama, the president of Fiji (Ratu Josefa Iloilovatu Ulivuda), and the hierarchy of the Methodist Church all made statements through the newspapers in this period. Through the newspapers, the Church frequently conducted arguments with Bainimarama about the running of the country.

The problem with using newspapers and relying on one in particular is that the material is biased because of either official censorship or the self-censorship of journalists, editors and publishers. *The Fiji Times* clearly objected to the 2006 coup before media suppression was in force and had to tone down its writing thereafter. I
also used the *Fiji Sun* and the *Fiji Daily Post* to a lesser degree, because fewer of their articles were accessible on the internet, and sometimes they were not accessible at all.

Following the 2006 coup one editor-in-chief (of the *Fiji Daily Post*) was threatened with deportation, but this did not occur. However, the editor-in-chief of the *Fiji Sun*, Russell Hunter, was deported to Australia in February 2008, and the editor-in-chief of the *Fiji Times*, Evan Hannah, was also deported to Australia in May 2008 for publishing material with which the regime did not agree. However, Australian and New Zealand newspapers were free to express diverse opinions and to publish some items of news that were not publishable in Fiji. For example, following the election of Qarase’s SDL party, Graham Davis, writing for *The Australian* newspaper, argued that the Australian and New Zealand governments were quite wrong to support “…a racist government pursuing racist policies, and [which] has in its ranks many of the shadowy figures behind the 2000 coup who are desperate to avoid justice” (Davis, 2006). Davis is an investigative reporter who has worked in radio, television and newspapers. He has no particular expertise on Fiji, but expresses his own opinions based on his own investigations in recent years.

**Chapter Outline**

The chapters in this thesis examine, in order, the role of the Methodist Church in the early stages of the formation of Fijian national society; the concomitant role of the Church in the polarisation of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians; the extent of Methodist Church influence and power by the time of independence in 1970; the growing connections between the Church and *taukeism*; the involvement of the Church in the coups of 1987 and 2000, and the effects of these coups on the Church; and finally the roots of the unravelling of Methodist influence and power that has become manifest since the coup of 2006.

Chapter two discusses the composition of pre-contact Fijian village life and its traditional organisation from the arrival of the first missionaries in 1830. I discuss the fragmented nature of pre-contact society and examine the ways in which the colonial authorities before and after Cession made major contributions to the building of a
national society. I also discuss the concept of polarisation in relation to the Indo-Fijians whose ancestors arrived in 1879 as indentured labourers from India in response to a request by the British colonisers in Fiji.

Chapter three establishes that the polarisation described in chapter two has its roots in the consolidation of different imagined Fijian communities. It further locates Methodism in the formation and consolidation of the dominant imagined Fiji, and traces Methodist influences in some of the more extreme expressions of exclusive indigenous Fijian nationalism. Chapter three discusses the making of the Fijian nation-state, from colony to republic, and the polarisation in discourse that occurred in the process.

Chapter four discusses the role of the Methodist Church in the structure and governance of Fiji. Taukeism, associated with Methodism, is discussed, including its formation and encouragement of a strident nationalism of Fiji for the Fijians. The Methodist Church’s structure—Village/Circuit/Division/Conference—is shown to be based on its relationship to village and government structures. Increasing diversity in the Methodist Church is outlined, examining how diversity of interests and religious worldviews among Methodists may counter any tendencies toward a monolithic Church dominating civil society and the state. The sources of increasing diversity in Methodism in terms of socio-economic and educational inequalities and the inclusion of some Indo-Fijians in the Church are shown to be associated with different theological currents and conflicts in the Church.

In Chapter five I examine the paradox of immense influence in tandem with increasing internal and external challenge, through an investigation of the involvement of the Church and leading Methodists in the coups of 1987 and 2000. The long-term and short-term causes of the coups are discussed. The involvement of the Methodist Church in the planning of these coups and their execution is teased out. The involvement of the Taukei Movement in violence associated with the 1987 coup is part of the narrative, and the roles of three key individuals who were influential in the 1987 coup. Two of these were committed Methodists, and one was a Catholic. Their roles are described and analysed. These are Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, leader of the coup, and Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, governor-general of Fiji, who gave amnesty to
Rabuka and declared the coup a *fait accompli*. The consequences of both coups are discussed and their effects on the power of the Methodist Church. A notable exception to Methodist supporters of the coup was Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who was a Catholic.

Chapter six examines relations between Church, state and society in the 21st century. The unravelling of the Methodist Church that commenced with the 1987 coup is traced to the post-2006 coup period. In this chapter the shifting relationships between the Methodist Church, the military, the police force, the Great Council of Chiefs, the Native Land Trust Board and politicians are discussed. Following the 2006 coup Commodore Bainimarama removed the Prime Minister, Qarase and the elected SDL party, and established himself as interim prime minister. Changes in Fiji have significantly affected the power and prestige of the Methodist Church. Fiji is now a military state ruled by the gun and by decree. The hierarchy of the Church was frightened into submission by the arrest of a Church staff officer in 2007 from the offices of the Church in Suva. Grassroots Methodists live in a society where the military has far more power than their Church.

The conclusion of the thesis stresses the importance of the Methodist Church as a key factor in the development of Fiji’s national society, leading to its consolidation as a key institution in that society, wielding influence in all spheres of national life. However, the Church’s effective endorsement of *taukeism* has contributed both to the divisions within Fijian society and to the unravelling of its own position of influence. Based on my analysis of the changing role of the Church since missionaries first arrived in Fiji, I conclude the thesis with speculation about future prospects for the Methodist Church and for Fiji.
Chapter 2

THE COMPOSITION OF FIJIAN SOCIETY FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES IN 1830

When the first missionaries arrived in 1830, Fijians mostly lived in villages ruled by the chief (turaga) and other persons of importance with particular functional roles in the village. Various factors contributed to the fragmentary nature of what we now know as Fijian society into village and unstable regional segments. These factors are discussed in this chapter. Some consolidation of segments occurred with the rising to prominence of Cakobau, the chief of Bau Island, who was involved in numerous wars against neighbouring villages and chiefs. These wars, such as the Bau-Rewa war, were about cementing power, gaining territory and defeating troublesome enemies.

The Bau-Rewa wars of 1843-55…grew out of family feuds or the quarrels of blood relations in a few leading families. The common people fought to avenge the wrongs, real or fancied, of their high chiefs; sons of one father were to be found on opposite sides; and the “people of the land”, whether they belonged to Bau, Rewa, or any other faction, were mere pawns in the game (Derrick, 1946 p.48).

By 1871 Cakobau had asserted his authority sufficiently to form a government for the next three years, which operated with little success, if success were measured in terms of nation–making (Derrick, 1946 p.163). The colonial government took over at Cession in 1874. This chapter examines the ways in which colonial authorities and the Methodists (before and after Cession) made major contributions to the building of a national society. However it also examines how, even as integration under British colonial influence was under way, the seeds of future polarisation were planted with the arrival of indentured Indians in 1879.

Two key concepts are deployed in this chapter. The term *fragmentary nature* is used to refer to relationships between the numerous social groups and separate villages that
existed in pre-contact Fiji. The development of separate communities in the form of villages meant that the nation-state as it developed under British colonisation did not yet exist. Informal gatherings occurred, however there was no institutional means by which to draw the various villages together. Warfare was more frequent than friendly meetings. Andrew Thornley describes the unsafe situation that the missionaries faced due to the “fragmentary political fabric of the land” (Thornley, 2002 p.21). A description by missionary Thomas Williams in 1848 supports Thornley’s view:

The government of this part of Feejee [sic] resembles that of Ancient Britain, consisting of several principalities, all small and each acknowledging a distinct leader…There is no end to intestine war. I am surrounded by a set of so-called chiefs, who are always falling out with each other (Thornley, 2002 p.21).

Villagers were loyal to their island of birth and Fijians still say “I am a Lauan”, or “I am from Kadavu”. Each island spoke its own dialect. Rather than integrating society, the presence of various dialects and loyalties to a specific area within the country, produced a fragmented society.

I also use the concept of polarisation, to describe the split that has developed in Fiji. The seeds of polarisation were planted with the introduction of the Indians as indentured labourers in 1879. By this term I mean a “splitting in half”, along racial lines, of the fledgling Fijian colonial society initially, and subsequently independent Fiji. Other races were present in Fiji society, such as the Tongans, Samoans, Chinese, and Europeans. I use polarisation to differentiate between the indigenous Fijians, i taukei and those of other races.

It is important to explain why the word “race” is commonly used in Fiji, instead of “ethnicity” (Kaplan 2004, Norton 1990, Premdas 1995). The racial divide in Fiji is emphasised in various official ways. The Fiji Census uses race as a category; residents or citizens entering or leaving the country must state their race on arrival and departure cards. Emde argues that “the concept of race is not exclusively defined in the western biological sense. Physical appearance as a biological notion of race exists in conjunction with language, custom and religion as socio-cultural acquired identity markers (Emde, 2005 p.388).
The Structure of Pre-contact Fijian society

This section discusses the structure of Fijian society when the missionaries arrived in 1830. At that time, Fiji was composed of hundreds of villages scattered over the 1.5 per cent dry land of its 100 habitable islands out of 300 in the group. There was no form of political or economic integration. In each village the kin relationship of vasu was a most important one. The male vasu or nephew or mother’s brother’s son, had the right, in his uncle’s village, to take whatever he wanted from his uncle’s goods. Vasu i taukei applied when he was born in his mother’s village; vasu levu, when his mother and father were both of high rank; a vasu levu could claim anything belonging to anybody in his mother’s village (Capell, 1991 p.256) One of the early missionaries described vasu in the following way:

Most prominent among the public notorieties of Fiji is the vasu. The word means a nephew or niece, but becomes a title of office in the case of the male, who in some localities, has the extraordinary privilege of appropriating whatever he chooses belonging to his uncle, or those under his uncle’s power. Vasus are of three kinds: the vasu taukei, the vasu levu, and the vasu: the last is a common name belonging to any nephew whatever (Williams, 1858 cited in Halapua (2003) p.91 ).

Men in this overwhelmingly patriarchal society were born into a particular rank in the hierarchy of the Fijian village. There were six grades of men, from serfs and commoners to high chiefs. A man’s rank depended on that of his father and to a lesser extent his mother (Derrick, 1946 p.8). The composition of Fijian society was defined by the mataqali and their specific functions within that society. The mataqali represented branches of the yavusa (tribe). In a yavusa there were:

- The turaga or chiefly mataqali, from whom the ruling chiefs of succeeding generations were chosen.
- The sauturaga or executive mataqali whose rank was next to the chiefs of the blood (kin), whose function was to carry out their commands and support their authority.
• The mata-ni-vanua or diplomatic mataqali from whom the official heralds or master of ceremonies were chosen.

• The bete or priestly mataqali into certain of whom the spirit of the common ancestor—now deified and known as the kalou-vu—was supposed to enter and through it would speak.

• The bati or warrior mataqali, whose function was fighting in wars.

• I tokatoka were subdivisions of the mataqali, and comprised closely related families acknowledging the same blood relative as their head, and living in a defined village area (Derrick, 1946 p.8).

The yavusa were broken up and reformed due to wars, other conflicts and the migration of people within the country. Broken yavusa reformed as confederations or vanua under a paramount chief who required the confidence of his people to retain his position at the head of a vanua. Vanua refers to both land and people. It is the place where you were born or where your mother or father was born. Groups of vanua formed kingdoms or matanitu in some parts of Fiji. In 1835 there were 32 places listed as matanitu by the Native Lands Commission (Derrick, 1946 p.9).

In 1876 Governor Gordon, the first governor of Fiji following Cession, asked the Council of Chiefs to set out the traditional system of native tenure, so that he could enshrine it in legislation (France, 1969 p.110). After two years of discussion the chiefs agreed that the ownership of the land is vested in the mataqali and the land is not to be alienated by any mataqali (France, 1969 p.113). In pre-Cession times land had been alienated by chiefs whenever they had a debt to settle, or an alliance to cement (France, 1969 p.113).

Factors Contributing to the Fragmentary Nature of Fijian Society

Constant Warfare among the Tribes

Chiefs used warfare to exert and maintain power over their tribes. The chiefs needed to demonstrate that they could control their subject people, their warriors and the border yavusa. Weak tribes played one powerful state against another and frequently
allegiances were changed if this was deemed to be advantageous to a tribe (Derrick, 1946 p.23).

Disputes over land, women and property, and quarrels or petty jealousies of the chiefs contributed to constant warring among the tribes (Derrick, 1946 p.24). Evidence of this occurred in the Bau-Rewa wars of 1843–55, in which the quarrels of blood relations in a few leading families commenced and fuelled the conflict.

The common people fought to avenge the wrongs, real or fancied, of their high chiefs: sons of one father were to be found on opposite sides; and the “people of the land”, whether they belonged to Bau, Rewa, or any other faction, were mere pawns in the game (Derrick, 1946 p.48).

As Methodism spread in Fiji, there developed antagonisms that led to war between those areas which had accepted the lotu (Christianity) and those that maintained adherence to traditional religion through their betes (priests). Thornley writes:

On his last visit to Bau, Calvert [a missionary] found many absent on a war expedition to Ba, where a teacher and five people had been killed. War also on Vatualevu produced bitter enmity between neighbours and races, a serious compromising of Christian principles and a decline in the Wesleyan cause (Thornley, 2002 p.236).

**Gods, Warfare and Cannibalism and Fragmentation**

“The idea of Deity is familiar to the Fijian; and the existence of an invisible superhuman power, controlling or influencing all earthly things, is fully recognised by him” (Williams, 1858 p.215-6). Reverend Thomas Williams, a missionary in Fiji from 1840 to 1853 explained that there were gods who were born gods, the kalou-vu, and gods who had been men, the spirits of ancestors and chiefs of renown known as kalou-yalo. The kalou-vu are eternal, but the kalou-yalo may die. Gods were associated with fishing in coastal and river communities, and with the success or failure of yam crops in the gardens of the village (Williams, 1858 p. 216). Derrick argues that:
The powerful kingdoms all attributed their success in war to the favour of their local war-gods, and failure, to neglect of them. At Bau, for example, the chief bure kalou (temple) was dedicated to Cagawalu. No campaign was begun without first repairing or even rebuilding the bure kalou, offering gifts, and consulting the oracle. Should the god promise success the warriors left in high spirits: their first concern when they returned was to present the dead bodies of their enemies at the bure kalou (1946p. 12).

Bodies were then presented to the chief, before they were cooked in an oven. Hearts and tongues were given to the chiefs, the hands to the children and the heads were buried. This was an essential component of warfare, in order to appease the gods and to show reverence to the chiefs (Derrick, 1946 p.21-2). As Williams observes, “Cannibalism is part of the Fijian religion, and the gods are described as delighting in human flesh” (1858 p.231).

The worship of different gods by different villages increased social fragmentation. Continual warfare in the struggle for power, prestige and land also increased fragmentation. The removal of slain bodies of one village to that of the victorious village perpetuated enmity between vanua and matanitu.

**Land Transfers and Fragmentation**

In the early 19th century, the chiefs had control over who could cultivate which piece of land and where each person’s house would be built. Cultivation was often a communal effort. Personal rights to land were created by initial cultivation of land by a family or by gift from a family member or chief. Land transfers could occur for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child
- Marriage of a woman
- If a family cared for the chief
- A reward for bravery in battle
- Defence of a corpse of a member of a donor’s family in battle (France, 1969 p.17).
Misunderstandings often occurred between donors and recipients about the length of time the land was to be used; sometimes it was given only for the recipient’s lifetime. The recipient of the land could not dispose of the land (France, 1969p.18).

Sometimes chiefs gave away land which was not theirs to give. For example, in 1868 Cakobau transferred 200,000 acres of land to a group of businessmen in Melbourne so that he could pay a debt to a group of American citizens in Fiji whose ships had been fired on by Cakobau’s warriors (France, 1969 p.81). Actions such as these by chiefs created anger and a feeling of helplessness among indigenous Fijians and led to fragmentation of the society. In the case of Cakobau’s transfer, conflict developed between those who supported him and those who did not. “On Viti Levu the absence of adequate control rendered disputes with the natives inevitable” (Derrick, 1946 p.185). Derrick continues that wars between the hill tribes and cotton growers on the Rewa River, some of whom had purchased their land from chiefs, led to loss of life on both sides.

**Environmentally Imposed Isolation and Fragmentary Nature of Society**

The weather also contributed to fragmentary nature of society. Heavy rainfall occurred for most of the year especially on the eastern seaboard, and flooding and landslides made travel within an island very difficult, as did fast-flowing rivers. High mountains also made communication between islands slow and exacerbated social fragmentation. The delta of the Rewa River in south-eastern Viti Levu provided some flat land for crop growth and became the area of densest population. It included Suva, the present capital city of Fiji. Routledge’s description of the topography of Viti Levu shows that there were many obstacles to overcome to find land fit for cultivation (Routledge, 1985 p.122)

**Tongan Settlers**

Tongans sailed their canoes to and from Fiji before groups of them settled in the Lau group of islands. By 1835 there more than 1,000 Tongans in Fiji (Thornley, 2000 p.64). Derrick claims that Tongans seriously disrupted Fijian society by pillaging Fijian gardens, taking their women and warring against the Fijians (1946 p. 125). Tongans also played a crucial role during tribal conflicts in Fiji either by providing
warriors or by assisting in reconciliation (Routledge, 1985 p.39). By the time of Cession, Tongans had been consolidated as a separate segment of the population of the Fiji Islands.

Routledge writes that “Taufa’ahau was the Tu’i Tonga the sacred king and father of all Tongans—validator, in other words, of the socio-political order” (Routledge, 1985 p.72). The Tui Nayau (King of Lakeba) in Fiji had a Tongan mother and resided in the Lau islands (Routledge, 1985 p.73). Ma’afu was leader of the Tongans from his arrival in Fiji in 1847. In 1853 he was entitled Governor of the Tongans in Fiji. Ma’afu held particular influence in Lakeba, and Taveuni the third largest island in Fiji. He was involved with Fijian chiefs in conflicts in order to gain power in Vanua Levu, the second largest island in Fiji (Routledge, 1985 p.78). He and Cakobau were the most powerful chiefs in Fiji until the time of Cession, when Cakobau gained ascendancy over his rival. However, Ma’afu was one of the chiefs to sign the Deed of Cession in 1874 (Derrick, 1946 p. 248).

**Cakobau and the Chiefs**

Cakobau, the paramount chief of Bau Island, was the most significant Fijian from 1865 to 1874. In one view he might be seen as a unifier in fragmented Fiji, but in his battles with other chiefs also as a manifestation of fragmentation. His is the first name on the Deed of Cession signed on 10 October 1874. This document ceded Fiji to Queen Victoria of Great Britain (Derrick, 1946 p.248). Cession was one of the most significant moments in the development of Fijian society.

Derrick argues that in the years immediately before Cession, Cakobau controlled the windward coasts of Viti Levu and Lomaiviti through warfare and relationships with powerful Tongans such as Ma’afu (1946 p. 158). Ma’afu was paramount throughout Lau and Vanua Levu. European settlers were anxious to establish a system of law to settle disputes over land in particular. It was suggested by Colonel Smythe, representative of Queen Victoria’s government in Fiji, that the eight important chiefs on the eastern seaboard of Fiji form a confederacy of native kingdoms. On 8 May 1865, at Levuka, seven chiefs representing the states of the eastern seaboard who claimed to speak for the whole of Fiji, formed a General Assembly (Derrick, 1946
Cakobau was elected president of the confederacy. “Legislative powers were vested in the General Assembly, and the code of laws was to be effective throughout Fiji” (Derrick, 1946 p.159). The confederacy failed in 1867, when Ma’afu tried to become president. The confederacy of Bau was set up as a result of the failure of the first confederacy.

Cakobau was crowned King of Fiji in 1867 at the instigation of Cakobau’s secretary Samuel St. John, an American from California. Samuel St. John drafted a constitution for him. Late in April 1867, St. John and William Drew invited 60 Europeans to adopt the constitution and to arrange a coronation ceremony for Cakobau on the island of Bau (Derrick, 1946 p.163). Cakobau was granted power over the military and the judiciary, and to collect taxes. However the British Consul at Levuka did not recognise Cakobau’s “new” status and warned the European settlers that they would not have protection from the British Crown if they recognised Cakobau’s authority. The native chiefs were informed after Cakobau’s crowning had taken place, and 297 subsequently swore allegiance to him (Derrick, 1946 p.164). He retained the title of Tui Viti (king) of Fiji during the Cession negotiations, although he was not legally a king in the eyes of the British government.

**Cakobau and the lotu**

Cakobau contributed to the fragmentation of Fiji but he is nonetheless a significant figure in the early stages of the making of a Fijian national society. In this section I examine his role in the early period of the British colonisation of Fiji. At least in retrospect, his conversion to Christianity can be seen as a factor in the development of a national society. Following pressure from the missionary John Waterhouse, Cakobau and his wife Adi Samanunu were baptised as Christians on 11 January 1857 (Thornley, 2002 p.176). A symbolic severance of his relationship with the gods of his fathers occurred:

The temples were despoiled; a sacred grove of casuarina (mokonko) trees, gnarled with age, was felled; and cannibalism and widow-strangling ceased at Bau. The long-withheld permission was given to the people to lotu (Christianity),
and old and young thronged the mission house, “begging for alphabets” (Derrick, 1946 p.111).

As a result of Cakobau’s conversion to Christianity, Bau became an important Christian centre. “Cakobau ordered the construction of a Christian chapel 100 feet in length. It had a high-pitched roof, reaching beyond 50 feet. The gables were encrusted with white cowrie shells and the building was devoid of nails, all parts tied together with sinnet” (Thornley, 2002 p.176). I return to the significance of the conversion and subsequent spread of Methodist Christianity later. However, he paved the way for the replacement of traditional Fijian warfare by British institutions such as the Royal Army, established in Levuka, Fiji’s first capital city, in 1871 (Halapua, 2003 p. 46). Cakobau’s power was maintained by his involvement in many wars.

One of the major reasons for the formation of a standing army in Fiji was the occasional killing, and more frequent assaults, on European planters by hill tribesmen in the early 1870s. This Royal Army comprised Europeans and tribal warriors from Cakobau’s own people in Tailevu and Ra (Halapua, 2003 p.47).

The Royal Army crushed insurrections in the interior of Viti Levu among the hill tribes, who were angry about alienation of their land by Europeans. Cakobau’s warriors, through their involvement with the Royal Army, threatened the sovereignty of the hill tribes over their own territory, and introduced the use of tribesmen as forced labour on plantations away from their own villages (Halapua, 2003 p.47). After Cession, Governor Gordon, first governor of Fiji, changed the name of the Royal Army to the Armed Native Constabulary (ANC). Sanday argues that as “the coercive arm of the state, the primary role of the military was the maintenance of the internal stability required for the development of a capitalist economy” (Sanday, 1991 p.244).

Cakobau was heavily involved in the first offer of cession to Queen Victoria in 1858 (Derrick, 1946 p.139). He stipulated that he retain his title of Tui Viti, that he should be head of the Native Department under the Queen’s representative, and that the Imperial Government should fully discharge the United States Government’s claim against him for 45,000 dollars (Derrick, 1946 p.139). Cakobau’s part in this agreement included 200,000 acres of land to be ceded to the Queen (Derrick, 1946 p.140).
first offer was not accepted by the British Government. Cakobau’s next attempt to settle his debt occurred in 1868 when a group of Melbourne businessmen formed a company called the Polynesia Company, for the purpose of settling Cakobau’s debt to the Americans for US$45,000, in exchange for large tracts of Fijian land.

Cakobau’s first charter transferred to the company 200,000 acres of land, which were specified in the schedule to the agreement as including Suva Harbour, and including both banks of the Navua River, and running back to the large Rewa River, that is, all lands within the boundary not already sold, the remainder to be mutually arranged (France, 1969 p.81).

None of the land was Cakobau’s to give away to foreigners, and displacement of indigenous Fijians occurred as a result. This, of course, created resentment and anger among the displaced (Derrick, 1946 p.181). The island of Beqa, which was under the control of Ma’afu, was not alienated because he refused to hand it over to Cakobau. The land in Natewa Bay was under the control of Tui Cakau, Cakobau’s sister’s husband. The land in Viti Levu Bay was controlled by Bau. Suva land was controlled by the son of Cakobau’s sister, so was easily included in the deal (France, 1969 p.82-3). “On paper, about 90,000 acres—less than half of the land promised—were made over to the [Polynesia] Company; and of this land settlers succeeded in occupying and planting [cotton on] less than 500 acres, mostly around Suva Harbour” (Derrick, 1946 p.181).

By 1870, the Fijian economy was experiencing great difficulties. The cotton industry had foundered and the sugar industry required capital to develop it and to pay for new mills. The banks would not lend money for land until titles had been investigated and confirmed. The white planters were anxious for cession to occur, to introduce stability into the society. In Great Britain, a change of government, led by Benjamin Disraeli, meant that the Report on the Annexation of Fiji was favourably received (Derrick, 1946p.246). Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of New South Wales, was instructed to take the Report back to Fiji for discussion with the king (Cakobau) and high chiefs. In preparation for the final signing, the Deed of Cession was signed on 30 September 1874 by the king and four chiefs. The signatures of the other chiefs, Ma’afu, Tui Cakau, Ritova and Katonivere, were subsequently obtained, making the document
official. Cession Day was celebrated with due ceremony on Saturday 10 October 1874 in Levuka, Ovalau Island (Derrick, 1946p.248-9).

So in 1874, at Cession, the colonial government introduced western moral principles and laws to govern all of Fiji. Fragmentation in Fijian society was papered over by introduced institutions of British rule and the British supported paramountcy of one chief, Cakobau. The next section examines the factors that contributed to the overcoming of chronic fragmentation. In particular, I focus on the role of missionaries.

**Missionary Contact from 1830**

In 1830, Tahitian missionaries named Taharaa, Hatai and Arue arrived on the island of Lakeba at the invitation of the *Tui Nayau* (chief) but soon moved to Oneata, another island of the Lau group, following failure to convert the *Tui Nayau* to Christianity (Thornley, 1995 p.31&33). They spent five years evangelising in the Lau group of islands, thereby paving the way for the first missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) (Thornley, 1995p.33). Reverends William Cross and David Cargill arrived in Lakeba in 1835. Under the patronage of the *Tui Nayau*, Cross and Cargill established a small, but in their view successful, Methodist Mission. Tongans living at Lakeba, some of whom had converted to Christianity in Tonga, increased the numbers. The missionaries established classes in November 1835, to prepare people for baptism. “Three classes were meeting by the end of the month, men and women in separate groups and almost entirely Tongan” (Thornley, 2005 p.151). By 1839 the LMS decided to make Fiji a separate mission district, no longer attached to Tonga (Wood, 1978a p. 39). Small schools were also begun to teach reading and writing. These activities became the chief manner in which Methodism spread. People often accepted the *lotu* because they desired an education (Thornley, 2005 p.151).

The next area for evangelism was the island of Viwa, which is close to Bau. William Cross travelled here to a group of 40–50 Christians. Viwa was greatly influenced by the more powerful island of Bau, ruled by Paramount Chief Cakobau, who in 1840 was firmly against accepting the *lotu*, or allowing any of his people to do so (Thornley, 2005 p.343). This situation changed in 1854 when Cakobau accepted
Christianity and allowed his followers on Bau to do the same. Cakobau’s desire for conversion, according to the historian Derrick (1946 p. 110), was stimulated by his loss in the Bau-Rewa war, caused by previous supporters turning against him and by threats from U.S. Consul Williams to destroy Bau. Cakobau felt threatened and isolated on Bau and so, after conversations with Reverend Samuel Waterhouse, decided to accept the lotu (Derrick, 1946 p.111). This proved to be a significant breakthrough for the missionaries.

The Committee of the LMS dispatched more missionaries; Cargill, Calvert and Jaggar went to Lakeba, and Cross, Hunt, and Lyth went to Rewa (Wood, 1978a p.39). Of all the early missionaries, John Hunt has been judged by missionary historians to have had the most illustrious ministry. Reverend Harold Wood argues that:

> His example of Christian living, his transparent earnestness, his indefatigable labourers, his courageous and tactful dealings with the chiefs, his outstanding translation work, and his training of the first pastor-teachers—all these had lasting results in Fiji (1978a p. 41).

John Hunt also practised medical skills learned from Lyth to heal people on Viwa. He established a hospital there and used his knowledge of medicine to evangelise among the Fijians (Thornley, 2000 p.228). Hunt established a Theological Institute on Viwa for which he wrote the lectures (Thornley, 2000 p.230). He accepted responsibility for translating the New Testament into the Bauan dialect, which later became the Fijian national language (Thornley, 2000 p.266).

It seems hard to exaggerate Hunt’s contribution to the shaping of a more unified Fiji. His work in scripture translation provided the necessary tool for the transmission of Christianity over the whole territory of Fiji. Beyond specific religious teaching, he also helped disseminate the rules and expectations of what was called “civilisation” (Thornley, 2000 p.419). He respected Fijian behaviour on the whole, but also felt that “civilisation” was necessary as a pre-requisite for conversion (Thornley, 2000 p.436). “Civilisation” of the indigenous Fijians was the link to the behaviour that the British expected at Cession and beyond. Missionary teaching provided this link (Thornley, 2000 p. 436-7).
“Civilisation” contrasted greatly with the culture and type of society the missionaries had come to. The Methodist missionaries came to a society where traditional gods were worshipped, so conversion to a religion such as Christianity required a totally new way of viewing the world (Thornley, 2005 p.177). Christianity required worship of one god, whereas Fijians had a pantheon of gods who served different functions. For example, some gods were concerned with fertility of the soil, with success in war, and with increased fertility in families. Peter France argues that the missionaries wished to destroy the power of the bete (priests) in order to get rid of what they regarded as immoral practices (1969 p. 30). Missionary preaching against the Fijian gods both reduced and augmented the power of the chiefs. Reduction of the power of the chiefs occurred because the chief obtained his mana or spiritual power from his ancestral gods, now deemed false. However, augmentation of the chiefs’ power occurred with the reduction of the power of the priests. This suited the chiefs admirably and also the missionaries. As they aligned themselves with the chiefs, the missionaries were able to legitimise their cause which was conversion of the people. In this manner, Methodism was inserted into the secular as well as religious life of Fiji.

They [missionaries] aimed to civilize, as well as to convert, and the less ardently evangelical believed in the benign influences of civilized practices as aids to conversion. This teaching affected both spiritual and secular authorities in Fijian society since it was aimed at the destruction of the old religion and the encouragement of the customs, and eventually the laws, of western civilization (France, 1969 p.30).

Methodism has maintained this close alliance with and influence on the political affairs of Fiji, as is discussed later in the thesis. With the influence of British rule in Fiji and the spread of Methodism, a degree of integration was achieved in Fijian society in contrast to the previous extreme fragmentation. The British rule of law established a framework for Methodist teaching. Certain practices such as cannibalism, the strangling of wives to accompany their husbands in death, the use of live people as rollers to launch canoes and polygamy were all outlawed. However this
alliance of Church and British law papered thinly over the cracks, which widened with the arrival of indentured Indians in 1879.

**Indian Influence on Fijian Society Leading to Polarisation**

Indian labour was introduced when Pacific Islands labour declined and Fijians were ruled unavailable for work in plantations and sugar mills. Sir Arthur Gordon, first governor of Fiji, insisted that Fijians be left in their villages to live in communities under strict government control, and banned the white planters from hiring Fijian labour (Gillion, 1977 p.1). Pacific Island labour was restricted by government regulation (Gillion, 1977 p.2). The cotton boom in Fiji, which occurred when supplies for Europe from the southern states of the U.S. were affected by the American Civil War, had led to an influx of European settlers and the call for more labour. When cotton was displaced by sugar as the staple export product, the need for labour remained (Wood, 1978b p. 1). Sir Arthur Gordon suggested to the European planters that labour should be obtained from India (Seth, 1991 p.15) “Between 1879 and 1916, 60,553 Indians arrived as indentured labourers in Fiji. Their girmit (contract) was for five years; they had signed to work 5 1/2 days per week, 9 hours a day for 1/- per day” (Ali, 1981 p.22). If they remained for 10 years they were entitled to a free return passage to India. Life in India at the time was difficult due to the introduction of taxation by the British colonisers (Scarr, 1984 p. 81). Indians were encouraged by the hope of a better life to sign up for indenture in Fiji. However the reality was quite different. One Indian labourer who arrived on Nukulau Island in 1911 recalled the following:

> When we arrived in Fiji we were herded into a punt like pigs and taken to Nukulau where we stayed for a fortnight. We were given rice full of worms and kept and fed like animals. Later we were separated into groups for various employers to choose who they wanted. We got to Navua and were given a three-legged pot, a large spoon, and some rice. We then went to Nakaulevu where we saw the sugar lines (Lal, V. 2001 p. 113).

Life under the coolie system, far from being an improvement on their life in India, proved to be narak or hell. There was illness, bullying, murders, overwork and
overcrowding in the poor accommodation provided (Ali, 1981 p.22). By 1920 all remaining indentures were cancelled. This occurred due to pressure on Fiji from India. Mahatma Gandhi in India and Reverend C. F. Andrews from Fiji addressed meetings all over India against the indenture system (Seth, 1991 p.29). D. M. Manipal, a Gujarati lawyer from Mauritius, came to Fiji to fight for an end to indenture and to assist Indians to fight for their political rights (Seth, 1991 p.28-9).

There are two crucial differences between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians in the way they view their place in Fijian society, which are discussed in detail below. The first difference lies in the way they view the land. For indigenous Fijians, their vanua (land and people) is sacred space handed down by their ancestors. Associated with this is the status of being i taukei, or a hereditary owner of the land. For Indo-Fijians there is no such ancestral connection to the land; land offers security as a commodity to farm and on which to build a house. Indo-Fijians are regarded as vulagi (strangers or visitors) (Srebrnik, 2002 p. 189). The second difference is a religious one. Most Fijians were Christian (Methodists), at the start of indenture. Indentured Indians were chiefly Hindus, with a smaller proportion of Muslims (Ali, 2004 p. 141).

**Indigenous Fijian View of the Land.**

A concept of crucial importance to indigenous Fijians and one that separates them from Indo-Fijians, is the Fijian “Trinitarian Solemnity” of Vanua, Lotu and Matanitu (Garrett 1982 p.114). The vanua (land and people), lotu (Methodist Church) and matanitu (government) in Fiji are inextricably entwined in the functioning of the society. The vanua is the land to which i taukei indigenous Fijians belong. I interviewed a man ordained in the Methodist Church called Jope in Suva (23/3/2006) and the following is his explanation of belonging in his community:

> To be i taukei means that you are a member of a community. Taukei starts with the family, the clan, sub-clan, toka toka, a few families, then toka tokas become a mataqali, then a number of mataqalis become a levusa. In these communal groupings I have a relationship. I identify myself with those you are related to including your ancestors. We have to have a certain area of land, sea, space where you belong
Reverend Tuikilawila Waqairatu is assistant secretary general of the Methodist Church in Fiji, usually known as Tui. In an interview with him in Suva (11/4/2006) he said “Those who are i taukei have their names entered in the VKB (Vola ni Kawa Bula), the register of births, in Suva. The newborn child is registered with a particular vanua which confers the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to a vanua.” One argument suggests that the lotu through missionaries and schools helped indigenous Fijians find their identity in the vanua.

**Indo-Fijian View of the Land.**

Indo-Fijians regard land as an essential part of the rural structure of Indo-Fijian society. Crops produced on farm land are regarded as commodities to be sold in the village markets, to support their families. Fijian land has no sacred value as it has for the indigenous Fijians. Sir Vijay Singh argues that:

To most non-Fijians, land is an item of economic utility, a basis for an income, to be acquired, used and disposed of, if the occasion arises, without much emotional wrench. To most Fijians, on the other hand, and almost every rural Fijian, it is part of his being, his soul; it was his forebears’ and shall be his progeny’s till time immemorial. And the Indian sees large stretches of land between Suva and Sigatoka and Nausori and Rakiraki lying idle and can’t understand it. He even becomes angry and bitter when he sees his former flourishing farm is now, after he was denied renewal of his lease, bush and scrub. The Fijian does not see it that way. Sufficient for him that it is there (Singh 1988 in Lal, B. 2003b p.343).

Vijay Singh was a founding member of the Alliance Party which was formed in 1966. This was a multiethnic party composed of members from the Chinese association, the Tongan Association, the Fijian Association, the Rotuman Association and Vijay Singh, who was unattached (Alley, 1986 p.30). The Alliance Party had been formed because of a need to “combine to govern ourselves, providing for our people a form of government which will be uniformly stable...” (Ratu Mara in Alley, 1986 p.30).
Indo-Fijian religion

The Hindus and Muslims represent the two most important Indo-Fijian religions. Jan Ali argues that initially “[u]nder the harsh living conditions faced by the Indian indentured labourers, both Hindus and Muslims were forced into forging a brotherhood for mutual protection and assistance” (Ali, J. 2004 p.143). However, they did not renounce their own religions. Klaus Hock asserts that “the most significant impact on the development of the Hindu tradition in Fiji was made by the rapid disintegration of the caste system as a consequence of indenture (2006 p.391; see also Jayawardena, 1971). Hock also argues that among Hindus the sense of identity in maintaining their religion was less well developed than the Muslims. With the abolition of the indenture system, Fiji Indians turned from industrial to political action to fight for an equal place in the community with the right to practise freely their religion (Gillion, 1977 p.391). Both Muslims and Hindus established schools and places of worship, and a social structure in which their religions are maintained and nurtured. Indo-Fijians peacefully co-exist with their Christian neighbours. Hindus and Muslims do not evangelise among Christians, whereas Christians actively evangelise among the Indo-Fijian community.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the processes through which the originally fragmentary nature of Fijian society was both unified and polarised from 1830 to Cession and the establishment of the British Colony of Fiji in 1874. Unification was assisted by the role of the Methodist missionaries, and the links between the Methodist church and the colonial authorities. However, the introduction of indentured labourers from India led to polarisation between i taukei and Indo-Fijians. The next chapter examines these twin processes of unification and polarisation in more detail, tracing their development from colony to republic, with a focus on the central role that the Methodist Church played in both processes.
Chapter 3

THE MAKING OF THE FIJIAN NATION-STATE
FROM COLONY TO REPUBLIC: POLARISATION IN DISCOURSE

This chapter establishes that the polarisation described in the previous chapter has its roots in the consolidation of different imagined Fijian communities. It further locates Methodism in the formation and consolidation of the dominant imagined Fiji, and traces Methodist influences in some of the more extreme expressions of exclusive indigenous Fijian nationalism.

The notion of imagined community and a conflict of imaginations in the process of nation-building, depending on racial group, is explored using a number of influential theorists and their concepts. The first of these is Benedict Anderson’s thesis argued in *Imagined Communities* (1983). Although his thesis is European-centred, it can also be applied to Fiji as an imagined community. Anderson’s definition of a nation is that

…it is an imagined political community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (1983 p.6, emphasis in original).

The nation is imagined as limited because each nation has boundaries. It is also imagined as a community (Anderson, 1983 p.6–7). This sense of community, Anderson argues, encourages members of the nation to sacrifice themselves in wars, in defence of the nation (1983 p.6). Anderson also argues that print capitalism, print technology and human language have all contributed to the creation of an imagined community (ibid.).
Robert Foster, editor of *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*, suggests that Anderson’s imaginative construction of “the nation” can be thought of as a narrative or story that links people to a state (1995 p.8). Foster also stresses the way in which rhetorical devices are used to persuade people that the narrative of the nation is true (ibid.). However, this is not always guaranteed because: “[n]arratives vary in their plausibility depending on who performs them; they also remain vulnerable to challenges posed by other, competing narrators or narratives” (ibid.). He suggests that the focus on narratives is particularly useful when discussing “nation making” in Melanesia (1995:p.27).

Henry J. Rutz continues this theme in his contribution to *Nation Making*, entitled “Occupying the Headwaters of Tradition”. He argues that the Fijian narrative of the nation is about “tradition”, a contested area. Rutz uses the term “rhetorical strategy”, which means “the tactic that captures ‘tradition’ in a way that is persuasive and compelling to a constituency predisposed on other grounds to contend the legitimacy of the nation” (1995 p.72).

Martha Kaplan agrees with Rutz and Foster that narratives are an important way of imagining the nation. Her particular argument stresses the importance of narrative through ritual:

I take ritual to be those powerful moments in which people make things happen by appealing to some force, some defining cosmology (fate, history, manifest destiny, the gods, a constitution, dialectical materialism), which is claimed to be beyond the individual his or her self. Nor are rituals static and repetitive, traditional and unchanging. People are constantly creating new rituals. By so doing, they create and implement narratives to control or empower, to contest the old or envision the new (or even envision the old anew) (Kaplan, 1995p.99).

Indigenous Fijians imagined their nation through the Fijian chiefly ritual and colonial British rituals which marked occasions of crucial importance in Fiji’s history, such as Cession in 1874 and independence in 1970. Kaplan shows us Indo-Fijians developing a separate set of rituals and associated narratives that continue to draw Indo-Fijians together in a dynamic that is reinforced by their relative marginalisation in the
colonial period and effective symbolic exclusion in the national rituals of the post-independence period. Kaplan presents Indo-Fijian rituals as a form of resistance to harsh indenture policies, promulgated by the British against labourers brought from India.

A symptomatic illustration of the two ritual worlds is presented by the anthropologist Susanna Trnka. She interviewed a young Indo-Fijian woman and came to the following conclusion:

She was seemingly unaware of the garlanding and arti ceremonies that took place during government ceremonies in the 1970s. She said that she would like to see a state dignitary welcomed with a tikka being placed on his or her forehead alongside the usual kava ceremony. Indo-Fijian ceremonies should take place in addition to indigenous Fijian ones and not occupy centre stage (Trnka, 2005 p.359 emphasis in original).

Robert Norton argues that in discussing culture and identity in the South Pacific that there are three related concepts of importance. The first is the discourses on identity shaped in the context of inter-group conflict” (1993 p.741). This argument is played out in the relationship of indigenous Fijians with Indo-Fijians in Fiji as a reason for the 1987 coups. It has also been used erroneously by some commentators as a reason for the 2000 coup. It is now generally accepted that the 2000 coup was caused by Fijian against Fijian conflicts (Field et al., 2005, Mealey, 2000). Secondly, Norton discusses the “invention of tradition: the concept that practices and beliefs now being asserted by islanders as their ‘traditions’ are shaped as much by the concern to construct distinctiveness selectively as by the survival of ideas and practices from pre-modern times” (1993 p.741). Thirdly, Norton discusses the “objectification of culture, denoting the way in which people may come to talk about, exaggerate or modify certain beliefs and practices as signifiers of their identity, as distinct from simply routinely living their culture”(1993 p.742). An example of this would be seen in the beliefs of the Taukei Movement (Fiji for the Fijians) which supported the 1987 coups and perpetuated much of the violence against Indo-Fijians before and after the coups. The movement was also responsible for the schism in the Methodist Church in February 1989.
However, Norton argues that:

…as well as these important factors, my own analysis will focus on differences in the ways macro-level discourses, orchestrated by political or intellectual elites, are related to popular social experience at the local level, on how the discourses differ in their sociological conditions, and on how these differences determine their impacts on human subjects (Norton, 1993 p.745).

Drawing on these ideas from Anderson, Foster, Rutz, Kaplan and Norton, I argue in this chapter that in Fiji there has been a failure to develop a consensual imagined community, as Trnka’s illustration suggests. There are several contesting imagined communities in Fiji and in what follows I discuss their evolution and the relationships between them.

Missionaries and the Development of an Imagined Community by Indigenous Fijians

Early missionary activity, including the conversion of Cakobau, whose acceptance of the *lotu* acted as a catalyst to the spread of Christianity in Fiji, was described in chapter 2 above. A variety of changes followed the arrival of the missionaries. These are examined in turn below.

Changes to Indigenous Customs and Beliefs

Radical changes in customs and new institutions that re-shaped collective identities were set in place as a consequence of missionary activity from 1830. The missionaries required that those who accepted the *lotu* should relinquish customs such as cannibalism, the strangling of widows on the death of a chief, infanticide, the use of live people as rollers on the launching of a new canoe, and the burying alive of people at the four corners of a chief’s house during its construction (Derrick, 1946 p.21–22). At the time of chief Cakobau’s conversion in 1854, “[t]he pagan temples were desecrated, the priests humiliated and even beaten by Cakobau when he heard reports of their continued activities. The sacred ironwood forest on the mainland opposite Bau, which had been used for pagan ceremonies, was cut down” (Thornley, 2002 42
Abandonment of practices that the missionaries considered heathen, including most notably polygamy, contributed to new identities among indigenous Fijians. After conversion to the *lotu* and adoption of required practices, they regarded themselves as worshippers of one god with all the responsibilities and privileges that bestowed. Along with baptism into the *lotu*, the candidates had to choose a Christian name. This marked a distinct point of separation between traditional Fijian life and the new Fijian life.

**Establishment of Infrastructure**

A number of changes provided infrastructure for diffusion of the new identities. One of the most influential of these was the provision of British-style formal education by the missionaries and their wives. Early in the Methodist mission both Fijians and Tongans were anxious to learn to read and write. At first the exercises given to indigenous Fijians to learn from were written by hand. However, in 1839 Thomas Jaggar (Methodist missionary) arrived with a small printing press. The first material printed in Fiji was the first part of the Catechism used to teach the people of Lakeba (Derrick, 1946 p.72). The missionaries believed that by enabling the indigenous Fijians to read the New Testament in their own language a sense of the evil of their ways would occur and this would lead to conversion (Wood, 1978a p. 87). Prayer was another means of communication between people, used to spread the *lotu*. Prayer meetings were often held in people’s homes and this provided an infrastructure for the diffusion of new identities (Thornley, 2002 p.71).

**New Identity Narratives**

The most important of the identity narratives that shaped the imagined indigenous community are crystallised in the concept of the *lotu* (Christianity, Methodism), the *matanitu* (political control, government) and the *vanua* (land and people) and in the notion of *vakavanua*, the traditional way of life in which they are expressed. The *vanua* refers to land and lineage; it is the ancestral land obtained and recognised as the homeland of the lineage group. Ravuvu describes the *vanua* from the point of view of an individual member in the following way:
In its spiritual dimension, it is a source of power to affect things. It is the place where his ancestors preceded him and in which their spirits or souls linger and watch over the affairs of those who come after them. The *vanua* contains the actuality of one’s past and potentiality of one’s future. It is an extension of the concept of self. To most Fijians, the idea of parting with one’s *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one’s life (Ravuvu, 1983 p.70).

The *matanitu* refers to organisation of “federations” or groups of *vanua*, for “special functions such as the swearing of military allegiance, special ceremonies of installation, including the conferring of a title linking a chief with the locality of the *vanua*” (Routledge 1985 p. 28). Each *matanitu* is governed by regional chief (*turaga*) loosely ruling over a confederation of chief-led *vanua*. As Routledge puts it:

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a new order of federation developed, as powerful chiefs increased still further the sphere of their influence by conquest and the formalization of tributary or even less dignified relationships for the conquered. *Matanitu*, as these “confederations” were called, were flexible and fragile alliances, requiring to be held together by main force (1985 p.28).

The contemporary idea of the *matanitu* is explained in the following: “There are no general names for the groups in a political framework; each is known by the place-name of the land upon which its village is built.” (Quain cited in Routledge 1985, p.29). For example, the Kubuna people belong to the chiefly *yavusa* (tribe) of Bau and also the *matanitu* of Bau.

The introduction of the *lotu* became a new master narrative and a new institutional framework in indigenous society. “*Lotu* is a Tongan word which implies the new Christian God; it recalls the uprooting of the old *garavi Kalou Vu* (worship of the ancestral gods) and the demolition of the *bure-kalou* (god houses) and all visible forms of traditional worship” (Sovaki cited in Halapua, 2003 p.71). The *lotu* became associated with the Wesleyan missionaries and eventually with the Methodist Church (Halapua, 2003 p.70). In Christian belief, casting off the traditional life of the old gods and accepting the *lotu* culminates in baptism. In the New Testament, this is symbolised in the act of baptism, when one who is baptised into Christ is baptised into death of the old and rebirth into new life. As a passage from the New Testament puts
it: “We have been buried with him by baptism into death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6: 4). Baptism allowed the convert to partake of the sacraments (bread and wine) in commemoration of Christ’s life and death. This was the ultimate sign that the person was committed to Christianity. In early Fiji, access to coveted education and access to the medical skills of the missionaries, acted as catalysts to committal to Christianity (Thornley, 2005 p.341).

The vanua and the matanitu was there before the missionaries arrived, but the link with the lotu occurred with the advent of the missionaries. The Reverend Ilaitia S. Tuwere argues that “the unity is so solemn and intimate that one cannot be disconnected from the other without collapsing the whole. It has infiltrated practically all levels of the Fijian hierarchy” (2002 p.52).

The missionaries shaped a mutual reinforcement of these elements of indigenous identity. In the first instance, this was achieved through the displacement of the status and function of the bete (priest) following the arrival of the missionaries (Halapua, 2003 p.70). These priests were the mediators between gods and people; they received and used the gifts offered to the god, on behalf of the people. The missionaries took on the role of the bete, by replacing the ancestral gods of the vanua. Instead of gifts being offered to the bete, they were offered to the missionaries. In 1841 “Tanoa’s [chief] principal wife brought the Cross [missionary] family a ‘fine pig’ as a love gift to the children. In return she received five yards of dress print” (Thornley, 2005 p.359). The missionary became part of the village structure and appears to have been incorporated into village narratives about the conduct of everyday life instead of the traditional bete.

Then, as already indicated, the provision of education provided a radical change for indigenous Fijians who spoke many dialects but had no written language. The diffusion of one language and the provision of one over-arching Bible narrative of origin and purpose sealed the integration of lotu, vanua and matanitu. Bauan became the Fijian language, following the decision of John Hunt to adopt it for translation of the Old and New Testaments in the 1840s. Tomlinson argues that “[t]he standard Fijian Language, an outgrowth of the Fijian Bible translation efforts, is now spread
through national newspapers, radio, and education. It has also become the language of worship in Fijian Methodism, particularly for prayer” (2006 p132). The provision of western-style education where adults and children learned in a formal manner was different from normal learning patterns. Traditional learning took place as children followed their parents onto the land to cultivate root crops, or took part in other family activities, including the rituals of the vanua and matanitu.

Linkage of the lotu, the matanitu and the vanua was a most important change in indigenous Fijian’s lives. The lotu became totally imbedded in the way in which indigenous Fijians imagined their society. The significance of the lotu, matanitu and the vanua, maintained through local religious practice and formal elementary education, continues to be an important narrative among indigenous Fijians today. Young people in particular leave the villages, their vanua, to receive education in the cities. However the urban churches continue for many to be the focus of social, cultural and political activities. As Sovaki argues:

In the city of Suva and its peri-urban villages and settlements, Methodist congregations are predominantly Fijian. As well as the worship services, frequent meetings of one kind or another are held by these groups, night or day, in the church, the hall, a home of one of the members, or even in a temporary shed. Over the years, as more and more Fijians have moved to urban centres from the villages and have experienced only limited control of the site of their new homes and are not necessarily living side by side with their own people, the church community has become the new nucleus of urban Fijian social and political organisation (Sovaki cited in Halapua, 2003 p.73).

Halapua spells out the achievement of the early missionaries: “[t]he early formation of the Methodist Church in Fiji established a Trinitarian structure: turaga (chief), vanua (people), and lotu (Methodist Church)” (2003 p.72). “In old Fiji, the chief represented the god” (Tuwere, 2002 p.54). The chief needed to be properly installed to this rank in order to ensure the prosperity of the people, the land and the sea (ibid.). The sacred and precious concept of the vanua to indigenous Fijians became intimately bound up in this new adherence to the lotu. The imagined community was given sharper focus following Cakobau’s conversion, as we have seen. The imagined Christian community
slowly spread to other areas of Fiji beside the eastern coast of Viti Levu, the islands to the east and to Vanua Levu to the north. What the missionaries initiated, the colonial authorities consolidated.

The Council of Chiefs was formed at the instigation of the British colonisers, adding a European dimension to the imagined community of indigenous Fijians. This Fijian imagined community was controlled by the British government representative in Fiji, the Governor, after Cession in 1874. France argues that:

The high chiefs rarely met in council until the imported institutions of government required them to do so. The Council of Chiefs was directly subject to [Governor] Gordon’s authority, the regulation which provided for its establishment stating: ‘The Governor is theoriginator of the Council and he alone can open its proceedings’ (1969 p.109).

Discussions by the Council of Chiefs included topics that indigenous Fijians would not have discussed in such a forum, including “the councils, the courts, marriage and divorce, planting of gardens and prevention of fire, theft, adultery, evil speaking, and the registration of births and deaths” (France, 1969 p.109). The notion that indigenous Fijians could not represent themselves but required control and guidance by the British colonisers, was established from the Deed of Cession onwards (Kelly, 2001 p.84).

**Development of the Indigenous Fijian Imagined Community:**
**Themes and Variations**

The Deed of Cession established that indigenous Fijian interests as determined by the Council of Chiefs and the colonial government were paramount in the country. The Deed, as interpreted from later in the 19th century on, has been used to discriminate actively against the Indo-Fijians. The Deed of Cession debate in 1946 confirmed the union of racial and political categories that have persisted through all the constitutions until the present day (Kelly, 2001 p.84). Rutz, in his chapter “Occupying the Headwaters of Tradition: Rhetorical Strategies of Nation Making in Fiji” asks the
question: “I ask how the Fijian nation, as opposed to the nation-state of Fiji, is imagined as a particular kind of political community?” (1995 p.71). Rutz believes that the narrative of the nation emphasises (indigenous) Fijian paramountcy regarding matters of the land and matters of governance. The narrative of the land does not involve Indo-Fijians, despite the fact that they have had connections with the land since 1879. Indigenous Fijian tradition is important, argues Rutz, but Indo-Fijian tradition, which has been developed since the first indentured Indians arrived, has not been included in the narrative of “nation making”:

The imagined political community of the European “nation” appeared for one brief historical moment prior to independence in 1970, thereafter struggled for seventeen years to surmount the colonial legacy of racial political communities, only to succumb in 1987 to a narrow, triumphant, but no less creatively imagined Fijian nation (Rutz, 1995 p.73).

However, there are now several imagined nations to be found among indigenous Fijians. Extrapolating from a small number of interviews, reported political speeches and letters to newspapers, I conclude that the most outstanding desire of ordinary indigenous Fijians for their imagined community is peace. Each coup since 1987 has brought not only political uncertainty but also economic uncertainty. Many have lost their jobs following the emigration of employers following the coups and the reduction in tourist numbers in hotels. Adi, a Fijian woman I interviewed in Suva (7/2/2006), had this to say about the 2000 coup, after which the relatively peaceful world of indigenous and Indo-Fijian coexistence was turned upside down:

Many people in Fiji lost their jobs. My husband was one. His boss was an Indian. Lots of Indians worked there, so he tips out the Fijians and gets the Indians to work. I was a nanny, laundry woman, and housemaid. My boss came from Scotland. She taught at USP [University of the South Pacific]. She left. My job was gone. My kids were all at school. I didn’t want to be a problem to my family. There was shooting around here at P.T.C [Pacific Theological College].

PTC is located next door to Parliament House so that this experience was particularly frightening for Adi. As a house-keeper and child-minder, it took Adi another month to find a job. However she received far less pay than before, as the more lucrative jobs
provided by European women were in short supply. It took her husband another three years to find a job, which made life difficult for her financially.

Even among those who are part of the indigenous Fijian elite, there are variations in what people desire for their country. Reverend Tui, assistant secretary general of the Methodist Church in Fiji, cited in chapter 2 above, studied theology in Melbourne. His imagined community is of a Methodist, Christian Fiji. It is shared by a number of the hierarchy of the Methodist Church “up the hill” at the Centenary Church in Suva. But his Methodist vision is quite different from that of other Fijian nationalists with roots in Methodism. He believes that the Church should speak out against injustice and the radicalism of the Taukei Movement that excludes Indo-Fijians from the imagined community of Fiji. He believes that the Church has a prophetic role; that it should preach the word of Jesus Christ and set an example to all Fijians both indigenous and Indo-Fijians. This includes showing love and care, and setting a moral example to all, especially the young. He calls this the shepherding role of the Church, directing the community toward peace and tolerance. He believes that the Church should spread its message via talk back radio and involvement in politics. He quotes from the Bible, Matthew Chapter 5 v 13–14, to underscore his belief that the Church in Fiji is the “light of the Church and the salt of the earth”. Reverend Tui argues that “the salt must retain its saltiness to be effective and...a city set on a hill cannot be hidden; the light must shine as a witness to the world”.

By contrast, the Taukei Movement, also with roots in Methodism and strong support in the hierarchy of the Methodist Church, has indigenous Fijians’ interests as a chief concern. Contemporary taukeism harks back to the anti-Indian taukeist nationalism of the 1940s. Taukeism has a racial aspect imbedded in the colonial and post-colonial era of Fiji. Fijian interests lie particularly in conserving vanua and matanitu, and protecting the paramountcy arrangements to the detriment of Indo-Fijians who were excluded as colonial imports of different race and religion. This stimulated hatred and polarisation between the two groups. Thus, within the indigenous Fijian demographic we have two divergent imagined Fijian communities: a nationalist one represented by the taukei and a more inclusive one represented by those who would include all races as Fijian citizens. As we see in chapter 5 below, divergences among indigenous leaders have become even more complex and pronounced in recent years.
Development of an Imagined Community by the Indo-Fijians from the End of Indenture

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Indo-Fijian community in 1920 was its diversity. Gillion describes the heterogeneous mix with different educational standards, and religious differences between Muslims and Hindus. Some people were born in India while others were Fijian-born, and of those born in India some were indentured labourers and some were free immigrants of Gujarati or Punjabi origin (Gillion, 1977 p.102). These differences gave rise to antagonisms within the Fiji-Indian community as each group fought for their place within British-controlled Fiji. On the other hand, Jan Ali argues that:

Under the harsh living conditions faced by the Indian indentured labourers, both Hindus and Muslims were forced into forging a brotherhood for mutual protection and assistance. Given their circumstances, survival took precedence over religious rituals but did not force religious renouncement…In order to survive the Hindus as well as the Muslims had to watch over each other and any religious differences therefore were suppressed because, under the circumstances...there was little cause for bickering (2004 p.143).

India, the mother country of the indentured labourers, remained a part of the Indo-Fijian imagined community. As already mentioned, Mahatma Gandhi and the Reverend Andrews (sent to Fiji by Ghandi to ascertain the conditions of indenture), lobbied in India for the end of indenture in Fiji (Seth, 1991 p.29). On 1 January 1920, the indenture system ceased. Other influences on the Indo-Fijian imagined community included the conflicts occurring in India. Many of the religious disputes in India between Muslims and Hindus influenced similar disputes in Fiji.

One of the most important issues for Indo-Fijians was education for their children. The Methodist missions had set up schools for the indigenous Fijians, and a few Indo-Fijians had been educated too. However, Gillion claims that the Europeans in Fiji thought that it was unnecessary to provide schools for Indo-Fijians as they were an unskilled indentured labour force and therefore unworthy of education (Gillion, 1977 p.118-9). Although by 1917 the government decided that it should do something to
assist education for Indo-Fijians, it provided inadequate aid for Indo-Fijian schools, established separately from indigenous Fijian schools, which were village-based. European discrimination against Indo-Fijians regarding education was expressed in 1936 by Sir Murchison Fletcher, who was governor from 1929 to 1936:

The Colonial Office have not in my time evinced the smallest interest in Fijian education...The Indian community are far wealthier than the Fijian community, and therefore better able to help themselves in the matter of education. The Indian always clamours loudly, when he wants anything. The Fijian never defends his needs...It is necessary to beware lest under Govt. of India – Colonial Office – local Indian pressures we act unfairly by the Fijians and give the Indians more than their share (Gillion, 1977 p.125).

In 1937 the first secondary school admitted Indians to academic education. “By the 1950s Indian organisations founded their own institutions: the Hindu Arya Samaj, the Rama Krishna Mission, the Muslim League, the Hindu Sanatani Associations and Fiji Gujarat Society”(Ali, A. 1981 p.27). The Indo-Fijian imagined community at this time was one in which Indo-Fijians were respected by the rest of Fijian society, especially the Europeans who made the crucial decisions in Fiji. “Izzat (honour), pet (livelihood), and insaf (justice)” were all important concepts for the Indo-Fijians (Gillion, 1977 p.130). However, educational and economic success did not confer the respect that they imagined and sought. This was partly due to “self-imposed apartheid” in the desire to protect and perpetuate their Indian heritage (Ali, A. 1981 p.28). It was also due to the segregation of Indo-Fijian children from schools that educated indigenous Fijian and European children (Ali, A. 1981 p.28). In 1929, the Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher argued:

I believe that the point of view of the Indian in all parts of the world is largely coloured by his resentment that, no matter what his standing is in terms of culture and wealth, the European persists in ignoring his social existence, but, be this as it may, the important point with the local Indian is, not constitutional forms, but a determination that he shall get what the European has got, and that he shall be granted an all-round equality of status (Gillion, 1977 p. 130).
Indo-Fijians have long included access to farming land as a desirable part of their imagined community. In the early 1920s the Commonwealth Sugar Refinery (CSR) made the newly freed Indo-Fijian cane farmers tenants on blocks of 10 or 12 acres leased from the company. Fijian, Indian and European landlords, all under contract to the miller, also provided land for tenants (Scarr, 1984 pp.129–30). CSR sold Fijian sugar to Britain and Canada during the 1920 and 1930s; the cost was partly offset by the 12.5 per cent duty in favour of British exports. Tenants made a subsistence living by working for CSR (ibid: 130).

The Fiji that Indo-Fijians imagined and desired also included representation in the Legislative Assembly equal to that obtained by indigenous Fijians and Europeans. In 1916 their agitation for political representation was minimally rewarded when they were granted representation on the Legislative Council. However, the governor nominated the Indian representative and chose Badri Maharaj, a person unpopular with the Indian community (Ali, A. 1986 p.5). This paternalist government view of representation did not meet the Indo-Fijian demand. They were capable and keen to choose their own representative for the Legislative Council, but that was denied them.

Political exclusion and discrimination in education and other areas of life from the 1920s reinforced the boundaries between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians that were founded in the indenture system. Despite internal religious differences, a separate Indo-Fijian world was marked off by Hindu religious festivals. From indenture in 1879 to its end in 1920, the Hindu festival of Holi was the primary celebration.

Holi, a ritual of inversion, dramatized the harsh hierarchies of the plantation system. With sprays of blood-red fluid, women besotted men, and “coolie” labourers marked the oppressive sardars and overseers. The climax of Holi festivals was the burning of huge effigies of the Demon Ravan who tormented Ram. Read in colonial context, it was the immorality of the indenture system that was burned with demonic rage (Kaplan, 1995 p.104).

By independence in 1970, the festival of Holi was celebrated less often and the festival of Diwali more often. This, according to Kaplan, signified a change in the
status of many Fiji-Indians, from indentured labourers to members of Fiji’s middle class and farmers working on lease-hold land as cane growers. “In India, Diwali celebrates households and prosperity, focused on Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In Fiji, Diwali was celebrated also as the night of the god Ram’s return from exile...Up until 1987, Diwali in Fiji celebrated the Hindu devotion that uplifted a community” (Kelly cited in Kaplan, 1995 p.104).

**Different Ways in which Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians Imagine Fiji**

A brief interlude in 1970, on the eve of Fiji’s independence, demonstrates how the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians viewed their country quite differently. A. D. Patel, leader of the Federation Party and supporter of common roll for all races, spoke to a group of Indo-Fijians:

> Imperialism everywhere has been the greatest enemy and antagonist of nationalism. In every country which was under imperial rule people were never described even as people, they were always described as peoples...People who have awakened nationally and have national consciousness now realize that religion is immaterial, race is immaterial, even your way of life is immaterial—what is most important is a sense of political solidarity, a sense of solidarity, a sense of unity, a sense of oneness...So after all is said and done, it is a question of the mind, not a question of the colour...It is the same thing with our nation, covered with the ignorance of racialism and sectarianism. Remove the cover, and the nation is there (cited in Rutz, 1995 p. 73).

That Indo-Fijian vision of an inclusive Fijian nation was shared by Chief Minister Ratu Mara, a high chief and leader of the Fijian community, as he spoke to a group of indigenous Fijians on the eve of independence:

> This is the first mass party political conference representing the towns and villages of the nation assembled to discuss and debate the issues that confront us. The Alliance is and will be the political force expressing the will of the people—the citizens of Fiji—not the Fijians alone, not the Europeans, part-Europeans,
Chinese or any smaller group alone, but THE CITIZENS OF FIJI...our first loyalty is to this nation and not to any other...So this party must build a national awareness that puts Fiji first in the minds and hearts of our people (cited in Rutz, 1995 p.73, emphasis in original).

Ratu Mara emphasises universal Fijian citizenship in his speech. Rutz comments: “In 1970, both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians were exhorted by their respective leaders to imagine ‘one people’ who live in ‘multi-racial harmony’. Both groups would subordinate cultural difference and racial politics to the common secular goals of an encompassing capitalist development” (1995 p.74). But it was not to be. The society of Fiji was polarised in 1970 between the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, and there were increasing signs of further divisions, particularly among the indigenous Fijians.

The two major population groups in Fiji have very different ways of imagining Fiji. Included in and reinforcing imaginings are stereotypes that each group has of the other. The Fijian word *vakavanua* means “the way of the land”, or tradition. This is in contrast to “the way of money” pursued by Europeans, some indigenous Fijians and, according to stereotype, the Indo-Fijians. “*Vakavanua* also incorporates European elements—Wesleyan Methodism and British codifications of chiefly hierarchies and land tenure—that are now seen as part of the way of the land” (Jolly, 2000 p.340). As has been seen in this chapter, *vakavanua* expresses the confluence of the *lotu*, the *vanua* and *matanitu*, as the bases of indigenous Fijian society.

Behind the stereotype lie certain realities. Indo-Fijians viewed land as a commodity to be planted with crops to provide them with employment. Land was generally leased from indigenous Fijian owners, through the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), which administered the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA). By the 1990s many ALTA leases were due to expire. Fijian supremacists argued that ALTA should be scrapped and the leases revert to Fijian landowners for the full achievement of *vakavanua* (Kurer, 2001 p.304). This caused anger among Indo-Fijian lease holders who had improved the land with their own capital.
In addition to such differences with an obvious material base, differences in modes of communication also appear to validate the stereotypes. Among leaders in Fiji the mode of communication varies depending on whether they are indigenous Fijians or Indo-Fijians. Brij Lal argues that Indo-Fijian politicians speak, in a “direct, frontal and confrontational” manner, whereas the indigenous Fijian politicians are generally the opposite. Their speech is “allusive, indirect, and hedged in by cultural protocol” (2003b p.342). Much debate is carried on in the media, which does not allow for face-to-face discussion of issues.

**Towards the Coups: Increasing Diversity and Differences between Imagined Fijis**

The story and analysis of the several coups is discussed in subsequent chapters. As a prelude, this chapter concludes with several vignettes of the most recent imaginings of Fiji as it ought to be.

*Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara*

Ratu Mara was the first president of the Alliance Party formed in Suva in 1966. The formation of this party consisted of representatives of Chinese, Tongan, Rotuman, Indian and indigenous Fijian associations. Ratu Mara said that the party had been formed because of the need to:

> Combine to govern ourselves, providing for our people a form of government which will be uniformly just and stable, maintaining our settled institutions; although we must be prepared if need be to review them. We wish to stand before the World as an example of good government by agreement of all the people concerned (Alley, 1986 p. 30).

Ratu Mara was particularly anxious to have important sectors of the Indo-Fijian community on side. This was never going to be easy as parties with ethnic bases were formed. The Federation Party led by Patel was established in 1965. This party grew out of earlier struggles of the Indo-Fijian cane farmers for representation (Alley, 1986 p.46). It supported the sugar stabilisation funds for capital improvements, the new
Agricultural and Landlord Tenant Ordinance for the protection of tenant farmers and outlawing of racial discrimination enshrined in the 1960 Constitution (Alley, 1986 p.47). Ratu Mara spoke of an inclusive Fijian nation in 1970. However, Sakeasi Butadroka, leader of the Fijian Nationalist Party, in a 1975 debate in the House of Representatives, accused Mara of selling the Fijians wholesale, by engineering the constitution he had imposed on them in 1970 (Mara, 1997 p.125). Butadroka asserted that Queen Elizabeth the Second had returned Fijian land to all Fijians and not to the rightful owners of the land, in the 1970 Independence Constitution. Mara was regarded as a traitor to the *vakavanua* by the *taukei* Fijians.

But though increasingly at odds with *taukeism*, Mara was nonetheless firmly focussed on indigenous Fiji as the real Fiji. 1987 marks the year of two military coups in Fiji, during which legally elected governments were overthrown and the Fijian nationalist movement was in the ascendency. Rutz quotes this paramount chief, leader of the chiefly Alliance Party, prime minister during the entire period of independence and major architect of normalisation following the 1987 coup, as he addressed the Council of Chiefs in 1988, as reported in the *Fiji Times* on 5 May:

> [We] share fully the concern which has been expressed about the divisive and debilitating forces that have created disharmony and disillusionment within the indigenous Fijian community. There have been too many instances of an unfortunate lack of respect for, and sensitivity to, traditional Fijian institutions and ethical values...Nevertheless, these individual rights and freedoms must be exercised responsibly and with sensitivity in full recognition of the over-riding importance that the indigenous Fijians attach to their communal values of duty and loyalty to the unity and harmony of their community and obedience to, and respect for, their traditional chiefly authority (Rutz, 1995 p.77–8).

As Rutz points out, the words *duty, loyalty, and respect* relate to the way in which indigenous Fijians relate to the state and the chiefs (Rutz, 1995 p78). Rutz gives certain words emphasis in Ratu Mara’s statement to emphasise the point that he wishes to make. Indo-Fijians are simply out of the frame.
Reverend Vijay Khan.¹

One of the people whom I interviewed in Fiji (1/5/06) was the Reverend Vijay Khan, an Indo-Fijian who is an ordained Methodist minister. He has a definite vision for Fiji that might have been compatible with Mara’s 1970 vision, but is at odds with the 1988 declaration. First, he would like Indo-Fijians to be accepted as equals in the Fijian community. “We are called foreigners. They couldn’t find a common name. It is disappointing that after 130 years here in Fiji [we] are still foreigners. We are culturally segregated. Indians want Fiji to be another India”. He sees that as a problem; he acknowledges that living in Fiji he must adapt and live in an “illusion of culture”. However he finds it particularly painful that even the Methodist ministers do not accept their Indo-Fijian ministers as equals. On the surface all appears to be well, but in fact they are discriminated against, especially at the Methodist National Conference. They do not walk in together to the Conference and because the indigenous Fijian ministers are more numerous, their opinions on issues are not taken into consideration. The Reverend Khan also hopes that Indo-Fijians will have more land to farm. He is anguished to see his Church members evicted from their land, because the leases have expired, even though the owners are Methodists. The evicted Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers are then forced to live in squatter housing around the periphery of the cities. They have no means of employment. “Look at all this overgrown vacant land here. It belongs to the Methodist Church and yet they will not allow the poor Indo-Fijians to lease it”. The Reverend Khan is very distressed by this.

Major-General Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka

On 14 May 1987, Rabuka entered Parliament House in Suva and sat in the public gallery. Three minutes later his “hit squad” entered the chamber and arrested Fiji’s newly-elected coalition government. This consisted of the Labour Party led by Dr Timoci Bavadra and the Federation Party, dominated by Indians (Dean and Ritova, 1988 p.12). Rabuka staged the coup to restore control of the country to the indigenous Fijians. The coalition government members were arrested and loaded onto transport trucks. Notwithstanding the coup, Rabuka was particularly keen to maintain Fiji’s ties

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¹ A pseudonym.
with the Crown as a mark of devotion to the Queen. Following his second coup, on 25 September 1987, Fiji was declared a Republic on 6 October 1987.

Eddie Dean and Stan Ritova interviewed Sitiveni Rabuka and published *Rabuka No Other Way* in 1988. The following profile comes from that text:

His personal driving forces are God, the Bible and Christianity. His personal Christianity is a starkly fundamentalist Methodism, strongly held, blunt and unyielding. Rabuka is emphatic that the Bible makes quite clear that God chose Fiji for the Fijians. It is “the land that God has given them”, Rabuka asserts. When the missionaries came to Fiji in 1835, they brought Christianity and turned Fiji “from cannibal land into Paradise”. But, early in 1987, Rabuka saw this God-given treasure under threat from an “immigrant race that would ascend to a position of political power, to complete control of Fiji” Rabuka saw this prospect as the inevitable flow-on from the election on April 11, 1987, of a Government which—although led by a Fijian—was dominated by Indians. The removal of the month-old Coalition Government was, therefore, essential “for the survival of the Fijian race. As simple as that” (Dean and Ritova, 1988 p.11, italics in original.)

Rabuka, a preacher in the Methodist Church said “I want them to stay here. It will be a big challenge for us to convert them to Christianity…we either go that way, or they convert us and we all become heathens (Dean and Ritova, 1988 p. 121).

Father Kevin Barr argues that “Fiji-Israelism”, which is the view that Old Testament theology encourages Fijians to see Fiji as their promised land, against the “heathen Indo-Fijians”, has encouraged this sort of racism in the country (Barr 2004a). In the Bible, Joshua chapter1 v1–6, the Lord said to Joshua “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all these people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel…Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them”. Mary Louise O’Callaghan writes:

Some of the Methodist missionaries believed that a Jewish influence operated in the Pacific Islands through the diffusion of people. Two in particular, the
diffusionist anthropologists Fison and Carey encouraged the Fijians to identify with Israel and think of themselves as God’s chosen people. It is a way of thinking much favoured by a line of Fijian prophets, many of whom predicted the second coming of Christ would take place in Fiji. The latest of these, Ratu Emosi Saurara, died only recently. Educated at a Methodist school for boys and a keen Bible student, he believed that he was following the line of an earlier cult leader, Apolosi, whose version of the millennium foresaw the expulsion of all aliens from Fiji so that its original inhabitants could grow rich and prosper (cited in Barr, 2004a p.7).

In the weeks before he perpetrated the 1987 coup, Major General Sitiveni Rabuka linked his taukei view of indigenous Fijian supremacy with that of “Fiji Israelism”. “The Fijian’s power-base is his land or ‘vanua’ which he guards jealously. For him, land is a sensitive area and the slightest threat to his land rights is defended vigorously because it is the only material thing that he owns” (Dean and Ritova, 1988 p.35).

In this chapter, I have shown how the two main racial groups in Fiji, the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, have come to imagine their society differently. These vignettes illustrate the outcome of a long history in which several different and recently, increasingly divergent, imagined Fijis have developed, despite more inclusive visions such as that of Ratu Mara in 1970 and the Reverend Vijay Khan. The complex influence of the Methodist Church in these processes of increasing divergence has been discussed. The majority Methodist position has supported and legitimated indigenous Fijian nationalism, however the inclusive vision of a small Methodist minority has been noted. In the next chapter, the diverse trajectories of Methodist influence are traced in more detail.
Chapter 4

METHODISM: FIJI FOR THE FIJIANS

As discussed in the previous chapter, Methodism was integral to the development of an indigenous imagined Fiji that failed to include Indo-Fijians. There have been increasing complexities and ambiguities in the connection: Methodism informs a strident indigenous nationalism of the taukei type but also more inclusive visions. In 1970 when Fiji became independent from the British Crown, the land was ceded to all Fijians, not just the taukei, leading to antagonism between them and other groups in Fiji. Diversity of socio-economic status among Methodists and a divergence of interests among the controlling elites of the Church and grass-roots members threaten to undermine erstwhile loyalties.

Taking the investigation of complexities further, this chapter examines the roots of the engagement of Methodism with indigenous Fijian society from the early days. It shows that Methodism is firmly embedded in and provides the basic form for local village life. More than that, the village/circuit/division/conference/structure of the Church parallels and links with the governmental structure at all levels. This link is clearest in Church connections with major institutions in Fiji.

To show this, I consider the connections between the contemporary Methodist Church and major national institutions such as the Native Land Trust Board, the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua party (SDL: United Party of the Vanua), and the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC). However, the evidence does not support the conclusion that a sort of Methodist theocracy prevails in Fiji. Increasing diversity in the Methodist Church itself is outlined, and I examine how diversity of interest and religious worldview among Methodists counters any tendencies towards a monolithic Church dominating civil society and the state. The sources of increasing diversity in Methodism in terms of socio-economic and educational inequalities and the inclusion
of some Indo-Fijians in the Church is shown to be associated with internal diversity and different theological currents and conflicts in the Church.

The Methodist Church and the Structures of Governance in Fiji

From the beginning, Methodism engaged with the structural form of indigenous Fijian life, and became and remains an intrinsic part of village life. The turaga (chief) has always been the head of the vanua, from pre-history onwards. He heads the village councils when the yavusa (clan) meets to discuss important questions such as the leasing of land or the building of a new hall for the village. The i tutu vakavanua (position or rank according to the land) consists of yavusa turaga (chiefly clan) and yavusa bete (priestly clan). The bete was replaced by the missionary in the village as the intercessor before God, rather than the myriad of gods at the time of missionary arrival (Tuwere, 2002 p.53).

The missionaries laid the foundation for the lotu, or rather the Methodist Church to be closely linked with the chief, village, people and the vanua. Aspects of Fijian culture rapidly became incorporated into the practice and teaching of the Church (Halapua, 2003 p.72).

The concept of the traditional way of life (vakavanua), which embodied the vanua (land and people) and the matanitu (political control, government) was firmly entrenched before missionary arrival. Thereafter, missionary evangelists spreading Wesleyan Christianity introduced the lotu to form “the Trinitarian Solemnity” (Garrett 1982 p.114) of Vanua, Lotu and Matanitu. Reverend Alan Tippett, in 1955, records:

Any Fijian way of life...is found to be a unity...on the basis of Land, Church, and Government. Its future as an entity depends on smooth inter-relationship continuing between those three elements. There must be co-operation and there must be mutual respect ( quoted in Tuwere, 2002 p.52).

While remaining integral to that unity in rural areas, the Methodist Church expanded its focus from the village to urban areas as young people moved to the cities for secondary education and employment. The Methodist Church in the towns became the
focus of many activities for Church members. These included political meetings, land protests, worship services and Bible studies for children, men and women, usually run separately but involving many of the same leaders and teachers. Land and political matters in towns, as in village areas, were addressed in Church gatherings along with specifically religious matters (Halapua, 2003 p.73).

**The Relationship of the Methodist Church to the Structure of the Vanua**

The foundation blocks of Fijian society are found in the time-honoured structure of village/vanua, the yavusa and mataqali (tribe) to which individuals belong. Each village or group of villages has its chief, who is the overseer of village problems and decisions. For example, the chief must be informed of births, marriages and deaths. The Methodist Church in Fiji follows the pattern of society in Fiji. At the base, the koro (village) is connected to the tabacakaca (circuit) which is connected to the wasewase (division). The most prestigious section of the Church at the top of the hierarchical pyramid is the Bose ko Viti/Komiti ni Cakacaka Levu (Conference) (Halapua, 2003 p.75).

Waqairatu (whom I interviewed 11/04/2006) describes the liaison of Church and village as it might be generalised from this case to the villages of the present:

The village chief, spokesman in the village, organizes things in the village and organizes things within the Church. You have two institutions working side by side. Sometimes they work co-operatively, chief and minister work together for the common good for the whole community. The chief is responsible for the building of the pastor’s house, as well as collecting the money from the people. The pastor cares for the spiritual life of the community. It is that reciprocal giving that our village community find to develop and grow.

Both village and church follow a hierarchical pattern, in which the commoner Fijians are at the bottom, and the chiefs and the ordained ministers at the top.

On 12 February 2006, on the island of Bau, my husband and I attended the 10am Methodist Church service which is compulsory for all members of the Methodist Church whatever their age. This service illustrated the interaction of church and vanua...
on the island. The status of the various actors in both the Church and the village was evident. Ratu Ratinoke, chief of Somo and secretary general of the Methodist Church 1988–9 sat to the right of the congregation, at the front. Beside him was an imposing chair which was empty. It belonged to the esteemed tui viti, Cakobau, who died in 1883. (His conversion and subsequent career are described in chapter one above.) Evita Dreke, the lay preacher, also sat at the front of the Church, from where he conducted the service and delivered the sermon in Fijian. Davita, the Church steward, organised the congregation, making sure that the children behaved themselves. He also assisted with the collection. Women were seated on the left of the church, men on the right along with the visitors. Children sat in the choir stalls and sang a chorus by themselves during the service.

The talatala (lay preacher) was in hospital when we visited Bau, so the lay preacher took over his duties. This included organising the main Sunday service at 10am, which is the major social activity of the week for all Methodists in the village, who comprise a high proportion of the whole village population. He also organised the men’s prayer meeting at 8am and the women’s prayer meeting at 3pm. During the week he conducted the men’s fellowship meeting and on another evening the women’s fellowship meeting. These meetings consist of Bible study and discussion.¹ The lay preacher conducted choir practice for the children after school and the adults in the evening. The pastor lives in a house provided by the village, is paid a stipend and food gifts are provided for him and his family’s consumption. The pastor and the lay preacher have a dominant role in Bau because of their continuous contact and control over their Methodist congregation. If a child from the Methodist primary school (the only school on the island) needs disciplining, the headmaster sends the child to the pastor for counselling and punishment. In this and many other ways his religious and civil duties are linked.

¹ All teaching materials for their meetings are prepared by the relevant Methodist Church department in Suva and sent to outlying churches such as the one on Bau Island.
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Organisation of the Methodist Church according to its Constitution

Today there are 44 divisions in the Methodist Church in Fiji and of these, 43 are indigenous Fijian and one is Indian. The Indian division is composed of 11 circuits, including a new one at Timothy Methodist Church in Navua (Fiji Times Online, 2007e). Decisions made at the circuit level of the Church are taken to the division level for discussion. Decisions made at the division level are taken to the annual conference for consideration. In 2006, the conference was held on Bau Island. From a discussion in English on Bau Island we learned that the Churches in each circuit are expected to contribute to the travel expenses (including air fares) of the ministers and their wives in their division. The circuit that has the honour of hosting the conference provides the food, drink and accommodation for all participants. Many of the people responsible for running the conference are poor and the provision of amenities for the members of the conference places a tremendous burden of money and effort on them.

In the week before the annual conference, Methodist primary and secondary schools from around Fiji and Rotuma compete in the annual soli (gift) and choral competition. Essentially this is a fund-raising effort, as the Church requires $3 million every year to carry out its activities and help to run its primary, high and vocational schools, theological college and orphanage. The Church raises this money through tithes and individual levies (soli) throughout the year, and fundraising done at the conference is in addition to these regular means of revenue raising (Biumaiono, 2006).

The annual soli and choral competition is regarded by members of the Methodist Church with ambivalence. A number of my female respondents regarded it with dread because of the financial burden it places on their overstretched family budgets. There is also the time factor: time for practice and time spent in travel. On the positive side, one respondent said that she regards it as a privilege to be able to contribute money and time to the church. She believes that God’s blessing will result from her participation in this fund-raising activity. The soli and choral competition imposes a duty on Methodist Church members to support their pastor financially and to obey their chief, who often lives in the village. It also imposes a duty to support financially the structure of the Methodist Church in Fiji—village/circuit/division/conference—so
that the Church can function properly (see Figure 1, page 64). The connection between the village and the hierarchy of the Methodist Church in Suva which administers the Church is sealed in August and September each year, as the soli, choral competition and conference cycles are completed.

The annual September Methodist Church conference is the most important meeting of the church. Ordained ministers of the church and their wives are allowed to attend. The conference is directly linked to the government of Fijian society as many of the ordained ministers of the church are also members of parliament or have relatives or friends in positions of power. The Methodist Church vice-president for 2007 is also the mayor of Suva, Ratu Peni Volavola—an example of the link between the Methodist Church and civil authority and the chiefs. Ratu Peni therefore commands respect and a high status, and wields considerable power. Later in this chapter I discuss the links between the Methodist Church structure and government structure in more detail.

A number of issues were discussed at the 2006 conference. Topics covered illustrate on the one hand, the involvement of the Church in everyday life and on the other, some erosion of its dominance in Fijian society. These included the role of music in the Church, particularly the use of musical instruments during church services. It was decided that the relevant department in the church would carry out research into this matter (Bola, 2006). The question arose because rival and growing churches such as the Christian Mission Fellowship and the Assemblies of God use musical instruments and modern music in their services. This is enjoyed by all age groups and is one of the features that the Church believes attracts Methodists away from their own churches,

Another issued discussed was a review of the number of circuits in the Church. The Indian division of the Church lobbied for the addition of another circuit. There was some discussion about the addition of another circuit due to the cost of sustaining it (Kikau, 2006a); it was decided at the Church Conference that a new circuit should be established in July 2007, at Navua (Fiji TimesOnline, 2007e). In another discussion, there was a decision to endorse corporal punishment in its schools, based on Proverbs
Decisions such as this emphasise the degree to which the Methodist Church influences family life in the vanua, given that the Methodist school is often the only school in an area. Maintenance of the membership levy at $10 rather than an increase to $15 was also agreed upon (Kikau, 2006). This was a sensible decision as many families could not afford the $10 per person per year levy at that time. One of the most important decisions made was to establish a new Methodist Church Trust in the Fiji Holding Trust in order to generate 70 per cent of the revenue needed to meet the running costs of the Church (Kikau, 2006b).

**Government Structures: An Overview.**

Governor Gordon, first governor of Fiji (1875-80) implemented the Council of Chiefs which “became a regular gathering mainly of chiefs but also of their own people. With time, the Council of Chiefs became the official voice of the Fijian people and a channel through which Fijian aspirations and goals were communicated to the colonial regime” (Ali 1986:2).

There are three confederacies based on the relationship of chiefs and clans, which have great influence but no direct role in government (see map 2, page 69). All the chiefs belong to one of the three confederacies or matanitu (Kabuna, Burebasaga and Tovata). Kabuna is the eastern confederacy which includes the influential island of Bau; Burebasaga is the area around Rewa, the central confederacy; and Tovata is the northern area around Cakudrove and Lau. The western side of Viti Levu was divided up and absorbed into the Kabuna confederacy and the Burebasaga confederacy (Ewins, 2000 p.1). These confederacies play an important role in decision making by the GCC, the members of which are predominantly Methodists (Bose and Fraenkel, 2007 p.227). However, there are tensions between the chiefs. The western chiefs resent the fact that, despite their substantial contribution to the economy of Fiji through tourism, and the export of gold and timber, they do not have their own confederacy. During the coup of 2000 there was a strong push for a separate confederacy called Yasayasa Vaka Ra to be formed. Because the GCC did not

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2 “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother”.

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approve, this did not happen (Bose and Fraenkel, 2007p.227). The tensions remain real however and the Methodist Church is involved in them, although not all members of the Church hierarchy are in agreement about whom to support.

Robert Wolfgramm, sociologist and editor of the Fiji Daily Post (interviewed 16/03/06) explained the links between the confederacies, the GCC, the military and the Methodist Church during the past seven years. Wolfgramm argues that the Kabuna confederacy is lined up against the Tovata, the matanitu of Laisenia Qarase, the prime minister. Qarase, a Methodist, is supported by the dominant leadership group in the Methodist Church. Influential Tovata men have been excluded from meetings called to discuss issues concerning the military and the government. Burebasaga confederacy is divided but tends to be against Bainimarama. The Rewa chiefs are very much against him. Bainimarama has the Roman Catholic Church’s support. The Bauan chiefs (Kabuna confederacy, predominantly Methodist) support Bainimarama (though he is not a Methodist), as do Ratu Mara’s family (he is also a former prime minister and president of Fiji), from the Tovata. The Methodist Church takes part in this manoeuvring as it supports Qarase and the SDL party, and has been making strident pronouncements against Bainimarama.

These divisions and rivalries between the confederacies and the chiefs contribute to divisions in the Methodist Church. Depending on the issue under discussion the chiefs, clans and the Church both reinforce and break the links between them. Ratu Josefa Ilolovatu Uluivuda is an example of a man who maintains links between the Methodist Church, the GCC and the government of Fiji. He is the tui vuda, the paramount chief of the Vuda district in Ba Province, in the sugar cane growing area of north-west Viti Levu. As a ratu he was elected president of the GCC in 2000 and re-elected in 2006 for another five years. The GCC is responsible for electing the president and vice-president of Fiji and 14 members of the Senate (Hansard, 2003). Ratu Josefa Iliolo was appointed president at the time of the 2000 coup during which Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was removed from that position. Ratu Josefa Iliolo has been a lay preacher and was vice-president of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma in 1997 and 1998. He is still active in the Methodist Church.
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Below the confederacies, Fiji is divided administratively into four divisions, which are further subdivided into fourteen provinces (13 Fijian and 1 Rotuman). Each province has a council which may make bylaws and impose rates subject to approval of the Fijian Affairs Board. The provinces have direct input into national affairs through the GCC and the Senate (Ravuvu, 1988 p.189).

While the constitutional role of the Great Council of Chiefs is to appoint the President, Vice-President and 14 members of the Senate, its primary function as an advisory body is to submit to the President such recommendations and proposals as it may deem for the benefit of the Fijian people. It also considers such questions relating to good governance and the well being of the Fijian people as the President or the Board may submit to the Great Council of Chiefs and to take decisions or make appropriate recommendations as stipulated under the Fijian Affairs Act (Ralogaivau, 2007 p.3).

Below the provincial level, districts and villages, based on extended family networks, have their own chiefs and councils. Indigenous Fijian interests are attended to by the provincial councils. “Other races” have separate local authorities which cater for their interests (Ravuvu, 1988 p.190).

The case of Ratu Epeli Ganilau is an example of the influence of Methodism in the exercise of chiefly rule at these various levels, although, as we shall see, the outcome of this influence may not be uniform. Brigadier General Ratu Epeli Ganilau is a Fijian soldier and statesman who currently heads the National Alliance Party of Fiji. In July 1991 he was made Commander of the Military; he retired from this position in 1999 and in the same year was appointed to the GCC; he was elected chairman in 2001 following the resignation of Sitiveni Rabuka. Ganilau and the political party that he represents believe in acceptance of all races, and the eradication of racism and want a review of the discriminatory Race Relations Act. As a religious man, Ganilau urges parents to instil moral values in their children. He provides a strong link between the military, the chiefs, the present government and Methodism, while dissenting from the position of the “dominant” leadership group of the Church.
Links between the Methodist Church and Major Institutions in Fiji

In early February 2007, the Church released a statement calling on the elderly and unwell current president to retire from being President of Fiji. At the same time, the Church called on the Royal Fiji Military Force’s Commodore Bainimarama to step down. The Church feared that Ratu Iloilo had been co-opted by Bainimarama to follow his orders. It called on the “Great Council of Chiefs to show integrity, compassion and to stand up for the rule of law and Godly principles including human rights in this difficult period” (Fiji Sun Online, 2007a).

The Church also exerted influence on other major institutions in Fiji and the following section examines its links with the Native Land Trust Board and with the parliament, in particular the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua party (SDL). These links were particularly prominent in the politicking that occurred before the May 2006 election.

Links with the Native Land Trust Board

In addition to its links with the GCC, the Methodist Church is also linked to key institutions of governance such as the NLTB, which controls the sale and lease of land in Fiji. In 2003 its Board was constituted as follows:

The board of trustees of the Native Land Trust Board comprises the President of the Republic of Fiji as president, the Minister for Fijian Affairs as chairman, five members appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs, three Fijian Members appointed by the Fijian Affairs Board from a list of nominees submitted by provincial chiefs to the Fijian Affairs Board, and not more than two members of any race, appointed by the President. The current members of the Board are as follows: President Ratu Josefa Iloilo-President of Fiji, Ratu Timoci Vesikula, a chief of Verata, and Ratu Tu’uakitau Cokanauto a leading chief in Bau (NLTB, 2003).

Ratu Iloilo illustrates links between the Methodist Church and institutions of governance, including the NLTB. In 2008, Bainimarama, as interim prime minister, is the most powerful person in Fiji, while Ratu Iloilo as president is arguably the most influential. However, the latter is a paradox, with his loyalties vested in different
organisations in Fiji. Between 1997 and 1998 he was vice-president of the Methodist Church and has been a lay preacher. He is also president of Fiji, with political power in the country. He is president of the Great Council of Chiefs, and thus is consulted on matters affecting Fijian people of all races. As the *tui vuda*, the paramount chief of Vuda, on the north-west coast of Viti Levu, he also has a duty of care to the people belonging to his *vanua*. He is president of the Board of Trustees of the NLTB by virtue of his position as president of Fiji (NLTB, 2003). As a trustee of the NLTB, he is the dominant member of the Board responsible for the administration of land on behalf of the native owners. The trustees are said to represent the common voice of the indigenous landowner and are required to work in partnership with the government in national development (Singh and Reddy, 2007 p.39). Ratu Ganilau is also a trustee of the NLTB and also a staunch Methodist. Here we have Methodists in prime positions to influence the members of the NLTB on behalf of both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians wanting to lease land to farm.

The Taukei Movement forged further links between the NLTB and the Methodist Church. It included senior indigenous Fijian civil servants and Fijian Methodist ministers as well as lower class indigenous Fijian landowners (Halapua, 2003 p.21). The Taukei Movement gathered momentum as it protested against the perceived unfairness against indigenous Fijians with the maintenance of 30-year leases of indigenous land via the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act of 1976. The Fijian landowners were also anxious that their rights were not being protected by ALTA and the NLTB. The victory in the 1987 general election of Timoci Bavadra, who was supported by both Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians, proved a catalyst for violence. “Prominent ministers and laypeople of the Methodist Church were leaders in the protests that precipitated the 1987 coup. Spokespersons for the movement included the Church’s vice-president, Vilaiame Gonelevu, and Tomasi Raikivi, secretary of the Fiji Council of Churches” (White, 1987 p.548). However, Reverend Josateki Koroi, president of the Methodist Church at the time, was strongly against the coup and *taukei* principles.

The representational and developmental responsibilities of the NLTB appear to be only selectively realised and instances of selectivity show the influence of the highest level of the Methodist Church and divisions of interest within the Church. A group
called the Viti Landowners Resources Association (VLRA) was formed in 2003 to represent indigenous Fijians in their dealings with the NLTB. Ratu Osea Gavidi, a Methodist, is president of this group. At a meeting in Suva which we attended he said: “For too long native landowners had been short changed either by the NLTB or by our tenants in not paying rent owed to us during the past rental distributions, hence the shortfall now totals something like $12 million”. The VLRA’s membership includes the chiefs of Fiji and operates with the support of the Methodist Church. The Reverend Waqairatu attended the first day of a 3-day meeting, to bless the proceedings of the VLRA and give it the Church’s support. I attended the second day of the meeting on 1 March 2006, during which some land grievances were discussed. The support of the Methodist Church for the VLRA as well as the NLTB illustrates the paradoxical nature of the Church and its alliances.

Members of the vanua who lease land through the NLTB receive half the revenue obtained from that lease. The NLTB deducts a 20 per cent fee for its services. Of the remaining 80 per cent, chiefs at various levels receive one-third. What is left over is distributed among the ordinary members of the clan (Kurer, 2001 p.300). The NLTB provides lucrative income for the trustees of the Board, including some who are Methodists. The chiefs belonging to the vanua receive 5 per cent, the yavusa 10 per cent and the mataqali 15 per cent of the land lease money. Remuneration for the i taukei owners of the land is small in comparison (France, 1969 p.166).

Those at the higher levels of the Church do not object to these arrangements. The Methodist Church has finally realised that the poor of the Church are over-burdened with demands from the Church for money. Instead of helping the poor directly, the Church has established the Methodist Holding Trust, which is to be responsible for revenue from Church assets, rent and other charges. “This was agreed to by the delegations at the meeting [Conference] and the Church will open the office soon”, Mr Waqairatu said (Fiji Times Online, 2007d). The trust will control the development of Church assets such as buildings and other properties (housing for ministers, hospitals and kindergartens), and finance church events such as annual meetings, choir competitions and Church schools. These expenses are normally financed by the burdensome soli that all Methodists are required to give. The trust is being established to assist in the expenses of running Methodist properties as outlined and, it is hoped,
to relieve ordinary Methodists of a degree of financial burden. The trust will initially be established with between $18 million and $20 million (Fiji Times Online, 2007d). Two examples of the new Methodist Church trust developments are in Nadi and Kaba Island. Permission to use land has been facilitated through the NLTB for these projects. This has been possible because the Church, the chiefs and the NLTB work as a team. For example:

To help the members of their congregation, the Nadi Division established the Nadi Methodist Division Holdings Trust and Nadi Methodist Division Company Limited to embark on income generating projects for the Church. Ratu Meli Saukuru said the concept was specifically mooted 10 years ago to help their members with the financial offerings they had to make for Church operations...Last week was the beginning of their project as the trust carried out a ground breaking ceremony for the division’s first project, a 102 lot housing sub-division to be leased out. Church president Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca said the initiative undertaken by the Nadi Division was something that had to be commended and followed by all other divisions in the country (Fiji Times Online, 2007c).

The second development of the Methodist Church Trust is Kaba Island, a 60-acre uninhabited island opposite the Shangri-La Hotel in Sigatoka. The Church plans to develop the island as a holiday resort. The Reverend Waqairatu reiterated that the Church had in the past relied on its members to donate 90 per cent of the funds needed to run the church in a year, but it now wants to operate a trust fund that will meet the financial obligations of the Church (Matau, 2007). The Methodist Church had freehold ownership of Kaba Island and instead of allowing indigenous Fijians to farm or otherwise develop the land, has retained the island as an asset. In order to develop it as a holiday resort, the Church will need permission from the NLTB, requiring evidence of registration of the Methodist Church Trust Fund, sufficient finance, a five-year business plan, a locality plan and majority consent of landowners for de-reservation if land is within a native reserve (Government of Fiji Islands, 1985). With the membership consisting of chiefs who are mostly Methodists, there should be no problem receiving NLTB permission for this development. Indigenous Fijian landowners, however, without the connections or money to develop areas of land for
tourism or any other activity would face insurmountable difficulties in making such an application to the NLTB.

The Methodist Church has been involved in land transactions since the arrival of the missionaries in 1830. In 2006 the building of a new bridge over the Rewa River in Naitasiri opened up old wounds of a contentious land deal between Navuso village and the Methodist Church in 1880. “Naitasiri chief Ratu Loco Qiolevu says he will never forgive the Methodist Church in Fiji nor partake in their asking for forgiveness and land cleansing process because they are liars and thieves” (Fiji Times Online, 2007b). Chief Qiolevu explained that the tribes associated with Navuso village had an agreement with the Methodist Church to give 300 acres of land for the church to build schools and a theological college at Davuilevu. Later, the Church extended the boundaries and co-opted extra land. It demanded $6 million in compensation for part of this land, which the government needed to build the bridge. The government offered $200,000 in compensation but the Church then decided that $1 million would be a more reasonable amount. Ratu Loco’s complaint was that the payment for the land on which to build the bridge was given to the Methodist Church instead of the original owners of the land, the people of Navuso. He also asserted that someone should tell the president of the Methodist Church, Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca, that the Church should ask for forgiveness from the landowners whose land had been taken by the Church. The Church did not reply to his complaint (Fiji Times Online, 2007b). The Reverend Josateki Koroi has also argued against the Church being compensated by the government for land required to build the Rewa River bridge in Viti Levu. Tomasi Tokalauvere is a friend of Reverend Koroi and writes articles dictated by him, then edits them so that they are suitable for newspaper publication. The following article was written in 2002 and published in the Fiji Daily Post, which accepted many articles written in a similar fashion.

The original intent of the landowners was to entrust the Methodist [Church] to use the land for religious activities and not to be the “Landlord” or have the land used for other gains. It is his view that any compensation for the land itself should be graciously and thankfully redirected to the original landowners, acknowledging the Church’s and the people’s gratitude for their generosity over years past. Surely, if this way is followed then we would
be closer to the way of love and peace shown to us by Jesus—who is Lord and owner of the Church universal (Tokalauvere, 2002).

Another case involving the members of the Monasavu mataqali, the government, the NLTB and a prominent Methodist, the late Sir Penaia Ganilau, concerned land for the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) to build a hydro-electric dam on. The sale of land to build the largest dam in Fiji at Monasavu was negotiated through the NLTB by Ganilau, who was deputy prime minister, minister for Fijian Affairs and chairman of the NLTB. He was also the first president of the Republic of Fiji (1987–93) and a prominent member of the Methodist Church. Although 40,000 acres of Monasavu catchment area was under negotiation, only 2,000 acres permanently used by the FEA was paid for, at $400 per acre, instead of the $8 million promised by Ratu Ganilau. The landowners also receive royalties from water used to generate power. By the year 2000, the interim government had decided to set up a Land Tribunal to deal with land claims and funds for compensation for cases such as the landowners of the Monasavu Dam project, because by then the landowners had not yet received compensation (Fiji Daily Post, 2000). The case for compensation of mataqali land went to the High Court, and was won by the landowners in November 2005; they were awarded $52.8 million. Their lawyer, Isireli Fa, commended the landowners on the seven-year fight conducted against the defendants—the Attorney-General, NLTB and the FEA (Fiji Times Online, 2005). This case represents one of the few victories of a mataqali against the bureaucracy, the NLTB and the Methodist Church and its spokesman Sir Penaia Ganilau.

**Links with the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party.**

The SDL party was formed in 2001 with Laisenia Qarase as its leader, following the 2000 coup. It won power in the 2001 general election. Initially, the SDL supported the landowners against the tenants but by 2006 had shifted focus toward the farmers. It even focused attention on the plight of Indo-Fijian evicted tenants and all those who had been affected by land lease related issues. In this way the SDL tried to gain the support of Indo-Fijians, which it did successfully in the 2006 election (Prasad, 2007 p.156). The Reverend Iliesa Naivalu, assistant secretary to the Methodist Church’s Department of Christian Citizenship and Social Services and a supporter of the SDL, believes that Methodists must take a moral stand on national issues. He believes that
there must be unceasing attempts to enlighten prospective leaders and voters on Biblical truths. “We take the Bible as the true and inspired Word of God. It is in this holy book that we see the place of religion and politics in the life of a community of faith, namely the Israelites and its relation to God and its neighbours” (Raicola, 2006 p.7). Naivalu is not alone—many Methodists in the Church hierarchy support the SDL party. Referring to the role of the Assembly of Christian Churches in which the Methodist Church is a major participant, Newland argues that “With Christianity at the apex of SDL values, SDL uses the symbol of the dove to represent their commitment to Christianity, but for Fijians, this is clearly a reference to Christianity embedded in the particular brand of cultural values propagated by the ACCF”(2007:308).

A display of the links between the SDL party and the Methodist Church occurred at the launch of the SDL campaign at Kalabu, Naitasiri in Viti Levu. Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca, president of the Methodist Church, was at the launch and blessed the SDL. He thanked the SDL coalition government for the help it had given the Church and for a good relationship over the previous five years. It was reported that Reverend Ratabacaca believed that:

The Church had gained a lot from the construction of the new Rewa Bridge. Part of the Church land had been used by the new bridge and the Church initially claimed $6 million in compensation but later accepted a smaller payout. The Government then agreed to improve some infrastructure of the Church’s school in the area and renovate Navuso Agriculture School. Reverend Ratabacaca said it would seek the blessing of the Almighty to be with the SDL during its campaign (Bolatiki, 2006 p.3).

According to the assistant general secretary of the Methodist Church, Reverend Ame Tugaue, the SDL party performed well in the recent coalition government and its new manifesto for the 2006 elections proclaimed stability through unity, multi-racialism and harmony (Ali, 2006 p.82). But the SDL, despite its one-off support for evicted Indo-Fijian farmers, is a nationalist party which supports the views and rights of indigenous Fijians to the detriment of Indo-Fijians. It supports the NLTB and the chiefs’ rights to make decisions regarding the sale and leasing of land even to the
detriment of ordinary villagers, as we have seen. The SDL in turn strongly supports
the Methodist Church in Fiji, and some of its members appear to be influenced by the
opinions of the Church’s hierarchy.

On the other hand, the SDL is antagonistic toward the military. The relationship
between the military and the Methodist Church is discussed in chapter 5, which
explores the significance of the two 1987 coups and the 2000 coup. Because of the
Church’s support for the SDL, its estrangement from the military has deepened. The
military launched a “truth and justice” campaign prior to the 2006 elections, during
which members went into the villages to “educate” the villagers against the SDL party
(Devi, 2006 p.3). The Reverend Ame Tugaue, said:

    The military should remain in their camp and leave to the church [teaching]
    about truth and justice. I don’t believe the military is the right organisation to
    teach people about truth and justice, two issues that are very fragile in our
    society. We have the church leaders who have the ways and means that the
    community can find acceptable (Devi, 2006 p.3).

Party leader and then-caretaker prime minister, Laisenia Qarase, said that the launch
of the party campaign was blessed with the presence of the Methodist Church
president (Bolatiki, 2006 p.3).

The preceding sections on the Methodist Church and national institutions have shown
that the Church and individual Methodist leaders wield great influence in society and
institutions of government. It is also clear that Methodism is not monolithic. The next
section turns to an exploration of the diversity among Methodists and its
consequences.

**Increasing Diversity within Methodism**

Increasing diversity of socio-economic status allied with hierarchical divides and
different interpretations of the Church’s mission have generated conflict in the Church
and in Fijian society at large. In turn these conflicts are beginning to affect the
influence of the Church at the highest institutional levels of Fijian society as well as at
its popular bases. Social class divisions are very pronounced in Fiji. They have increased markedly over the last 25 years and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor is evident in the Methodist Church (two-thirds of the indigenous Fijian population are Methodist). Inequality in life-chances and a divergence in life-styles and economic interests between rich Methodists, including the chiefs and leading Church officials, and poor Methodists at the rural and urban grassroots level have increased over this period. This has resulted in tensions and conflicts, to be discussed below.

The extent of inequality in Fijian society and its increase over 25 years may be established against base lines set by the best available, though now aging, analysis of class in Fiji, published by Sutherland in 1992. The Fiji Poverty Report 1997 indicates that poverty in Fiji has worsened since Sutherland’s analysis of classes (discussed below). The reasons for the increase in poverty between 1992 and 2003 are the following:

- The introduction of 10 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT) in July 1992 and the increase of VAT to 12.5 per cent in January 2003;
- the devaluation of currency which affects the purchasing power of wages;
- the evictions of more Indo-Fijians as land leases expired led to the increase in squatter settlements, especially in the west (Ba and Nadi);
- an increase in water rates and city council rates;
- the decline in the sugar industry (with repercussions for those dependent on it, including kava producers in the central, eastern and northern divisions) (Khan and Barr, 2003 p.19).

Following the 2000 coup, Chaudhry’s removal of the VAT on food was reversed, resulting in an increase in prices. Khan and Barr argue that 20,000 people would lose their jobs and a large number of people, especially Indo-Fijians migrated overseas (Khan and Barr, 2003 p.20).

Data collated by William Sutherland (1992 p.157) indicates that the upper class in 1992 consisted of 60 per cent Indo-Fijians, 12.8 per cent indigenous Fijians and 27.2
per cent “Other”. The preponderance of races other than indigenous Fijians reflects their success in high-level occupations. Accommodation, tourist shopping, travel and tours are dominated by foreign capital. Local white capital took second place in travel and tours, and local Indo-Fijian capital came second in tourist shopping (Sutherland, 1992 p.148). The smallest earnings were made by indigenous Fijians through handicraft sales (Sutherland, 1992 p.148). Upper class indigenous Fijians were often from chiefly families who had gained wealth through land sales belonging to their vanua, or through positions as trustees on the NLTB. A few indigenous Fijians also occupied highly paid positions in the military or the bureaucracy.

Sutherland’s data shows that the middle class was 49.8 per cent Indo-Fijians, 39 per cent indigenous Fijians, and 11.2 per cent other (Sutherland, 1992 p.157). The “other” includes Europeans who own land and businesses. Indo-Fijians worked hard to gain a good education in order to practice in the professions such as law, medicine and dentistry (Plange, 1994 p.90). Their forebears had either been indentured labourers who opened businesses when indenture ceased, or had entered Fiji as Gujeratis (free-born Indians). Members of the middle class included civil servants, academics, professionals, entrepreneurs, politicians and businessmen. The Reverend Waqairatu (interviewed 11/04/06) commented “look at the tall buildings [in Suva], stand by the road, ten-to-one you see taxi drivers, jewellery shops and supermarkets, all owned by Indians. Economic power is in the hands of foreign investors”. Waqairatu’s observation is common among indigenous Fijians, but misses the point that in Fiji as a whole, there is “more income inequality within than between major ethnic groups” (Walsh, 2000 p.387). Although most middle class indigenous Fijians (civil servants, politicians and military personnel) are Methodists, the middle classes are not predominantly Methodist.

Sutherland divided the lower class into the working class (white collar, blue collar, and rural). The realities of the lower class in Fiji are that the great majority of Indo-Fijians (89 per cent), like the majority of indigenous Fijians (79 per cent) belong to the disadvantaged classes—the farmers, wage workers, peasantry, unpaid family workers and unemployed (Sutherland, 1992 p.159). Families of the lower class of indigenous Fijians often rely on remittances sent by men working in the military in the United Nations peace-keeping forces in the Sinai and the Lebanon, or as security guards in
Iraq and Afghanistan. Deaths among these participants are high and it is sad to see photos published in the press of a family surrounding the coffin of a loved one as it arrives at Nadi airport.

The lower class is large and extensive. A paper on poverty in Fiji shows that in rural villages, in which most people are indigenous Fijians, nearly one-quarter of the population lives below the “basic needs” poverty line\(^3\) (Sharma, 2004 p.6). Rural settlements with 26.2 per cent, and urban settlements with 27.6 per cent people in poverty may have either Fijian or Indo-Fijian residents, sometimes both. Data from the 2002–03 Household and Income and Expenditure Survey (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2006) suggest even worse levels of poverty, especially in, but by no means confined to, rural areas. This survey classifies 32 per cent of Fijian and nearly 40 per cent of Indo-Fijian households in rural areas as “in poverty”. In urban areas, smaller proportions of households are so classified: 23.2 per cent of Fijian and 25 per cent of Indo-Fijian households (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2006). The high proportion of Fijians who are poor are not only absolutely poor in the sense that their incomes are lower than their basic living costs but, through the period studied, increasingly so in relation to the upper class that has been getting richer. In 1991, “the Fijian rich were 14 times better off than the Fijian poor and rich Indo-Fijians 28 times better off than Indo-Fijian poor” (Walsh, 2000 p. 388). Walsh tells us that inequality steadily increased following the coups of 1987 and 2000.

Following the 1987 coup, the upper class expanded to include indigenous Fijian public officers. Many of the most prominent of them were Methodists. This is discussed in chapter 5 below. Halapua argues of these new upper class members that:

> While they may not have actively worked to depose the elected government, their conduct after the coup, particularly when they realised that there were personal gains to be made from supporting a non-democratic regime, is what led them to support the ruling class initially, and eventually become part of the ruling class. The officials among this category...were the ones who were determining resource

\(^3\) “Poverty refers to households which cannot meet basic needs for food and shelter, or to sustain the lifestyle that is considered normal in a particular country at a particular time” Sharma (2004).
allocation policies and their implementation in the Rabuka regime. Together with the cabinet members, they were those who were in effective control of state resources. The bitter irony is that those who have been directly involved in maintaining and in the escalation of uneven economic distribution of opportunities and wealth in Fiji since 1987 are indigenous Fijians in key and strategic positions such as [president, vice-president, prime minister] (Halapua, 2003 p.126-7).

Methodists who obtained wealth and power during the 1987 coup included Major General Sitiveni Rabuka, who now works a 2,000 acre plantation at Valavala, near Savusavu; Apisai Tora who became the minister of communication, works and transport in the military regime in 1987, and was a member of Ratu Mara’s interim government from 1988 to 1992. He also became the owner of cane farms in Nadi and since the 1987 coup, a business called Wire Industries Ltd (Halapua, 2003 p.129).

More important than these gains by individual Methodists was the impact of the economic and social policies of the 12-year Rabuka government on inequalities in Fiji, up to the early 1990s of Sutherland’s snapshot and beyond. The neo-liberal and “structural readjustment” policies of those years meant that a small economic elite of indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, foreigners and locals became much richer. However, the proportion of Fijians who were poor, and the depth of their poverty, increased because of a drop in real wages, a 10 per cent VAT, the adoption of a user-pays principle for social services and down-turns in a number of industries that had provided employment and income to lower class Fijians of both major ethnicities (Walsh, 2000 p.388). Walsh reports that in 1977, one-fifth of the Fijian population suffered “basic needs poverty”. This rose to at least one-quarter in 1991 and by 2000 the situation was even worse (Walsh, 2000 p. 388).

In February 1989, Methodists sympathetic to the Taukei Movement took over the offices of the Methodist Church, locking out the Church president, Reverend Josateki Koroi and the acting general secretary Paula Niukula, who were not members of the Movement (White, 1989 p.406). Ratu Isireli Caucau, a high chief related to the most prestigious chiefly family in Fiji and circuit manager of the high-chiefly island of Bau, was installed as Church president (White, 1989 p.406). Manasa Lasaro took over the
position of general secretary. The constitution of the Methodist Church in Fiji and the Standing Committee (through which the Church makes major decisions between annual conferences) was suspended, and a meeting was called to develop a new Church constitution (White, 1989 p.406).

In 1989 a schism occurred in the Methodist Church. Members who were involved in the schism on the winning side such as Manasa Lasaro, Apisai Tora and Rabuka were active members of the coup. They also influenced a large proportion of ordinary Methodists of all classes who joined them in street marches and the violence against Indo-Fijians that followed the coup. The Methodist Church was now divided into those who supported the Taukei Movement’s “Fiji for the Fijians” and those such as Koroi, Yabaki and Niukula who supported an inclusive Fiji. This division in society and the Church illustrates the demarcation between a majority of upper class Methodists and those of the lower classes, but also continuing ties and identities across class lines. The combination of demographic, economic and political factors has left Methodist Fijians divided in a way that is exacerbated by increasing class differences but by no means reducible to them.

Racial divisions

Racial divisions are evident in the Methodist Church, but are not nearly as important as socio-economic divisions. At the last Fijian census, in 2007, the indigenous Fijian population had increased to 473,983 while the Indo-Fijian population was 311,591 (Vunileba, 2007). The Indo-Fijian population has decreased from 44 per cent to 38 per cent of Fiji’s population (Field, 2007). As in 1996, the remaining 5 per cent were of Chinese, European, part-European, Australian, Rotuman, Tongan, Samoan or other origin (Newland, 2006 p.320).

In 2003, there were 47 divisions and 250 circuits, but only one division called “the Indian Division of the Methodist Church in Fiji”. Indo-Fijian Methodists mostly live on Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni, and in Levuka, in spread-out geographic areas (Newland, 2006 p.348). Different classes of Indo-Fijians are represented by this one division.

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4 Although the 2007 Census has been taken, not much detailed data has been released.
Hierarchical Divisions

The Methodist Church is divided into those who have a theological education and authority (although they are divided on issues of Church mission and taukei paramountcy), and lay people who are expected to obey them. Lay obedience includes attendance at church services, prayer meetings, visiting the sick and paying the soli. Theologically educated ministers (talatala) spend three years studying at the Davuilevu Theological College and three years in practical training. Three programmes are offered at Davuilevu: the three-year diploma; the Bachelor of Divinity for which they can be selected after ordination; and the Bachelor of Ministry (Newland, 2006 p.349). Under the talatala are catechists (vakatawa) and village pastors (vakavuvuli). The village pastors have no formal training, but apply to become local preachers as a stepping stone towards further study. They are responsible for the organisation of Church activities in the villages, as well as carrying out their normal weekday occupations (Nayacakalou, 1975 p.92).

The top level of the hierarchy of the Methodist Church occupies the offices adjacent to the Centenary Methodist Church in Butt Street, Suva. Two examples of members of the hierarchy are Reverends Ame Tugaue and Iliesa Naivalu. The former is the assistant general secretary of the Methodist Church. His name must appear on the document granting permission to research Methodist papers in the archives in Suva. His written permission must be obtained to do any research on the Methodist Church, to do interviews, or to stay with a Methodist minister and his family. He makes statements to the media on the Church’s policy on various subjects. Reverend Naivalu is the assistant secretary of Christian Citizenship and Social Services. He previously held positions as court translator, and reporter and photographer for the vernacular publication Nai Lalakai in 1982 (Singh, 2007). His work today includes counselling people who are suffering from various difficulties in their lives. “People line up in his office everyday for his counselling and he loves to listen to their problems and advise them how to improve their lives by being in the presence of God” (Singh, 2007).

While Tugaue and Naivalu each obtained an education, and have the authority to make pronouncements on Church matters affecting the community and to counsel
people in need, by contrast, lay Methodists have usually had little education and are required to obey the authority of those in power.

Aminiasi (pseudonym), whom I interviewed on Bau Island, on 11/02/06, is a lay person. He had two years training as a lay preacher at the Methodist training school at Davuilevu and is a steward of the Methodist Church on Bau Island. His responsibilities are formidable. On Mondays he has to ring the Church bell at 7am to wake the people up to pray. Congregational worship is at midday and 6pm. At 8pm youth fellowship takes place; one of his preachers takes this service. On Tuesday at 8pm there are two hours of choir practice, then a meeting and more singing for competition practice (such as the choral competition before the annual Methodist Church conference). On Wednesday between 6am and 6pm women come for fasting and praying for the congregation. On Thursday evening he has to organise a Church service. On Saturdays there are Bible reading groups for men and women, Sunday school and youth fellowship. On Sundays there are services at 6am, 10am and 4pm. There is a prayer meeting at 8am, after which he goes home for breakfast. Sunday School is held from 8.30 to 10am. At 2pm is the women’s fellowship and men’s fellowship follows at 5pm. He reads the Scriptures every day. Aminiasi receives a low salary for this Church work. In between he farms his vanua land for bananas and taro for the family to eat.

I interviewed another lay person, Naiogabui (pseudonym), in Suva on 14 February 2006. She moved from her vanua to Suva to gain higher education at secondary then tertiary level. She spoke of her Church duties regarding the soli and singing. She gives $10 a year for the soli because she is a confirmed member; there is also a general soli to give each week and a monthly thanksgiving service where she gives soli and sings. If she has no money then she does not go to the monthly service. Naiogabui’s faith in Christ is strong but she is the sole supporter of her family, so the continual demand for soli is a burden to her. She visits the women’s prison in Suva each Sunday morning before church. Life is filled with duty for Aminiasi and Naiogabui in the service of their Church.

The combination of heavy duties and poverty, as in the case of Naiogabui, in many instances involves a cost for the Church—of strained loyalties and even exit at the
grassroots. This is particularly the case in a context where there is increasing competition from Pentecostal churches for the loyalties of Christians, especially those moving to urban areas. In rural areas the problems facing the Methodist Church are exacerbated when the Church’s own land interests and trust projects conflict with the interests of local smaller land-owners and rural labourers.

Conclusion
In this chapter I have examined the ways in which the Methodist Church has become part of the political, religious and governance structures in Fiji. Although Fiji is not a Christian state, much less a Methodist one in a formal sense, many Christian principles have influenced the way in which nation-making has proceeded in the country. The Methodist Church wields great influence over the everyday lives of Fijians, from the base of society to institutions of government. The Church has intimate links with the GCC, the revered body of chiefs with constitutional powers that affect all citizens of Fiji. The Church also has intimate links with the NLTB which controls all land transactions in the country. The chiefs and those of the upper class fare much better than ordinary Fijians. The Church also has intimate links with the SDL party which favours the upper class, both indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian, although it nominally protects indigenous Fijian land interests.

However in this chapter it has also been demonstrated that the Methodist Church is divided on the matter of paramountcy of indigenous Fijian land interests and culture. Further, we have seen signs that the diversity of socio-economic status among Methodists and the divergence of interests between the controlling elites of the Church and grassroots members threaten to undermine erstwhile loyalties. Consideration of divisions within the Church lead us into chapter 5, in which I examine the role of the Methodist Church and its adherents in the coups of 1987 and 2000. These coups emphasise the sharp divisions within the Church and in Fijian society. Poverty, violence and unemployment, particularly among the young, are evident now in Fiji. Research in 1991 showed that one-quarter of the population lived in poverty and another quarter were marginal (Newland, 2006 p.327). The Methodist Church has less control over its members than it had before the 1987 coup.
Chapter 5

THE METHODIST CHURCH

The first three chapters in this thesis traced parallels and interactions between the development of the Methodist Church as it established a position of great power and influence in Fiji, and the development of Fijian national society and state. In particular, I have argued that Methodism in its missionary phase was central to cultural and political consolidation. Methodism was also involved in the consolidation of the cultural and institutional exclusion of Indo-Fijians. It was integrally involved in the development of key local, regional and national institutions and continues to influence them. Furthermore, the Church has played a pivotal part in the consolidation of upper class elite privilege and control over lower class Fijians both indigenous and Indo-Fijians.

In the preceding chapters I have also shown that the Methodists and their Church came to reflect some of the major ethnic, class, and ideological and religio-cultural divisions in contemporary Fijian society. Paradoxically, this has meant that as Methodism reached a pinnacle of influence in Fijian civil and political society, it has suffered from the effects of increasing class and cultural difference in Fijian society, as manifest in Church membership.

In this chapter, I examine this paradox of immense influence in tandem with increasing internal and external challenge, through an investigation of the involvement of the Church and leading Methodists in the coups of 1987 and 2000.
The Coups of 1987

Long-term causes.

Social separation of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians was one of the key causes of the 1987 coups. As outlined previously, the colonial government planted the seeds of a sort of apartheid between the two ethnic groups. The British exhibited a paternalistic view of the indigenous Fijians, who were likened to children who needed protection and could not manage their own political or economic affairs. This was reflected in the fact that indigenous Fijians were granted the right to vote in general elections in 1963, some 34 years after the Indo-Fijians. Until then the Great Council of Chiefs nominated their members to the Legislative Council (Lal, B. 1992 p.190) Lal argues that the British colonisers were adamant that indigenous Fijians should remain in their villages, work as subsistence labourers in their vanua and maintain their traditional way of life(1992 p.190) The concepts of the vanua, lotu and matanitu should be maintained at all costs. The lotu (Methodism) was the basis of their moral, physical and religious life, and imposed definite regulatory observances in the village such as Church attendance.

In 1944 the most significant form of separation that can be linked to later conflict occurred with the establishment of a Fijian administration headed by Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna as secretary for Fijian Affairs and the first Fijian member of the Executive Council (Ali, A. 1986 p.14). The Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) was established at that time to ensure continuance of village-based community structure, and to insulate it from Indo-Fijians and economic and cultural changes from abroad. The FAB was actually a committee of the Council of Chiefs, but influenced by European officials and non-official European legal and financial advisors of the Board (Ali, A. 1986 p.15).

In 1948 a revised set of regulations was laid before the Legislative Council in which Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna stated that:

here were the rules of conduct for a people whose life is based, socially and politically, on the patriarchal system, which may be defined as one consisting of a number of enlarged families whose members have common descent, own heritages in common and are under the paternal authority of the patriarch or eldest male of the line (Ali, A. 1986 p.15).
As a chief, Sukuna convinced the colonial administration that the FAB was essential for the protection of indigenous Fijians. So it was that they were separated from Indo-Fijians by legislation. As explained in chapter two above, Indo-Fijians were a more socially diverse group, with different religions, places of origin, castes and reasons for moving to Fiji. Indo-Fijians lived apart from, but side by side with, indigenous Fijians. With little in common with each other and kept apart by colonial administration, antagonism and anger often characterised the relationships between the two groups. Religious differences, too, were a major source of difference between the two ethnic groups. The majority of indigenous Fijians were Christians, mainly Methodists. This cultural and structural separation was a long-term factor in the upheavals of 1987.

Another long-term factor was the land issue. In the 1930s some indigenous Fijians leased land to Indo-Fijians as the latter finished their indentures. Some refused to renew land leases or did so at exorbitant prices. In order to retain experienced Indo-Fijian labourers, “the Commonwealth Sugar Refinery (CSR) transformed its plantations into small holdings, with CSR as the miller retaining the final say over production, prices, inputs and risks” (Halapua, 2003 p.17). Ratu Lala Sukuna—chief, soldier, and colonial administrator—persuaded indigenous Fijians to allow all their mataqali lands to be administered by a central authority. So in 1940 the Native Land Trust Authority was established, to be a constant source of contention between those who wished to let their land (indigenous Fijians) and those who wished to rent it (Indo-Fijians) (Halapua, 2003 p.18). By the 1950s the NLTB had slowed lease renewals, causing anxiety among the tenant farmers and a subsequent crisis in the sugar industry (Halapua, 2003 p.19). Indo-Fijian tenants suffered greatly under the terms of lease arrangements. Although they used their own capital to erect farm and residential buildings, drainage and irrigation channels and access roads, there was often no compensation for these improvements at the end of the lease. Thirty-year lease renewals were common in the 1980s and 1990s, placing the tenant farmer at a financial disadvantage (Kurer, 2001 p.300). This caused anger among the Indo-Fijians and dissatisfaction among the indigenous Fijians as uncertainty increased regarding leasing arrangements.

Indo-Fijians were regarded as vulagi (strangers) in Fiji while indigenous Fijians were taukei (owners/people of the land). Indo-Fijians regarded land as a commodity on
which to grow commercial crops, whereas for indigenous Fijians the land was their vanua, sacred land from the ancestors to be cared for in trust for coming generations. So the long-term causes of instability reinforced one another. Separation of the races by the colonial government at Cession, paramountcy of indigenous Fijian rights, discrimination against Indo-Fijians in access to lease land, and treatment of Indo-Fijians as strangers in their adopted country were long-term causes of the 1987 coups (Srebrnik, 2002 p. 189; see also Kaplan 1993).

More Immediate Political Causes: Party Formation and Political Conflicts

The Alliance Party formed on 12 March 1966 initially had wide ethnic representation among its members. Ratu Mara said that it was formed because of a need to “combine ourselves, providing for our people a form of government which will be uniformly just and stable, maintaining our settled institutions” (Ratu Mara cited in Alley, 1986 p.30). Sutherland argues that the Alliance Party’s viability rested on contradictory class foundations. “On the one hand it needed the economic support of the capitalist class (foreign and local capital), while on the other it needed the political support of a large section of the disadvantaged classes—wage workers, farmers, peasants and the unemployed” (1992 p.161).

The major opposition to the Alliance Party, the National Federation Party (NFP) was formed as an alliance between the Federation Party and the National Democratic Party in 1966. This new Indo-Fijian dominated party won a stunning victory with increased majorities in all communal constituencies at the 1966 election. Ratu Mara, head of the Alliance Party, felt threatened by the increase in Indo-Fijian power (Sharpham, 2000 p.41). Norton argues (1986 p.65) that “In 1966 the NFP aimed to show Britain and the United Nations that most Indians wanted the common roll” in order to diminish the power of indigenous Fijians in the electoral process. This did not occur. However, the fact that it was even proposed showed a new sense of power by Indo-Fijians following the 1966 elections. This electoral victory attacked the roots of indigenous-Fijian dominance and discouraged them from wanting independence. However, Britain was keen to grant Fiji and other Pacific dependencies their independence (Sharpham, 2000 p.44). On 10 October 1970, Fiji became independent from Britain.
Sutherland records that in the April 1977 election, support for the Alliance Party fell by nearly one-fifth to an all-time low of just under 65 per cent. It lost significant Indian support, due to its policy in government of favouring indigenous Fijians over Indo-Fijians in the awarding of government scholarships for the pre-degree programme at the University of the South Pacific (Sutherland, 1992 p.168). It also lost support among indigenous Fijians because of its support in government for the passing of the Agricultural Landlords and Tenants Act in November 1976. This Act recommended a minimum lease period of 30 years, and allowed for a further extension of 20 years (Sutherland, 1992 p.166). The ALTA was perceived by indigenous Fijians as favouring Indo-Fijians in their push to access land for a substantial period of time.

In September 1977 another general election was held during which indigenous Fijians flocked back to the Alliance Party for fear that Indo-Fijians would win power. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s the annual growth rate of the Fijian economy fluctuated a great deal and the Alliance Party declined as an economic crisis gripped Fiji. As Brij Lal reports:

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the annual growth rate of the Fijian economy fluctuated widely, registering a 9.6 percent real growth in the gross domestic product in 1979 and negative growth in 1981, the average for the period 1979–81 being 1.9 percent per year (1992 p.254).

Further, at this time hurricanes and droughts devastated the economy. Sugar production declined in 1983 by 46 per cent, accompanied by a drop in the world sugar price of 25 per cent since 1980. Civil service salary rises for 17,000 workers exacerbated Fiji’s problems. The government proposed a one-year wage freeze commencing in November 1984 (Lal, B. 1992 p.255).

Lal records that after Independence, new political parties and political events exacerbated polarisation. Furthermore, the Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP) vigorously promoted a politics of racism and intolerance of non-indigenous voters. Lal writes that the founder of the FNP in October 1975 was Sakeasi Butadroka, a former Alliance assistant-minister. In October 1975, he moved a motion in Parliament demanding the repatriation of Indo-Fijians back to India (Lal, B. 1986 p.96). He also accused the
eastern chiefly establishment, especially Ratu Mara, of promoting the dictatorship of Lau at the expense of other provinces (Lal, B. 1986 p.96). The platform of the FNP included the planks that “the interests of the Fijians must be paramount at all times”, and “the Fijians must always hold the positions of Governor General, Prime Minister, as well as the Ministries of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, Lands, Education, Home Affairs, Commerce and Industry and Co-operatives” (Lal, B. 1986 p.96). There was to be no room for Indo-Fijians to exercise their autonomy according to the FNP. Their economic and cultural contribution would remain unacknowledged. The FNP pushed anti-Alliance Party objectives:

The party’s critical message was that the Alliance was supposed to advance Fijian interests but had failed to do so and that the small Fijian elite had benefited under Alliance rule. In the 1977 Fijian elections the FNP won 11.6% of the Fijian communal vote [which] showed that at least some sections of the Fijian masses were becoming aware of and disgruntled by intra-Fijian class differences (Sutherland, 1992 p.167).

The FNP’s class resentment and its racist objectives created the seed-bed, from 1977 to 1987, for the extremist brand of nationalism espoused by the perpetrators of the 1987 coup.

Moreover, Sutherland argues that at the other end of the political spectrum, the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) was formed out of the struggles of working class people through the trade union movement to gain fairer working wages and conditions. The trade unions were repressed by legislation such as the Sugar Act and the Trade Disputes Act of 1973. The economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s exacerbated workers’ difficulties (Sutherland, 1992 p.173). In the 1985 Budget the imposition by the Alliance government of cuts in civil service jobs and a freeze on wages and salaries, exacerbated the people’s financial difficulties, and was a catalyst for the formation of the Labour Party (Sutherland, 1992 p. 173).

At the launch of the FLP on 6 July 1985 Timoci Uluivuda Bavadora (a medical doctor and indigenous Fijian) said:

We recognised that it was time for the working people of Fiji to form their own political party rather than continue to rely on the goodwill of existing political
parties that increasingly had demonstrated that they represent only the narrowest of interests (Sutherland, 1992 p.175).

Bavadra had experience as a government medical doctor working with poor indigenous Fijian villagers and urban workers. He established village health clinics and family planning programmes. He also worked in the union movement advocating for workers’ rights regardless of race. Sutherland also argues that class divisions among the indigenous Fijians, as well as the racial divisions between the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, gave birth to the Fiji Labour Party

Lal records that in November 1986 a coalition between the FLP and the NFP was formed to fight the April 1987 election. The Coalition was formed following the Ba (north-west Viti Levu) by-election where, in a three-way contest, the Alliance Party defeated both the FNP and the FLP. The Labour leaders realised that as an essentially urban-based party, they needed to expand their base to rural areas to succeed at the national level. The NFP could provide that crucial link to the rural sector (Lal, B. 1992 p.259). The coalition also extended across the racial divide. The Indo-Fijian based NFP accepted an ethnic Fijian (Bavadra) from the FLP as leader of the coalition. The coalition focussed on the class bias of Alliance rule and attacked the government for relying on the politics of race and fear. The Alliance Party concentrated on spreading fear about ownership of Fijian land and loss of Fijian control in government (Sutherland, 1992 p.178)

Bavadra led the FLP/NFP coalition to victory in the 1987 election. A coalition advertisement proclaimed that:

Under the Alliance, the elite have feathered their own nests while conditions for the rest, particularly the poor and disadvantaged have got steadily worse. Inequalities have become part and parcel of Alliance rule. Poverty is a disease—the Alliance is the carrier (Sutherland, 1992 p.177).

Sutherland argues that “the biggest losers in the Alliance’s defeat in April 1987 were the eastern dominated chiefly elite and the Fijian state bourgeoisie” (1992 p.162). The sense of loss exacerbated other tensions previously described. The election result sealed processes of increasing political polarisation. However, on the eve of the coup, the political situation could not be described simply in terms of ethnic or regional
division. The Labour Party, headed by an indigenous Fijian, had the support of some sections of the indigenous Fijian population. This reflects the fact that class as well as ethnic factors were involved.

How the Coup was Planned.

Sharpham claims that all the major institutions in Fiji were involved in the 1987 coup: the Methodist Church, the military, the government, the Great Council of Chiefs and the bureaucracy (2000 p. 96). The planning behind it illustrates the way in which elements in these institutions worked together. Lieutenant General Sitiveni Rabuka, a high-ranking member of the military, a staunch member of the Methodist Church as a lay-preacher and treasurer of his Circuit, was approached by members of the defeated Alliance Party, officers of the Alliance Party, other Methodists and Taukei Movement members (Sharpham, 2000 p. 96). Initially, Rabuka met with colleagues from his province of Cakaudrove at the military barracks in Suva, who were visiting to talk with the Army Commander Brigadier Ratu Epeli Nailatikau about strategies in case of civil unrest following the general election. Rabuka was asked by three colleagues, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Viliame Gonelevu and Jone Veisamasama, to meet him at the Methodist Church offices at Epworth House in Suva. Viesamasama was the secretary general of the Alliance Party, while Gonelevu had been an Alliance candidate in the election with Inoke as his campaign manager (Sharpham, 2000 p.96). Inoke was also a member of the Methodist Bible Society and had an office where the meeting was held in Epworth House.

Rabuka suggested the idea of a military coup and was told by his friends: “It is up to you. God has placed you here to carry out this coup” (Sharpham, 2000 p.97). Sixty officers who had served in Lebanon were chosen from the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and given further rigorous training in close combat by Captain Isireli Dugu (Sharpham, 2000 p.99). The object of the training was kept secret. Rabuka was their leader and he also led the coup on 14 May 1987. They walked into the parliament while it was sitting and members were transported to the Queen Elizabeth Military Barracks by truck. Other members of Rabuka’s team took over the Post and Telecommunications department and the Fiji Broadcasting Commission (Sharpham, 2000 p.108). Rabuka deposed the RFMF Commander, Brigadier General Ratu Epeli
Nailatiku and the chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Sanday, who were left out of the coup planning (Sharpham, 2000 p.113). The Commissioner of Police and his two deputies were also suspended. Rabuka also demoted Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, while offering him the position of president in the new Republic of Fiji (Sharpham, 2000 p.111).

Halapua claims that the Mara-led Alliance Party supported and endorsed the coup (2003 p. 53). Ratu Mara was a Catholic, so that the Fijians felt that he did not fully support them despite the fact that the Alliance Party embodied the interests of the Fijian chiefly system. The military were there to protect the business interests of the chiefly politicians, as the politicians were there to promote business interests belonging to the military. Once again, lower-class indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians were left out of the frame (Halapua, 2003 p.53).

Halapua further claims that the democratic institution of parliament was violated by the coup. Politicians of the FLP/NFP Coalition had had their right to sit in the parliament annulled (Halapua, 2003 pp.54-5). The army supported the 1987 coup because many of its members were Methodists who also belonged to the Taukei Movement. The Methodist Church supported the 1987 coup because of the perceived threat to indigenous Fijian vanua, lotu and matanitu. The GCC supported the coup because they represented the upper and middle class indigenous Fijians who had much to lose economically if Indo-Fijians were in control of the Fijian parliament. Their power base was also threatened (Halapua, 2003 pp.54-5).

Bavadra who headed the government in 1987 was Fijian, so Rabuka’s coup was a demonstration of resistance to Western Fijian authority. Members of the Taukei Movement supported the coup and perpetrated much of the violence against Indo-Fijians before and after. Apart from helping to plan the coup, members of the Taukei Movement also planned subsequent protests. In Tavua, in western Viti Levu, Ratu Ovini Bokini ordered his men to set up a roadblock on the King’s Highway opposite the police station. Placards displayed anti-government slogans “We hate the Coalition. We don’t need it” and “Labour government is Lowest in the World” (Lal, B. 1992 p.272). On 21 April, 2,000 Fijians gathered at Viseisei, Bavadra’s home village, making speeches expressing their extreme displeasure at the displacement of many of
the prestigious chiefs in the government (Lal, B. 1992 p.272). Plans were made by the Taukeis to blow up the huge oil tanks at Walu Bay, to burn down Indo-Fijian houses and to kill Indo-Fijians around Suva. In the west, it was planned to burn Indo-Fijian cane fields. The law office of Jai Ram Reddy, the Indo-Fijian leader in Lautoka, was fire-bombed by Taukeis (Lal, B. 1992 p.274).

**Key Individuals Involved in the Coup.**

Three men played an influential role in the 1987 coup: Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka was a planner of the coup; Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, a nationalist, was a supporter; Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau did not support the coup but accepted it as a *fait accompli*, and subsequently pardoned Rabuka.

*Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka*, the leader of the coup, was educated at the Queen Victoria School in Suva. Initially it was established for the sons of chiefs, but following WWII, others were selected by a competitive process.(Sharpham, 2000 p.32). Rabuka entered the RFMF in 1968. In 1980 he assumed leadership of the Fiji troops in Lebanon as part of the United Nations Interim Forces stationed there to maintain peace. He was strongly nationalistic in support of indigenous Fijians. He was also a committed Methodist. The relationship between the Methodist Church, the military and the Alliance Party was a close one in 1987. When Rabuka and his hand-picked RFMF soldiers took over the parliament building on 14 May 1987, he claimed that he acted in order to prevent violence perpetrated by the Taukei Movement following the Coalition win. Sharpham (2000 p.16) reports that at a press conference on the Friday morning following the coup, Rabuka said that he wished to reassure the nation, particularly the Indian citizens and other races, “that the protection of their lives and properties is our top priority”. He repeated that the reason for the coup was to prevent violence and bloodshed and “to pre-empt law and order breaking down in Fiji”.

Mob violence erupted on the streets of Suva on the following Wednesday, as Taukei Movement supporters waited for Ganilau to support the coup. Young men and Taukei supporters, mostly belonging to the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Methodist Church, punched and kicked Indians, and smashed shop and car windows (Sharpham,
The violence that Rabuka had feared occurred in downtown Suva. By 25 September 1987, Rabuka was disenchanted by the lack of assistance from Mara and Ganilau so he perpetrated a second coup in which he took control of the government himself (Sharpham, 2000p.132,133). The British Crown was no longer interested in negotiating with a country that had dismantled democracy. On October 7 1987, Rabuka read a decree over the radio declaring Fiji a Republic (Sharpham, 2000 p.135).

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara received a privileged education by being awarded a scholarship by the colonial government in Fiji to study in England. Later, he was chief minister from 1967 to 1970, and was Fiji’s first prime minister and head of government at Independence on 10 October 1970, serving in that capacity for 22 years. Ratu Mara founded the multi-racial Alliance Party in February 1966. He was also a chief from the Tovata (eastern area) with a close association with the Methodist Church in Fiji (Kotobalavu, 2001 p. 103). Despite this association with the Methodist Church, he was a Catholic. Roderick Alley argues that:

> in its formative stages, the Alliance followed the pattern of political parties that are created “from the top” for the mutual satisfaction and joint interests of particular elites concerned to legitimise and maintain such interests under conditions of increasing electoral competition (1986 p.38).

Mara supported the 1987 coup and Halapua argues that this was because the loss of the Alliance Party in the1987 election would have meant lack of access to monetary benefits through power, prestige and business deals (Halapua, 2003 p.128).

Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was a member of the Catholic Church, having converted from Methodism during his years at the Marist Brothers’ School in Suva. He was governor-general of Fiji at the time of Rabuka’s coup in 1987 and was also Rabuka’s commander-in-chief, paramount chief, and his patron. Rabuka informed Ganilau that he had abrogated the Constitution, so that the position of governor-general longer existed, but that he wanted him to be president of the new republic (Sharpham, 2000 p.111). Ganilau expressed the view that the coup was illegal. He proclaimed a state of public emergency, arguing that the constitution still stood and that men of the RFMF and the public service should remain loyal to the oath of office which they had sworn
to the Queen (Sharpham, 2000 p.114). However on 24 May, Ganilau issued a proclamation granting amnesty to Rabuka and accepting that the coup was a fait accompli.

**The Church, Involvement of Individual Methodists and the Schism in the Methodist Church**

The Methodist Church supported plans for the 1987 coup and assisted in the perpetration of it. Planning took place at Epworth House, the offices of the Methodist Church in Fiji. As stated above, Rabuka, Ratu Inoke, Gonelevu and Veismasama, all members of the military and Methodists, discussed plans for the coup on 15 April, three days after the election results were announced (Sharpham, 2000 p.96). Another planning meeting involving members of the Methodist Church was held at the Reverend Raikivi’s house in Suva on Easter Monday, a week after the election (Sharpham, 2000 p.98). Present at the meeting were members of the defeated Alliance Party, most of whom were chiefs; most were Methodists. Filipe Bole, former Fijian ambassador to the United States; the former Alliance Attorney General, Qoroniasi Bale; Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, president of the Fiji Council of Churches and a leading Taukei; Ratu George Kadavulevu, son of the paramount chief of Fiji, Ratu George Cakobau; a former Alliance minister, Apisai Tora; and “Big Dan” Veitata (Sharpham, 2000p.98). Ratu Finau Mara, Ratu Mara’s eldest son, a Catholic was also among the coup planners. These men were politically active and determined to take action against the government that was formed after the 1987 general election.

Methodist Church involvement included support for the “Sunday Bans” imposed by Rabuka following the coup. The significance of the Sunday Ban was that the military had the support of senior members of the Church for enforcing the Biblical injunction on the Sabbath as a day of rest as state policy (Halapua, 2003 p.77). The Sunday Bans though, revealed divisions in the Methodist Church hierarchy; there were those who supported the Bans and the coup, and those who did not. Manasa Lasaro, the general secretary of the Methodist Church, used the Sunday Bans as a means of persuading indigenous Fijians that the nationalist viewpoint was the Church’s view.

For his part, Lasaro exploited his influential position in the Methodist Church to rally support from the wider congregation. By manipulating the Sunday Ban as a
symbolic bottom line, he increased his influence and made a name for himself. His endorsement by some of the senior clergy ensured that the Sunday Ban had theological sanction among ordinary villagers and their chiefs, and thus permeated many parts of the vanua (Halapua, 2003 p.77).

Lasaro’s involvement in the coup did not apparently benefit him personally in monetary terms, but the Church benefited from the Rabuka government’s financial support for its annual Conferences and other activities following the coup (Halapua, 2003 p.131).

The Reverend Josateki Koroi was the President of the Methodist Church at the time. He was a moderate with views opposed to those of Lasaro. He deplored the involvement of the Church in the coup and believed that the Sunday Bans were inconsistent with the views of the Gospel (White, 1989 p.406). Lasaro was initially disciplined by the Church, but he and his supporters took revenge and took over the offices of the Methodist Church in February 1989 (Halapua, 2003 p.77). Koroi and the acting general secretary, Paula Niukula, were locked out of the Church offices. Installed as president was Ratu Isireli Caucau, a high chief closely related to the most prestigious family in Fiji and also circuit minister of the high-chiefly island of Bau (White, 1989 p.406).

The Sunday Bans proved to be the catalyst that provoked the schism in the Methodist Church in 1987. Twenty years later, the division persists between nationalist Taukei Fijians who supported Rabuka’s 1987 coup in its discrimination against Indo-Fijians, and moderate Methodists like Koroi and Yabati who believe that Fiji should be inclusive of Indo-Fijians and all other races. The latter advocate the principle of equal access to education, employment and health care, and freedom to express their religious beliefs. The former insist on the faith-based legitimacy of indigenous Fijian paramountcy (my interview with Koroi, 3/3/2006).

In an article entitled “For God’s Sake!! George!!” (Fiji Daily Post, 2002) the Reverend Josateki Koroi has a great deal to say about Fijian Christians and the Methodist Church following the 1987 and the 2000 coups. The title alludes to George Speight and is strongly critical of the 2000 coup that he led (discussed below), but also addresses issues in the Church in 1987 and earlier. First, Koroi says that scripture does
not recognise indigenous rights but only human rights. God did not give native Fijians the right to claim supremacy over other races. He argues that to claim otherwise is to endorse the sort of racism that characterised Hitler’s Germany. “Methodist Church leaders are more concerned about the Fijian culture than the Christian mission of the Church. They seem to be more Jewish in preaching than Christian”. Koroi claims that they wish to follow God’s directives to the Israelites to go and fight, and take possession of the lands of other peoples (Joshua 1: 3–7). Fijian Christians claim exclusive ownership rights to land. Koroi believes that

this explains the Fijians Christians’ egotistic psyche and the introvert character which subjects other races to submission such as the torching of Indo-Fijian homes, the looting, pilferage, and the right to destroy assets (Tokalauvere, 2002 p.3).

Referring to both the 1987 and 2000 coups, Koroi states that “currently Fiji is in a confused state and unable to confront decision with integrity. There is no Truth, no Justice, and a serious lack of righteousness. Peace and unity is replaced by violence, hatred and falsehood” (Tokalauvere, 2002 p.4). Koroi defines a Christian as a follower of a living person, the risen Christ Jesus, the Lord Himself. A Christian is not a follower of Christian principles or religious laws. He does not believe in the concept of the Christian state, or that the Christian religion and the state should be one (he calls this a *vanua* government), a principle supported by many members of the Methodist Church in Fiji (Tokalauvere, 2002 p.6). He also abhors the high levels of *yagona* consumption (a drink which induces feelings of well-being and drowsiness) as it leads to low productivity in homes, villages and on a national level. He believes that women suffer because the men are lazy when they have drunk too much *yagona*. The drinking of *yagona* is widespread in Fiji and normally occurs after the Church services of the Methodist Church, with the minister presiding over the *yagona* bowl (Tomlinson, 2002b p.77).

The Reverend Inoke, a leading member of the Methodist Church in Fiji, has very different views from Reverend Koroi regarding his responsibilities as a Christian. I interviewed him at the Pacific Theological College in Suva on 22 March 2006. As *i taukei* with *vanua* land in Taveuni, he takes his responsibilities regarding the protection of that land very seriously. He explained that his land and also the sea are
inherited by blood (from his parents), so that they are precious and special, and part of his worth. When I asked him about the concept of a Christian state in Fiji, he replied that it would legitimise the position of being i taukei; the custom, position and belief system that was part of Fiji’s Christian transformation from 1830. It would do two things: first, it would preserve Christian principles at a national political level and protect against other forms of religious practice entering the country; second, it would allow successful resistance by i taukei to the push from forces both inside and outside the country to democratise Fiji.

Reverend Inoke argues that the Ten Commandments provide the law invoked by i taukei to reject the legitimacy of non-Christian religious beliefs in Fiji. From the Bible he quoted “thou shalt have no other Gods before me”. He believes that the coups of 1987 and 2000 were legitimate because they were conducted in order to protect the i taukei way of life, and that the Methodist Church should be involved in politics in order to preserve this.

Apisai Tora, a Methodist member of the Taukei Movement, and one of the planners of Rabuka’s 1987 coup, expressed the view of many indigenous Fijians, that the election of a government with an Indo-Fijian majority was a violation of the Deed of Cession. On 20 April 1987, Tora made the following impassioned speech at a Taukei Movement meeting in the presence of Rabuka:

> Our generosity, our willingness to share and care have been used to slap us in our face. They have been used to push the taukei aside. They have been used to deprive us of the paramountcy of interests which the Deed of Cession guaranteed and which the fathers of the present Constitution undertook to uphold and protect for all taukei forever.

> This sacred covenant, this sacred agreement is now broken. Our independence is now shattered. Upon us is imposed a new colonialism, not from the outside but within our own country by those who arrived here with NO rights and were given full rights by us the taukei.

> We cannot remain silent as our traditions and customs are endangered, as the leadership of our turaga is spurned, as our land, our only asset and the source of our security, is put in the control of others…

> Thus our country is taken from us. We cannot become strangers in our own land (Sharpham, 2000 p.100).
Both the Reverend Inoke and Apisai Tora supported the paramountcy of *i taukei* Fijians as a compelling reason to support the 1987 coup. By contrast, the Reverend Koroi argues that the preservation of Fijian paramountcy is not a valid reason to perpetrate a coup. He argues that the results of a democratic election should be respected and that all citizens of Fiji should have equal rights to education and employment, and the freedom to practice their religion. He is critical of the Methodist Church, of which he is a faithful member, because, in his view it no longer practises Christianity as Christ taught it, or as John Wesley interpreted it (Koroi, 2005 p.1).

The paradox of great influence coinciding with internal instability is explained not only by social and demographic factors—that is, that the Methodist Church on the basis of its success comes to reflect the growing diversity of class, status and power in Fiji—but also because the theological development that has taken place in a successful and well-endowed Church with sophisticated tertiary institutions has deepened theological divisions in the Church.

**The Immediate Consequences of the May 1987 coup**

Rabuka was sworn in as the head of government on Sunday, 17 May 1987. Members of the defeated Alliance Party, most of whom were members of the Taukei Movement, a small number of independents, and Coalition members, formed a Council of Advisors to help him run the country (Lal, B. 1992 p.276). Rabuka perpetrated the second coup on 25 September 1987 in response to President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau’s proposal for the restoration of civilian rule in the form of a Council of National Reconciliation, including Bavadra (Coalition leader) and Mara (Alliance leader). The militant Taukei Movement felt betrayed by Rabuka’s endorsement and implementation of the proposal (Srebrnik, 2002 p.193).

The Council of Advisors was headed by Sir Kamisese Mara. A week after the appointment of the new Mara administration, the Taukei Movement split publicly. The faction led by the Methodist Reverend Tomasi Raikivi went to Government House to see Ganilau and to pledge support for the new government. The other faction was led by Butadroka, a hard-line *Taukei* and lay preacher in the Methodist Church. He was antagonistic toward the GCC, which he believed had given Fijian land to all
Fijian citizens at Cession rather than solely to indigenous Fijians, as he and other Taukei felt right and proper (Srebrnik, 2002 p.193). The hard-line Taukeis were angry that there were only two of their members included in the Mara administration. They were also critical of Rabuka for handing over power to a civilian administration without first obtaining the approval of the GCC (Dean and Ritova, 1988 p.135). The hard-line Taukeis called themselves the Taukei Liberation Front (Sharpham, 2000 p.129).

The 2000 Coup

The 2000 coup was provoked by the lack of resolution of the issues that had precipitated the 1987 coups. Social separation of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians created disunity and the land issue remained unresolved. Anger expressed in 1987 festered among the diverse citizenry of Fiji for reasons that have been discussed. Paramountcy of the indigenous Fijians remained a prominent issue in 2000. However, indigenous Fijians were divided between those who were marginalised by poverty and the middle and upper classes, with the latter providing leaders and support. In all of this, the Methodist Church hierarchy continued to support nationalist political views, including those of the two Taukei factions noted above, and this contributed to distress among the Indo-Fijian population. Having exerted its authority in 1987, the military remained a threat to democratic government.

Immediate Factors Contributing to the 2000 coup

The appointment of Ratu Mara as prime minister following the 1987 coup was a key factor in the perpetration of the 2000 coup (Halapua, 2003 p. 111). Ratu Mara’s heritage is particularly relevant as the causes of the 2000 coup are examined. He was born on the island of Vanuabalavu, in the Lau group, in the Tovata. He was the Tui Nayau, paramount chief. His wife, the Roko Tui Dreketi, held the highest chiefly title from the confederacy of Burabasaga, the central confederacy. The appointment of Mara as prime minister of the interim government alienated rival eastern chiefs who were traditionally the most powerful in Fiji (Halapua, 2003 pp. 112-113). Mara was also closely associated with elite European, part-European and Indo-Fijian business interests. Lower class indigenous Fijians and Taukeis resented his appointment as they
felt unrepresented by him. Citizens in the western provinces also felt that Mara did not represent them (Teaiwa, 2000 p.1). It should be noted that Ratu Mara was a Roman Catholic, and this was another reason why Taukeis felt unrepresented by him.

A second key factor was the election of Mahendra Chaudhry as prime minister in 1999. Chaudhry was the leader of the People’s Coalition Party Government from 1999 to 2000, following the 1999 election (Williksen-Bakker, 2002 p. 73). The fact that he was an Indo-Fijian caused considerable disquiet among indigenous Fijians, especially those in favourable positions to gain wealth and position from their access to contracts and employment for as long as indigenous paramountcy was maintained. Fiji now had an Indo-Fijian as head of government instead of an indigenous Fijian and indigenous Fijians believed that paramountcy would be affected even though it was enshrined in the laws controlling the composition and authority of the Senate.

Norwegian economist Solun Williksen-Bakker argues that initially Chaudhry gained widespread approval because he announced his intention to investigate the mismanagement of money from the Fiji Development Bank and the National Bank of Fiji, which had occurred during the previous government (Williksen-Bakker, 2002 p.73). However, Chaudhry’s announcement that the Indo-Fijian cane-farmers would be compensated after their leases on Fijian land had expired stirred indigenous Fijian dissatisfaction. This was expressed in conversations in which Williksen-Bakker (2002) participated and in the newspapers at the time. The *vanua* became an issue of focus instead of other issues such as unemployment, poverty, unrest and violence, which had helped bring the People’s Coalition to power. The Indo-Fijian “problem” also became a focus that displaced other troubles in Fiji (Williksen-Bakker, 2002 p.73).

Williksen-Bakker argues that economic issues were intertwined with the ethnic tensions. From 1970 onwards, there was much public discussion about the indigenous Fijians’ inferior position as far as business was concerned. Newspapers published many articles on the subject and politicians used the topic to stir up anxiety among indigenous Fijians. Indigenous Fijians had traditionally grown sufficient food to feed their families and fulfil Church donation requirements. But selling surplus goods at markets or road-side stalls was not regarded as business by indigenous Fijians who,
Williksen-Baker claims, disdained business even as they envied and felt inferior to Indo-Fijians who had often established successful businesses. Williksen-Bakker (2002 p.1) argues that the rhetoric used prior to and during the build-up to the 1987 coup and during Rabuka’s regime in the 1990s used this theme of the inferiority of indigenous Fijians in business to legitimate the coups. He suggests that “the dichotomy of business–vanua comprises a variety of concerns and doubts related to modernisation, urbanisation, ethnicity, belonging, values, and choices” (Williksen-Bakker, 2002 p.72). For indigenous Fijians, setting up in business was madua (shameful), because they needed to attend to the duties of their vanua. Consequent economic problems exacerbated by a severe downturn in the Fijian economy contributed to support for the 2000 coup among the indigenous Fijians.

Political and constitutional factors also must be taken into account in order to understand the 2000 coup. A new constitution was promulgated in 1990 by presidential decree, to replace the 1970 Constitution that had been abandoned by Rabuka in 1987 (Lal, B. 2003a p. 672). The 1990 Constitution stipulated that the head of government should be an indigenous Fijian and reserved special positions of authority for indigenous Fijians (Lal, B. 2003a p.672).

It reduced parliamentary representation of the Indo-Fijian population proportionate to their size, while increasing the relative representation of the indigenous Fijians. All multiracial voting was abolished by creating a wholly racially segregated electoral system. Rural, more conservative indigenous Fijians were disproportionately represented over their urban counterparts (Lal, B. 2003a p.672).

This constitutional discrimination was a cause of unrest among Indo-Fijians. On the other hand, Sutherland argues that this constitution produced racial solidarity among working-class indigenous Fijians. It highlighted the struggle between Mara (chief) and Rabuka (commoner), and the classes they represented (1992 p.200). In response to the 1987 coup, in June 1990 the chiefs decided to launch a political party, the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) or Fijian Political Party, which aimed “to promote the unity of the Fijian people and the consolidation of their culture and tradition” (Lal, B. 1992 p.330). It replaced the old Alliance Party and was led by the commoner Major General Sitiveni Rabuka, much to the disgust of its chiefly founders (Srebrnik, 2002 p.195).
In quick succession, a number of developments on the nationalist indigenous Fijian side took place. In 1990 the Nationalist Methodist Reverend Manasa Lasaro joined Sakeasi Butadroka’s Fijian Christian National Party, the platform of which stressed the need for Fiji to follow the Christian God and urging that Fijians should be a holy people demanding holy government for all. The Christian National Party formed a nationalist alliance with Fijian National United Front (FNUF) and the SVT to contest the 1992 general election (Srebrnik, 2002 p.195). The SVT party led by Rabuka won the election and the government that it formed included members of the allied parties.

In 1994 Rabuka called another general election. The Methodist Church now supported the SVT party which won the election, while the FNUF lost all its seats (Srebrnik, 2002 p.195). The Church had publicly supported the strongest indigenous Fijian nationalist party, the chiefs and Rabuka.

Lal argues that the 1999 general election provided a test for the constitution of 1997, which was supposed to provide answers to Fiji’s racial problems. Two coalitions competed. On the one side, Rabuka’s SVT joined with Jai Ram Reddy’s National Federation Party. On the other was the People’s Coalition, led by Mahendra Chaudhry’s Fiji Labour Party together with a number of minor Fijian parties (Lal, B. 2003a p.676). The 1997 Constitution allowed for any party gaining 10 per cent of the vote to have members in the new cabinet. The People’s Coalition won 37 seats outright and with its Coalition partners, 54 of the 71 seats in the House of Representatives. Mahendra Chaudhry became head of the new government, causing deep resentment among some of the Fijian aspirants. Chaudhry observed the 10 per cent representation from the other parties which was required under the 1997 Constitution (Lal, B. 2003a p.676). For the first time in history an Indo-Fijian was now prime minister.

**Planning of the 2000 Coup**

The Chaudhry government lasted exactly a year before it was overthrown by yet another coup. The coup was planned in a house at 8 Mitchell Street, part of the Laucala Beach Estate in northern Suva (Field et al., 2005 p.73). A member of the public service, the Counter Revolutionary Warfare (CRW) unit from the military, a
FNP Coalition MP, and George and Jim Speight were among the planners of the coup. The Taukei Movement and the Methodist Church were also involved and planned to hold a march on the day of the coup as a protest against the Chaudhry government (Field et al., 2005 p.75).

Mealey (2000) argues that the 2000 coup was a civilian coup, led by George Speight, a failed businessman of part-European descent. Speight had recently been sacked by the government as head of the Fiji Hardwood Corporation, but had powerful connections to various parties disenchanted with the Chaudhry government. Speight had been accused of accepting thousands of dollars of “consultancy fees” paid to him by a U.S. businessman during negotiations between an American resource group and a high-profile British government timber corporation in a contest to win a share of Fiji’s mahogany plantations. With the change in government, Speight was excluded from the negotiations and the promised financial rewards (Mealey, 2000 p.1). Brij Lal describes Speight as “volatile, dangerously delusional, the self-appointed saviour of the indigenous Fijian ‘race’, even though he himself is half-indigenous” (2000b p.1).

At the time of the 2000 coup the army was divided into those who believed it was legitimate to use force against the duly elected government of Fiji and those who did not (Field et al., 2005 p. 76). The CRW’s First Meridian Squadron was involved in training for and plotting the coup which occurred 19 May 2000. George Speight informed the squadron in planning meetings that weapons from the military barracks would be used. Exercises in preparation were carried out on Vanua Levu, on Rabuka’s property, although he asserts that he had nothing to do with the coup (Field et al., 2005 p.76). Ilisoni Ligairi was the retired founder of the CRW who believed that protection of the taukei was a priority above maintenance of a stable elected government, although he, too, asserts that he had nothing to do with the planning of the coup (Field et al., 2005 p.77).

The group who executed the coup consisted of George Speight, his brother Jim Speight, Ligairi and four CRW soldiers. They entered the parliament building on the morning of Friday 19 May 2000. Two shots were fired inside at the chamber roof and Speight announced: “This is a civil coup, with arms and ammunition, by the people and for the people. Please just tell them [the politicians] not to get up!” (Field et al.,
2005 p.82). The parliamentarians were held prisoner for 56 days, while mobs ran riot in the streets of Suva and the countryside looting and burning shops, houses, and markets—particularly those belonging to Indo-Fijians. Fear spread among the civilian population and for 10 days no-one was running the country, until the Armed Forces took over, headed by Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama who appointed himself executive head of the government (Lal, B. 2003a p.677). The hostages were released unharmed except for Chaudhry, who was physically abused while in captivity. Speight and his accomplices were eventually arrested and tried for treason (Lal, B. 2003a p.678).

**The Paradox of the Methodist Church**

The Methodist Church supported the coup against the new government. Church President Tomasi Kanailagi had written a letter to eventual coup leader George Speight, expressing anti Fiji-Indian sentiment and support for a coup (Field et al., 2005 p.153). Other Methodist Church leaders, Methodist members of the Taukei Movement and of the CRW military unit lent support ranging from moral support to active involvement. The Church supported the planning of the coup and members participated in a march and demonstration held on 19 May, the day of the coup. Methodists participating in the march had not planned for it to be violent, but the crowd was out of the Church’s control. Shops were vandalised and burnt, Indo-Fijians terrorised and anarchy reigned in downtown Suva (Teaiwa, 2000 p.3).

By June 2000 when the hostages were still incarcerated in the parliament building, the journalist David Robie wrote:

> Leaders of the country’s most influential church, the Methodist Church, have given mixed messages by condemning the attempted coup, yet apparently also giving tacit support for calls for a Christian state, and visiting Speight as well as the head of the military government, Commodore Frank Bainimarama (2000 p.1).

When the coup took place, many church leaders, including the Methodists, advocated the “disagree-with-the-method, agree-with-the-cause theology” (Field et al., 2005 p.150) and according to the critics of the Church’s involvement, the shallowness of it all was exposed by outrageous “forgiveness” extended to the coup leaders. The Methodist Church continued to offer “forgiveness” to their members who participated
in these “atrocities”, as the sins were being committed and the hostages held (Field et al., 2005 p.150). More excusably, the Methodist Church gave sanctuary to 60 street children from the capital Suva, including seven young girls who had participated in the lawlessness, at a refuge near Nausori (Robie, 2000 p.1). Two groups of senior ministers of the Methodist Church visited the rebels at the parliament complex as well as the military barracks at Nabua. Ilaitia Tuwere, the secretary general of the Methodist Church, tried to negotiate with Speight for the release of the hostages. Tuwere said that he supported Bainimarama “to clear the air with ordinary people” (Robie, 2000 p.1). He believed that most of the demands issued by Speight and the rebels had been achieved, so why should they continue to hold the hostages? (Robie, 2000 p.1).

On the other hand, the Methodist Church issued a statement condemning the coup and the imprisonment of parliamentarians as hostages. The Church exhorted its followers publicly not to support the coup. A report of an incident in Suva suggests opposition to the coup among sections of the military:

News media have reported that one of two cars involved at the Maunikau checkpoint shooting incident on Monday—which was claimed by rebels to be an assassination attempt on Speight but denied by the military—was owned by the Methodist Church and driven by a pastor. The car was hit by two bullets in the trunk and one tire was shot out. The president of the church, Rev. Tomasi Kanatlagi, declined to comment (Robie, 2000 p.1)

**Conclusion**

The period of the two coups in 1987 and the coup of 2000 amounted to a revolution in Fiji society. The second coup of 1987 created the Republic of Fiji, severing for all time the colonial ties that had moulded the nation. Coup culture had been born in Fiji, bringing with it the probability of further coups. Halapua describes the 1987 coups as a devastating hurricane:

The nation was hit by a particular form of socio-political, economic, cultural and religious storm. It is suggested that the crisis evident in Fiji today is intricately linked to this event. It is further suggested that the social, political and moral problems which disadvantage the majority and the powerless cannot be eliminated by addressing only the consequences while the “eye” remains concealed (2003 p.192).
As Halapua argues, the “eye” of the hurricane is constituted by those groups that seek to maintain advantage for themselves at the expense of the disadvantaged, in a situation where they believe their dominance to be imperilled. These include the Methodist Church, the military, the police force, the Great Council of Chiefs, the NLTB, politicians and any others with access to power and money in the community. The rhetoric of “Fiji for the Fijians”, “We must protect paramountcy” and “Indo-Fijians cause indigenous Fijian problems” ignores the fact that indigenous Fijians are deeply troubled and divided. The 2000 coup exacerbated the problems remaining after 1987 (Halapua, 2003 p. 192). There was poverty, lawlessness, lack of educational opportunities for the poor majority, particularly in the tertiary sector and unemployment increased. Tourism and garment manufacturing declined, as did exports in the sugar industry, slowing the economy.

Therefore, the unintended revolution that resulted from the coups consists of three key elements. First, there was a rapid erosion of traditional bases of solidarity among indigenous Fijians and of the institutions, including the Methodist Church, but more generally of the vanua–lotu–matanitu complex that nourished this solidarity. Second, increasing polarisation between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians was exacerbated by the coups. Finally, there was the increasing incapacity of institutions of governance to cope with the contradictory demands of threatened elites and the majority of increasingly impoverished and disadvantaged citizens. These three factors were all accelerated by the coups and have fuelled the culture of coups and the likely trend of alternate civilian revolts and military takeovers.

This chapter has shown that the Methodist Church is integrally involved in all these factors. The examination of the coups shows not only the involvement of officers of the Church and prominent Methodists in the lead-up and execution of the coups, but also how divisions in the Church and economic/demographic changes in the Methodist population have contributed to fractures in the vanua–lotu–matanitu complex. Furthermore, it reveals how the Church and prominent members have been at the forefront of increasing polarisation and the subversion of institutions of governance.
Chapter 6

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The influence of the Methodist Church and the fragility of its hegemony was revealed in the coups of 1987 and 2000. Along with other institutions and groups, the Church was at the eye of the hurricane, in Halapua’s analogy (2003 p. 192). The “eye” was constituted by those groups that sought to maintain advantage for themselves at the expense of the disadvantaged, in a situation in which they perceived their dominance as imperilled. They included the Methodist Church, the military, the police force, the GCC, the NLTB, politicians and any others with access to power and money in the community. In this chapter, the shifting relationships between these institutions and key personnel before, during and after the 2006 coup are described. I then analyse the role of the Methodist Church in the coup and the consequences of the coup for the Church. The main argument of this chapter is that the coup of 2006 greatly accelerated the Church’s slide, which began in 1987, from the peak of its hegemonic position in Fijian society.

A Note on Sources: Media Suppression after the Coup

There are few academic sources available for the events that have been unfolding in Fiji since 2006, so here I rely heavily on media sources. However, since the coup, on 5 December, means of communication in Fiji have been severely curtailed. For example, the licence for Channel 2 Fiji was suspended on 28 November 2007 for “breach of conditions” (Fiji Times Online, 2007). There are three major English language dailies in Fiji and at various times members of staff of each have been severely intimidated. Recently, the publishers of two of them were deported to Australia. The first newspaper to be threatened was the Fiji Daily Post. Its editor, Robert Wolfgamm, had his passport seized and he was threatened with deportation, though this did not occur. Wolfgamm, the acting general manager Apenisa Mataitoga and news editor Mithleshni Gurdalal, were taken to the Queen Elizabeth Barracks for a meeting with the military (Fiji Times Online, 2006f p.1). The newspaper has since been wary about what it publishes, especially articles related to Commodore
Bainimarama and his regime. I received this e-mail from Wolfgramm on 7 December 2006:

We are running on a skeleton staff (about 40 out of 72) and all are scared—some are scared and taking time off, others of us are scared and trying to work on. No point in being immobilised by fear. Today’s print edition of our paper carries a blank space where my editorial usually is—partly protest, partly self-preservation. I’ve spent more than 100 editorials (of more than 600) in the past two years criticising the military commander for overstepping his constitutional mark and warning the government and presidents that action was required. Instead what we got was appeasement. Now it has come to this. Something ugly is going to come out of all this unwinnable war the commander has started. He is taking on every key institution in the society [reproduced with permission].

The second paper to have its content curtailed was the Fiji Sun. Its publisher, Russel Hunter, was deported to Australia on 25 February 2008 for publishing a story about tax evasion by an interim cabinet minister (thought by many to be Chaudhry, who was Finance Minister at the time). The regime denounced him as a “security threat” (Fiji Times Online, 2008c p.1). The Fiji Times initially fared rather better than the other two newspapers, so was an excellent source of material on day-to-day events in Fiji. In fact, it became the only source I had, as I was unable to return to Fiji to check what was happening in the country. However, on 2 May 2008, Evan Hannah, the Fiji Times publisher, was also deported to Australia, leaving his staff behind. Hannah claimed in The Australian newspaper: that “[m]edia freedom is clearly at risk of further erosion with Interim Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, as late as May 5, threatening to close media outlets that fail to comply with his version of fair and balanced coverage” (Hannah, 2008 p.1). Although the information I have drawn from media sources should be read with some caution due to possible bias, it nonetheless enables me to consider here the most recent events in Fiji in order to link them to the broader arguments in this thesis about the Methodist Church in that country.

The 2006 Coup

On 5 December 2006, Commodore Frank Bainimarama announced that he was Fiji’s new leader. He deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase (first appointed by Bainimarama in 2000, then elected in 2001 and again in 2006) and the elected government. Bainimarama’s announcement declared that “as of six o’clock this evening, the military has taken over the Government, has executive authority, and the running of the country” (Brown and Nicholson, 2006 p.1). Bainimarama denied that
he had stepped into the shoes of President Ratu Iloilo, who had the constitutional power to sack the prime minister in “exceptional circumstances”. Bainimarama claimed that the Qarase government had “undermined the constitution by engaging in bribery and corruption” and proposing bills that would seriously disadvantage Fiji and its future generations. Brown and Nicholson further report that Bainimarama said the military forces had made entreaties to the Qarase government in a spirit of fairness and sincerity, but the government had responded by attacking the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and tried to remove Bainimarama from his post as commander of the Military Forces (Brown and Nicholson, 2006 p.11).

Bainimarama’s key demands prior to the coup included his request that the government should cease pursuing the passing of the Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill, which would extend immunity to those involved in George Speight’s 2000 coup, and the Qoliqoli Bill giving local tribes foreshore rights (Bhim, 2007 p.126). He also requested that politicians linked to the 2000 coup should likewise be removed from office, and that the Australian Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes should be removed (Ray, 2006 p.A2).

Briefly, the Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill would grant amnesty to those who had tried to take Bainimarama’s life, including certain politicians in government. The Qoliqoli Bill gave indigenous Fijians rights over the seashore and fishing areas attached to their vanua. This removed a source of revenue from non-indigenous Fijians, including some senior officers in the military. Commissioner Hughes was an astute policeman who was investigating crime in the military, including the murder of eight CRW officers in November 2000 (Field, 2007b p.178). Further instability occurred with a bloody mutiny at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks on 2 November 2000 during which eight men died. The troops killed had intended to either assassinate or arrest Bainimarama. (Field, 2007b p.178). Bainimarama’s involvement in the incident has not been proved in a court of law. A report in The Australian claimed that Corporal Kalounivalale’s body was transported to the Suva Memorial hospital and four other soldiers—Jone Davui, Epineri Bainimoli, Iowane Waseroma and Lagani Rokowaqa—were suspected of being murdered on the same night. Three others were unnamed (Kearney and McKenna, 2006 p.1). As Ewins reports:
This particular incident appears to have been a reaction to Commodore Bainimarama’s decision to disband the now-infamous Counter Revolutionary Warfare unit that Rabuka set up in 1987, and members of which, led by Ligairi, were prominent in the May 2000 Coup. The mutineers were apparently all from this unit, and sought to have the decision reversed (2000b p.1).

Under Bainimarama, the military had been a supporter of Qarase’s government following the 2000 coup. In fact, Bainimarama had appointed Qarase to head the government at this time. However Bainimarama, and with him the military loyal to him, switched their allegiance following the November mutiny in the Queen Elizabeth Barracks (Bhim, 2007 p.127). From supporting the ethno-nationalist cause, the military now advocated multiethnic statehood (Ratuva, 2007 p.31). The mutiny was perpetrated by nationalists who wanted to remove the Commander of the RFMF, take over the military, release George Speight and the coup perpetrators, and establish an exclusivist ethno-nationalist state called Matanitu Vunua, as outlined in a document called the Deed of Sovereignty (Ratuva, 2007 p.31). According to those who allege that Bainimarama ordered the murder of soldiers who believed that the 2000 coup was illegal, Bainimarama and soldiers loyal to him stood to gain further power by the act (Ratuva, 2007 p. 31).

The government and Bainimarama clashed over issues such as the government’s reluctance to reappoint him Commander in 2003, the reconciliation policy, the size of the military budget, and the performance of politicians and public servants (Ratuva, 1993 p.35). A number of coup perpetrators were released from prison on flimsy pretexts by the government, which angered the Commander. In 2005 Bainimarama warned the government that the RFMF “would put pressure on anyone” who dared to tamper with national security, saying that “if we don’t act, this country is going to go to the dogs and no investor will want to come here” (Ratuva, 2007 p.36). In January 2006 he claimed:

They have let people out of jail on one excuse or the other. How can they [the government] sleep at night—do they have a clear conscience?...This government is incompetent...It’s better that they resign so that the people can do the things that [are] supposed to bring us good (Ratuva, 2007 p.39).
The *Fiji Times* reported that on 15 March 2006, the police force and the military were involved in a row over the purchase of arms for the police Tactical Response Unit (Rarabici, 2006 p.1). Police Commissioner Hughes said that the 30 submachine guns, which had never been intended for the military, had been purchased to replace the police force’s old and unreliable firearms (Rarabici, 2006 p.1). The guns, pistols and other arms, he claimed, would be used to equip police on peace-keeping missions overseas because the United Nations no longer provided these to civilian police. Bainimarama accused the police force of diverting weapons meant for the military. He also said that machine guns used for combat purposes when issued to the wrong institution raise serious internal security implications (Rarabici, 2006 p.1). This issue was never resolved to Bainimarama’s satisfaction. As a result, the army seized the weapons without police permission and Commissioner Hughes left Fiji permanently after threats were made against him and his family.

**The Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill**

The Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill was Bainimarama’s greatest “thorn in the side”. The bill included a section on restorative justice, based on the South African Truth and Justice Commission (Bhim, 2007 p.127). Following the 2000 coup in Fiji, perpetrators could confront those whom they had wronged and ask for their forgiveness. Through the Ministry for National Reconciliation, the government organised events, religious gatherings, consultations and special programmes to bring people together (Qarase, 2005 p.6). Arrangements for amnesty, under certain conditions, were also part of the draft Bill. The definition of amnesty contained in the Bill allowed forgiveness to be granted by the President “for the purpose of excusing and erasing from legal memory the illegality of an act or omission in association with a political objective during the designated period” (Qarase, 2005 p.11). This first part of the Bill established an Independent Reconciliation and Unity Commission to deal with amnesties and restorative justice. The second part set up a Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Council (Qarase, 2005 p.13). Qarase further claimed that the Council was to promote protection of the law and the Office of President, as well as to give priority to cultural, customary and traditional means of achieving unity, in a spirit of tolerance (2005 p.19).
This brief outline of the Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill highlights issues which infuriated Bainimarama, sections of the military and Indo-Fijians who had been assaulted during the 2000 coup (Bhim, 2007 p.124). Once again, indigenous Fijians were offered preferential treatment and an undertaking that priority would be given to cultural, customary and traditional means (i.e. of indigenous Fijians) of achieving unity.

The “Truth and Justice” Campaign by the Military Prior to the May 2006 General Election.

In the Fiji Sun newspaper of March 11, 2006 Bainimarama announced the commencement of his Truth and Justice campaign:

My senior officers and I agreed in a meeting last week that the army should inform the people of Fiji of what happened in 2000. We will use the media; we will go into the villages and tell them the real truth of what happened and what is being done. There is no strong leadership in the Government to say “do the right things”. By not having programmes to educate people that what happened in 2000 was wrong, we will continue to live in an area of instability like that of 2000. This government has not done right by the military as has been done in the past. Qarase is not bold and strong enough to give back to the army what we had given the Government in the past. Instead of penalising those convicted of the May 2000 events the Government continued to absorb them back into the corridors of power (Wilson and Tamani, 2006 p.1).

One of the women I interviewed in Fiji, Reape (a pseudonym), described the visit by the military to her village in north-west Viti Levu, in April 2006. She said that the turaga ni koro (chief of the village) announced in a loud voice that people must come to the hall. About 60 people came. The military speakers provided yagona first and then held the meeting. They did not actively campaign against the government, nor did they mention the 2000 coup. The speakers stressed that each person in the village should decide for themselves whom to vote for and not let others decide for them. In other words, villagers should not follow directions from the Methodist Church, which was actively promoting the SDL party. Reape told me she had already decided to vote for the Fiji Labour Party. A landslide victory to the SDL party indicated that the military’s campaign had little effect on the voters at the 2006 election (Ratuva, 2007 p. 43).
The Methodist Church and Fijian Society

It was shown in chapter four how the Methodist Church, grass-roots Methodists and members of the Methodist hierarchy supported the 2000 coup led by George Speight (Robie, 2000 p.1). Several members of the Church hierarchy also assisted in the planning of the coup, though a number of prominent Methodists such as Reverends Josateki Koroi and Akuila Yabaki spoke out strongly against it. There was a change of presidency in the Methodist Church about this time, and the incoming President, Kanailagi, supported the 2000 coup. Once Speight had made his move, however, the Church judged it necessary publicly to oppose his methods, especially his armed kidnap of parliamentarians. So the Church supported the military opposition to Speight and its subsequent takeover of parliament. However, the Church–military alliance was brittle and short-lived. By the end of 2000, when the plot to assassinate Bainimarama at the Barracks was uncovered and eight CRW soldiers murdered, the military and the Methodist Church were on opposite sides of the Fijian power struggle. While the Methodist Church was still a supporter of the SDL party for the 2006 election, the military were working for the FLP, and against the SDL (Ratuva, 2007 p.41).

Following the 2000 coup, President Ratu Josefa Iloilovatu Uluivuda, a member of the GCC and paramount chief of the largest province in the country, pleaded for unity among the churches. He was a former vice-president of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, and thus had strong influence on moves for Church unity which led to the establishment of the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji (ACCF, 2003). In an interview in Suva with Reverend Waqairatu (Assistant General Secretary of the Methodist Church) on 12 April 2006, he explained how Church unity was to be forged through the ACCF. Iloilo declared that unity between the churches should come first, before the unity of the vanua and the government. However Iloilo’s vision was not to be realised. Whatever Iloilo’s motivations—and he possibly saw church unity as a means of achieving national unity after the coups, which had left churches and society more divided than ever—his advocacy of such unity could be seen as a counter-manoeuvre to the victory of Indo-Fijians in the 2001 election.
Initially, 52 Christian denominations were represented in the ACCF, including the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and the many variants of the Pentecostal Churches in Fiji (ACCF, 2003 p.58-59). Sixty Christian organisations were linked to the various denominations such as Prison Fellowship Fiji and Youth with a Mission (ACCF, 2003 p.60-61). By 2003 the ACCF was virtually an alliance of Methodists and Pentecostals, and the priorities of *vanua* and government for indigenous Fijians had come to the fore. The vision of the ACCF was for “Fiji to be God’s treasured possession” (a reference to Exodus 19: 5):

To keep the Assembly focussed on its most important responsibility of first turning the hearts of all people in Fiji to God. Fiji can only become God’s Treasured Possession if the people of this country submit themselves to God and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master and their Saviour (ACCF, 2003 p.2-3).

In this mission statement we see how Iloilo’s initial intentions had been transformed. The ACCF Review stated: “He [Iloilo] used his orderlies, the Ministers of the Assemblies of God Church and the Methodist Church Office” to facilitate the first meeting (ACCF, 2003 p.2). The Assemblies of God made a traditional approach to Reverend Tomasi Kanailagi for unity among the churches, and the formation of an organisation to achieve this (Newland, 2007 p.305). Unity did last at least until the aftermath of the 2006 coup. The Committee Report of 2003 recalled that on 30 May 2001, there had been an overwhelming response to the invitation from the president of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma (per Reverend Tomasi Kanailagi) extended to all heads of Christian Churches to meet at Epworth House to discuss the formation of the ACCF. It was also noted in the Report that, prior to 30 May, the Methodist Church and Assemblies of God leaders had invited various political leaders to unite and reconcile their differences before the August 2001 election (ACCF, 2003 p.8). The breakfasts with politicians, organised by the churches, became a project of the ACCF, and this grew more salient as other churches dropped out of the alliance (ACCF, 2003 p.13). This part of the ACCF report reveals the political nature of the group. The report details the restoration of an intimate relationship of church (Methodists and Assemblies of God) and politics, which has created so much division in Fiji society. Another example of this relationship, noted in the Report, was the launch on 30 September, of the Prayer Assembly of the South Pacific by Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase (ACCF, 2003 p.10).
In 2002 the ACCF organised fewer activities. However, Prime Minister Qarase, various politicians and chiefs were involved in meetings. A religious evangelism conference, the Billy Graham conference with the theme “Festival of Peace”, took place in June (ACCF, 2003 p.12). Another conference, “A Healing of the Nation through 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting”, took place from 16 September to 25 October (ACCF, 2003 p.13).

The ACCF stated at the end of the 2–year review that God had reversed a plan of the devil to destroy Fiji “through the crucibles of fire and death” during the May 2000 coup. The unity of Christian churches, it claimed, had provided a vehicle through which to build up the Body of Christ (ACCF, 2003 p.35).

In October 2006, the ACCF made a request to Qarase regarding amendments to the Fiji constitution, which it claimed condoned various immoral practices such as same sex marriage and the ordination of gay priests. An application to establish a gay resort in the Yasawa group had brought the issue to the fore. Also, a case of sodomy had recently been brought before the Lautoka High Court (the case was dismissed). So far, no change had been made to the laws of Fiji or its constitution regarding these matters (Fiji Times Online, 2006a p.1).

Opposition to the ACCF

Strong opposition to the ACCF came from a number of individuals representing various groups in Fiji. Father Kevin Barr works with the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA), a non-governmental organisation based in Suva, founded in 1990 by the late Reverend Paula Niukula with the aim of addressing the social, religious, economic and political problems of Fiji. I interviewed Father Barr on 27 February 2006 about his opinion of the ACCF and he reported that the ACCF, like the SDL party, which had been formed at the same time after the 2000 coup, represented nationalist, indigenous Fijian beliefs supported by the Methodist Church. Father Barr believes that the ACCF is actually a re-packaging of old Taukei Movement extreme nationalism.
Father Barr said that the ACCF used mainly Old Testament theology to support its cause. The ACCF answered its own question, “Why isn’t Fiji being blessed?”, he said, with the claim that it is because it has allowed the gods of other countries to invade Fiji, so that only when we get rid of these gods and people who worship them will Fijians be blessed. This, in his assessment, is a racist view that discriminates against the Indo-Fijians who are Muslims and Hindus and place great importance on their religious places of education and worship.

Manfred Ernst, sociologist, researcher, senior lecturer at Pacific Theological College and editor of a number of publications including *Globalization and the Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands* (2006) also strongly disapproves of the ACCF. I interviewed him at the College on 28 February 2006. Ernst argues that the ACCF is all to do with politics. Both Barr and Ernst argue that the ACCF works closely with the government of Fiji’s Ministry of Reconciliation. These links are based on the belief, shared by these institutions, that reconciliation among indigenous Fijians should be achieved first, and national reconciliation based on the principles of Christianity will follow. Barr argues that these principles are misguided if the aim is to work for reconciliation in a multicultural and multi-religious Fiji.

Ernst noted that the ACCF was granted office space by the government. It had access to important political figures including the prime minister and was able to advise the government on people for leadership positions. The prime minister at the formation of the ACCF, and involved in it from the beginning as noted above, was Qarase, a Methodist, so it suited his agenda that Fiji become a Christian state. Ernst believes, on the contrary, that church and state should remain separate in order to achieve good governance in both. If Fiji is to function successfully as a multicultural society with space for those of all ethnicities to flourish, then the notion of a Christian state is unhelpful, in the view of both Ernst and Barr.

Father Barr also deplored the promotion of what he called the “praise the Lord” style of worship (Pentecostal) as suitable for all Fijians. Reverend Peni Narawa, of the Assemblies of God church, Deuba, acknowledges that this Pentecostal style is a cause of disunity between Pentecostals and the Methodist Church, despite both becoming major stakeholders in the ACCF (ACCF, 2003 p.63). This disunity must be addressed,
he believes, particularly in the villages where disruption has occurred. Disruption of the *vanua, lotu* and *matanitu* is indeed a possibility because of the insertion of Pentecostal religions into the villages (Newland, 2004, 2006).

Another issue noted by both Barr and Ernst is the lessening influence of ecumenism in the Christian churches in Fiji. Since the formation of the ACCF, the influence of the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) has waned. This is partly due to the financial support given to the ACCF by the government, support which it did not give to the FCC.

**The Relationship of the Methodist Church with the Military**

We are now in a position to understand what was involved when, on 2 October 2005, the *Fiji Times*’ editorial was headed “Army declares war on Church”:

> Military commander Voreqe Bainimarama has warned the Methodist Church it will ban all its reverends from going to the Middle East if the Church supports the Unity Bill. And, he said, they would ask individual reverends to state their view on the Bill. Those who back the Bill will not be allowed to travel abroad with the Fiji troops (*Fiji Times Online*, 2005a p.1).

This statement reveals how strongly Bainimarama disagreed with the Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill and its supporters. He threatened to recruit ministers from the Pentecostal churches in what had traditionally been a Methodist position. However, the Reverend Apete Tanoa, general secretary of the Assemblies of God church, indicated that his church would not accept such a position if the Methodists had been excluded from it. Methodist president, Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca, and assistant general secretary Reverend Tuikilakila Waqairatu declined to comment. The *Fiji Times* claims that in reply to this article, FCC president, Anglican Bishop Apimeleki Qiliho, suggested that the Commander and Methodist officials should discuss the issue privately rather than in public (*Fiji Times Online*, 2005b p.1). Methodist Church general secretary, Reverend Ame Tugaue, said the Church never dreamed there would be a day when the Military Commander would make such a statement against the Church. Military spokesman Captain Neumi Leweni said that the selection of anyone participating in peace-keeping missions was the sole responsibility of the military (*Fiji Times Online*, 2005b p.1).
In these newspaper articles we see the Methodist Church and the military led by Bainimarama in public disagreement regarding the Reconciliation bill and the authority of the Church regarding appointment of overseas army chaplains. As Reverend Tugaue records later in the article, such a ban was the first to arise in many years of association between the military and the Church. The other matter of interest in this article is the suggestion by the FCC president that his “own personal opinion is that the Methodist Church should take the issue like a good open Christian and discuss with the military commander” (Fiji Times Online, 2005b p.1). Lack of support for the Methodist Church by the FCC here reveals the resentment felt by the latter about the formation by the Methodist Church of the rival organisation ACCC, which has diminished the authority of other religious groups such as the FCC (Fiji Times Online, 2005b p.1).

On 6 April 2006 the Fiji Sun recorded another public disagreement between the Methodist Church and the military (Rina, 2006 p.1). The Church threatened to defrock certain Methodist chaplains (talatalas) who had agreed to participate in the military’s Truth and Justice campaign prior to the May 2006 general election. Reverend Tugaue said that the army should not use chaplains in its campaign because it was political. Bainimarama replied that the Church endorsed the SDL party so they were already openly involved in politics. Ratu Meli Saukura, an ordained Methodist minister, was standing for the SDL Party with the Church’s blessing (Rina, 2006 p.1).

The day before the coup, Fijian soldiers removed guns and ammunition from the police Tactical Response Unit headquarters (Fiji Times Online, 2006b p.1). Military roadblocks were erected around Suva that night, Monday, 4 December, and Qarase was prevented from holding a previously arranged meeting at Government House with Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi (Fiji Times Online, 2006b p.1).

Following the coup on 5 December, a recurrent post-coup cycle of beatings and intimidation of outspoken critics of the coup took place at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Nabua (Fraenkel, 2007 p. 246). Fraenkel writes that these included lawyers, women’s rights activists and SDL party officials. Ordinary civilians were also picked up from their homes for various allegedly criminal activities. An article in
The *Fiji Times* claimed that on 24 December 2006, soldiers rounded up six pro-democracy activists, including members of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, a business man, and youth activists, and took them to the barracks (*Fiji Times Online*, 2006h p.1). The article reports that the detainees were terrorised and later released and made to walk home in the pouring rain.

The Methodist Church remained silent for two months following the 2006 coup. The Church hierarchy was in shock and fearful of what the army might do. The first direct threat to the Church came with the arrest of a staff member from inside the offices of the Centenary Methodist Church in Stewart St, Suva (*Fiji Times Online*, 2007b p.1). A *Fiji Times* photographer, Sitiveni Moce, who happened to be at the offices and was photographing the arrest was also arrested and had the film in his camera confiscated (*Fiji Times Online*, 2007b p.1). He was detained at the barracks for about an hour and later released. A military spokesman, Major Neumi Leweni, said that Sitiveni was arrested because he took pictures of the soldiers without seeking permission (*Fiji Times Online*, 2007b p.1).

Following these arrests, the Methodist Church released its first statement since the 5 December takeover, entitled “Here We Stand”. The Church called the takeover a “treasonous act against the State” and went on to say that the coup had led to more poverty, judging from the increasing number of members seeking assistance from the Church. The Church’s statement said:

> Even if the interim regime’s clean-up campaign were to succeed and its economic and social policies were to result in the total alleviation of corruption, discrimination and poverty (which we doubt), one would still not be able to change the illegality of the actions of the military in removing a democratically-elected Government (*Fiji Times Online*, 2007c p.1).

The article went on to record that the general secretary Reverend Tugaue confirmed that Commander Bainimarama had visited the Church offices the previous day for discussions. He also confirmed that a staff member from the Church’s office had been taken away by the army for questioning (*Fiji Times Online*, 2007c p.1).

In February 2007 the Methodist Church protested against the military’s arrest of senior police officers involved in investigating Bainimarama for sedition before he
seized power in December. Australian officials see the detention of at least five senior police officers as confirmation of their belief that Commodore Bainimarama seized power to head off police investigations into his behaviour (Hyland, 2007 p. 4).

Fraenkel claims that the Methodist Church became involved in strong protest against Bainimarama in February 2007 (Fraenkel, 2007 p. 437). The Church had found its voice, however Fraenkel further claims that it was of little avail, after the major blows to its influence had already been dealt. Bainimarama had abolished the Great Council of Chiefs at the time of the coup and then re-appointed Iloilo as president of Fiji on 5 January. Iloilo made the following speech which shocked the Church:

Good citizens of our beloved Fiji Islands. I know that the events of the past few weeks have been trying on all of us. In particular in early December we were at crossroads at which hard and decisive decisions needed to be made. I was, as has been noted by the Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, unable to perform my duties as I was prevented from doing so… In any case given the circumstances I would have done exactly what the Commander of the RFMF, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama did since it was necessary to do so at that time. These actions were also valid in law. Therefore, I fully endorse the actions of the Commander of the RFMF and the RFMF in acting in the interest of the nation and most importantly in upholding the Constitution (Fraenkel, 2007 p. 438).

The Church called on Iloilo to resign as it deemed him incapable of carrying out his duties to the best of his physical ability in “this uncertain time” (Fiji Times Online, 2007d p.1). On 9 February (Fiji Times Online, 2007e p.1) the military issued a statement saying that it had a very cordial relationship with the Methodist Church, but that those who had drafted the statement of protest were politically motivated. However, the article claims that Maika Maroca, branch secretary of the Fiji Labour Party Suva Open Branch Wing, called on Naivalu (the health minister) and the deputy secretary of the Church, Reverend Waqairatu, to resign from the Methodist Church. He said that the Church had become a laughing stock of the country for suggesting that politically neutral people should replace the interim administration and that this showed the poor mentality of the men of the cloth employed by the Church (Fiji Times Online, 2007e p.1). For the hierarchy of the Methodist Church, this would have been a painful criticism. The Church had always commanded respect in the society, even among those of other religions. It was used to commanding authority among its own people. With the abolition of the GCC, who were all Methodists, and the
establishment of Bainimarama as interim prime minister, the Church suffered humiliation, loss of power and embarrassment.

**Immediate Results of the Coup**

Prime Minister Qarase was a prisoner in his own home in Suva on 5 December 2006, according to Kearney and Walters (2006: 1). Their report describes a truck carrying soldiers that turned up at Qarase’s gate but was turned back by police. The military removed weapons from the police, putting the former effectively in charge (Kearney and Walters, 2006 p.1). Bainimarama dismissed all the elected ministers and replaced them with 16 members of his own choice. Mahendra Chaudhry, the former prime minister, became interim minister for finance, as well as interim minister for national planning, public enterprise and the sugar industry (Fraenkel, 2007 p. 439). Fraenkel further reported that:

> Chaudhry was to re-design the 2007 budget, and somehow fill the F$70m gap left by the dropping of the previous government’s proposed VAT increase, avoid the impending economic collapse anticipated to result in a F$190m revenue shortfall (including an undisclosed sum to cover the military’s giant blow out of its budget during December) and, he hoped, persuade the European Union to continue to provide F$350m to assist sugar re-structuring after the inevitable end of sugar price subsidies (2007 p. 440).

On 6 December, the European Union expressed its strongest possible opposition to actions that undermine the democratic process in Fiji and condemned the seizure of executive power from the democratically elected government by the military (*Fiji Times Online*, 2006c p.1). The EU threatened to suspend money set aside from its Sugar Adaptation Strategy Program designed to support Fiji’s sugar industry over eight years (*Fiji Times Online*, 2006c p.1). Immediate economic uncertainty followed the 2006 coup.

Another blow was the withdrawal of Fiji’s membership of the Commonwealth. Secretary Don McKinnon, said that Fiji’s membership would be restored once democratic rule was returned to the country. “McKinnon said whatever programmes or projects under the Commonwealth family in form of a comprehensive aid package that Fiji has been enjoying will be stopped” (*Fiji Times Online*, 2006a p.1). The British military announced that it would suspend recruitment of Fijians into their army
as a sign of its disapproval of the coup. Two thousand Fijians are serving with the British army in Iraq and it provides popular employment due to the high salaries paid (Wilson, P. 2006 p.4). Serving soldiers in the British Army were not sent home, but lack of future employment would mean a reduction in remittances sent back to Fiji. Military ties between Fiji and France were also severed at this time. Reuters reported that:

No visas will be issued to members of the military or civilian officials involved in the coup d’etat, according to the French Foreign Ministry Spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei. Visits by Fijian military officials on French soil were suspended, as were encounters and exercises with its military (Fiji Times Online, 2006d p.1)

The article claims that the US also dealt a military and economic blow to Fiji. Military aid worth $3.19 million was suspended, as were military aid programmes such as the Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training. Visas to the US for coup participants and the sale of military equipment to Fiji were also suspended (Fiji Times Online, 2006g p.1). The suspension of financial aid and visas created loss of face among its international supporters.

The coup also adversely affected a number of important organisations that had intimate dealings with the Methodist Church and through which the Church had previously been able to exercise great influence in Fiji. The first of these was the Native Land Trust Board. On 14 December, armed soldiers raided the Suva offices of the NLTB, looking for documents related to the Pacific Connex joint venture which the NLTB has with millionaire Ballu Khan’s company. Pacific connex was one of the two companies bidding for a licence to conduct mobile phone services in the country (Fiji Times Online, 2006e p.1).

The Fiji Times Online (2007a) claimed that by 1 January 2007, Bainimarama had decreed a ban on native land sales, especially to people overseas, unless the sale was approved by the NLTB. The practice of “land-swapping” where native land is swapped for Crown land then sold for the development of resorts, was also be controlled by the landowners, the NLTB and the government. An example of “land swapping” occurred in the procuring of land to build the Momi and Denarau Island resorts (Fiji Times Online, 2007a p.1). These new arrangements whereby the military
took over control of the NLTB, side-lined the chiefs, who were members of the Methodist Church. The Church was in this way excluded from involvement in or influence over lucrative resort development. The nexus between the Church and the chiefs who were members of the NLTB was broken, as was the Church’s privileged access to land deals. As a significant land-holder in Fiji, the Church was seriously disadvantaged.

Criticism of the use to which indigenous Fijians put money received from lease land was discussed in November 2007 (Fiji Times Online, 2007m p.1). Fijian Affairs Minister Ratu Epeli Ganilau (appointed by Bainimarama) argued that money earned should be used to pay for building schools or houses. However, he continued, many mataqali would rather spend money gathering material wealth or funding church activities than setting up scholarships that would be an invaluable investment in young people. He further argued that annual land rentals were likely to be used for building a village church or meeting hall. The new military-controlled NLTB even suggested that it play a role in advising indigenous Fijian landlords on how to invest their money (Fiji Times Online, 2007m p.1).

The Methodist Church’s relationship with the GCC has been an intimate one since the latter’s formation by the British in 1876. Most chiefs are Methodists. The strength of the vanua, lotu, matanitu complex has contributed to this relationship between the Church and the chiefs (Tuwere, 2002 p.52). Vunileba, in the Fiji Times, claims that following the 2006 coup, on 17 December, the GCC called a meeting to be held on at the FMF (Flour Mills of Fiji) Dome in Suva (Vunileba, 2006 p.1). Bainimarama was to be invited, all the provincial chiefs, Qarase and the deposed opposition leader Mick Beddoes. The deposed president, Ratu Joni Iloilo, and deposed vice-president, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, were also to be invited. This meeting was supposed to address the crisis in Fiji following the coup. In fact, Qarase was prevented by the military from attending. A military spokesman said that there was no rush to form a caretaker government. The SDL’s national director Peceli Kinivuwai called on the military to stop further destabilising the country by spreading rumours of a plan to assassinate Bainimarama (Vunileba, 2006 p.1).
On 13 April 2007, members of the Fiji military were sent to close the GCC (Pareti, 2007), which rendered the GCC impotent. The chiefs were unable to exercise their traditional constitutional role of electing the president of Fiji, the vice-president, the prime minister and the members of the Senate. Subsequently, on 19 February 2008, Bainimarama took over the chairmanship of the GCC (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008b p.1). This highly institution, to which indigenous Fijians had turned in times of trouble, was no longer functional. Ro Teimumu, Rewa High Chief and head of the Burebasaga confederacy, expressed her disgust in the following terms at Bainimarama’s actions:

> At the beginning of the December 2006 coup he assured the nation that no military officer would benefit from the coup. Then he took up position of President, then he became Prime Minister, then co-chair of the National Council to Build a Better Fiji and now he is the chairman of the GCC…How can the Fijian military colonels sit back and watch the destruction of the institutions that protect the rights and interests of the Fijian people?...Commodore Bainimarama’s actions showed he was acting in his own interest (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008b p.1).

The *Fiji Times* claimed that an opposite view about the dismantling of traditional Fijian organisations was expressed by a Methodist minister, director of the Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF). Reverend Akuila Yabaki attended the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination in early March 2008. He expressed the view that:

> While there is an affirmation in the Convention for the protection of the rights of indigenous people, it would seem that the existence of traditional institutions such as GCC, NLTB and the provision of superior parliamentary representation for indigenous Fijians may have passed their sell by date (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008e p.1).

Yabati claimed that there were deliberate moves by Qarase’s government to condone racial discrimination. He also said that the legacy of British colonial paternalism towards indigenous Fijians had to be reviewed seriously in the light of international law. The CCF involvement in the People’s Charter process must be maintained to find a way forward (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008e p.1).

The People’s Charter was a document first published in April 2007 by Bainimarama. Through the formation of a National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF), he claimed, Fiji would be rebuilt into a non-racial, culturally vibrant, well-governed,
truly democratic nation that seeks progress, prosperity through merit-based equality of opportunity, and peace would result (Bainimarama, 2007p.1).

Bainimarama called for submissions from the public concerning the People’s Charter. Of 51 proposals submitted, 48 supported the Charter, three did not. The Methodist Church, the Naitasiri Provincial Council and the SDL party rejected the proposal (Bainimarama, 2007 p.3). As indigenous Fijian paramountcy was to be demolished in favour of granting opportunities to people of all ethnicities, this was not surprising. The People’s Charter was another step towards effectively diminishing the power and influence of the Methodist Church in Fiji.

The Fiji Times claimed that by February 2008, discussions were held among the chiefs regarding the composition of the reorganised GCC with Bainimarama as its head (Fiji Times Online, 2008f p.1). It had been decided by Ratu Josateki Nawalowalo, representing the interim government, that only chiefs who had been properly installed in their vanua would be eligible to sit on the new GCC (Fiji Times Online, 2008f p.1). However, the Tui Bua said that she had never witnessed an installation for her title in her village of Lomanikoro in Bua ever since she was a little girl. The chiefly title is simply passed down from one generation to another (Fiji Times Online, 2008f p.1). Ro Teimumu Kepa, paramount chief of the Burebasaga Confederacy and Rewa Province, said that although she had been formally installed by her vanua, she would not join the new-look GCC. The review of the GCC was before the courts in Fiji in early 2008 (Fiji Times Online, 2008f p.1)

The Fiji Times reported that Reverend Waqairatu, assistant general secretary of the Methodist Church, was ambivalent about the new system for choosing chiefs for GCC (2008b p.1). First, he disagreed with the plan to have only chiefs properly installed by their vanua elected to the GCC; then he said that maybe it was a good idea (Fiji Times Online, 2008e p.1).

The proposal that chiefs elect members from their own number to the prestigious body GCC is in itself revolutionary. It is significant that the GCC, because of its formidable historical, constitutional and cultural status was the last indigenous Fijian organisation
over which Bainimarama took control. The mysticism, the sacredness and the power of the chiefs is here being attacked and desecrated by the new arrangements:

The influence of the chiefs was due in no small measure to the *mana* or mystical power attributed to them. The chief’s person was sacred; his *mana* extended to his personal belongings, such as his comb or his club, and it was *tabu* for anyone not of the household to touch him or to handle any of his things (Derrick, 1946 p.16).

Indigenous Fijians have depended on their chiefs in times of distress, such as the coup, for leadership and protection. The chiefs no longer have the power to do this. In terms of both its loss of power and of new rules to determine its membership, the chiefly system is under attack and with it, the *vanua, lotu, matanitu* nexus.

The *Fiji Times* claims that by 2008 the Methodist Church had made an important decision regarding its place in a society now dominated by Bainimarama (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008f p.1). At its Annual Conference, the Church decided that it would support neither the National Council for Building a Better Fiji, nor the People’s Charter. According to the *Fiji Times* article, Reverend Waqairatu said the Church had decided not to be part of the NCBBF because the military-led regime was an illegal government. He claimed that, after 13 months of leading the country, the regime had brought much suffering to the people of Fiji, that a lot of people were unemployed and that there was a lot of psychological and financial stress in local communities. Fijian institutions had been deprived of power. The Church, he concluded, cannot compromise its morals and values by supporting the changes (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008a p.1).

The Methodist Church held a “‘Think Tank” in March 2008 at Epworth Hall in Suva (*Fiji Times Online*, 2008d p.1). The meeting was held to discuss Fiji’s present status and its impact on the work of the Church and the livelihood of the people. The *Fiji Times* reports there were 20 members in the Think Tank, comprised of professional lay Church members and some former deposed politicians who are Methodists. Issues such as the poor state of government services, high inflation, high unemployment, fiscal policies that exacerbated poverty, the absence of good governance and lack of transparency on the part of some leaders in the interim government, were discussed. These were also issues which Reverend Waqairatu pointed out as serious when I
interviewed him on 11 April 2006. According to the Fiji Times the Church saw itself as advancing more questions rather answers, because the organisations in which the Church normally had influence such as the NLTB, the GCC and the Government, had become inaccessible to it. It was resolved, however, that other “Think Tanks” would be held in the future to discuss Church problems and those of Fiji (Fiji Times Online, 2008d p.1).

Conclusion

The 2006 coup dealt a catastrophic blow to the Methodist Church in Fiji. For two months the Church was silent, as though in shock. It then re-found its voice and criticised Bainimarama for instigating the coup, and the section of the military that supported it. But its means for exercising influence and power were greatly damaged. Fear was instilled into the Church with the arrest of a staff member from inside the offices of the Centenary Methodist Church (Fiji Times Online, 2007b p.1). Fear stifled protest: most people who were taken to the Queen Elizabeth Barracks were treated so badly that they did not report what had happened to them. Interventions by the military into key Fijian institutions denied the Church its traditional access to organisations of power. First, the democratic government was overturned. Qarase, supporter of Methodists and indigenous Fijian paramountcy, was imprisoned in his home in Suva, then sent back to his ancestral home, away from the capital. Ratu Iloilo was co-opted by Bainimarama to carry out his orders instead of his usual chiefly duties as president of Fiji. As a Methodist, Ratu Iloilo had dealt a severe blow to the Church’s power and prestige. Institutional restraints on Bainimarama and the military were removed. The NLTB and the GCC both had their personnel culled, with appointees sympathetic to Bainimarama installed as replacements. The police force had its weapons removed along with its power. The military took over both. The chief of police was dismissed and returned to Australia. At the same time, members of parliament with whom the Methodist Church normally had contact and from whom it had received preferential treatment were no longer available. In all these ways, the hegemonic edifice of which the Methodist Church was an integral part was effectively dismantled. The fragility of the Church’s position of dominance, already revealed in the coups of 1987 and 2000, was now more starkly evident than ever. The future for the Church is as uncertain as the future of Fiji itself.
CONCLUSION

There is a narrative theme of rise and fall in the preceding chapters. They have shown, first, the Methodist Church’s rise as a key factor in the development of Fiji’s national society, leading to its consolidation as a key institution in that society and wielding influence in all spheres of national life; second, chapters five and six told the story and traced the factors involved in the unravelling of Methodist influence. This unravelling of the Church’s power and authority commenced with its support of the taukei in the 1987 coups and continued during the 2000 coup. The schism in the Methodist Church in February 1989 continued the Church’s loss of power. In this chapter, the major turning points in this narrative are reviewed. In the final section, the prospects of the Methodist Church in ever-changing Fiji are discussed.

The Rise of Methodism and Development of Fijian National Society

From their arrival in 1830, Methodist missionaries encountered a Fijian society fragmented into matanitu and their constituent vanua under the rule of often warring chiefs. Gradually, as chiefs, especially paramount chiefs, were converted, and mission churches and schools prospered, the lotu (Methodism/Christianity) proved to be an essential factor in the story of integration of fragmented local units into a recognisable national Fijian society.

Chapter two told the story of the insertion of the lotu into the vanua–matanitu complex which existed before the arrival of the Methodist missionaries. The insertion of the lotu established the “civilisation” of the indigenous Fijians and gradually normalised the behaviours that the British expected and enforced at Cession in 1874 and thereafter. At the same time, the civilising process promoted gradual acceptance of a central political authority while preserving the authority of the chiefs. The development of the new vanua–lotu–matanitu complex, of which the Methodist Church was an integral element, was completed and the foundations of Fijian national society were laid.
This complex became a political as well as a religious base for Fijian society. However, the new identity based on the *vanua–lotu–matanitu* complex was not extended to all elements of the population of colonial and post-colonial Fiji. In particular, Indians, introduced as indentured labour between 1879 and 1916, were excluded by virtue of the policies of both the colonial government and the Methodist Church. Indo-Fijians were regarded as strangers (*vulagi*), or slaves or coolies (*kaisi*) (Srebrnik, 2002 p. 189). Because Indo-Fijians were not Christians they were excluded from incorporation into the Fijian *matanitu* through the connection provided by the Methodist Church.

By 1878, most of the high chiefs had accepted the *lotu*, so that Methodism and early governance of Fiji became mutually reinforcing. The high chiefs enjoyed status among the people of the *vanua* and the *mataqali* (land-owning units) to which they belonged. The British governor co-opted the chiefs as a source of authority, which assisted in the governance of indigenous Fijians. The high chiefs enjoyed status among the missionaries as they assisted in the spread of the *lotu*. Then, recognition by the colonial government of the special place of the high chiefs, a development made possible by Methodist missionary activity, in turn enabled Methodism to gain dominance in early colonial institutions in Fiji.

One of the most important tasks which Sir Arthur Gordon, governor of Fiji, set the Council of Chiefs was the formalising of land ownership, according to the British view. After much discussion and confusion among the indigenous Fijians, the term *mataqali* was decided on to denote ownership (France, 1969 p. 113).

By the middle of the twentieth century important changes in the *vanua–lotu–matanitu* complex were made with regard to land. But the Methodist Church remained central in the altered complex. Having established control over Fijian land policy after Cession, the government placed all leasing of Fijian lands in the hands of a statutory body, the Native Land Trust Board in 1940 (Lal, 1992 p. 102). Indigenous Fijians lost direct control over the land in their *vanua*, as decisions about the leasing of land were made only by the majority of members of their *vanua*, followed by application to the NLTB for permission and approval from the chief of the *vanua*. The Methodist Church was intimately involved in all of these transactions, not least because members
of the Board of Trustees of the NLTB were mostly indigenous Fijian Methodists. In 2006, as the president of Fiji, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, a prominent Methodist, was president of the Board, the minister for Fijian Affairs was chairman of the Board, and other members were mainly prominent chiefs (NLTB, 2003).

The NLTB remained one of the Methodist Church’s sources of power and financial gain as its leaders were able to influence land transactions. However, the NLTB was designed to look after indigenous Fijian interests exclusively, thus it became a factor in racial division. The separation of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, which began early in the colony’s history and was continued in the setting up of the NLTB, remains a source of friction in Fijian development. The paradox of the Methodist Church was that it was integrally involved both in the formation of Fijian national society, and in the social fragmentation around an indigenous Fijian–Indo-Fijian divide.

From the Peak of Methodist Influence to its Unravelling

On 10 October 1970, Fiji became the Independent Dominion of Fiji. Independence was negotiated in Great Britain by a small group of Fijian chiefs, including the first prime minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (Lal, B. 1992 p. 215). As Lal argues, “[c]autious, continuity, and continued links with the colonial past rather than fundamental change in new directions would be the hallmark of the postcolonial years” (1992 p. 215). All was not well in Fiji. The structure and sharing of power, the problem of Indo-Fijian access to land, the electoral system, which guaranteed paramountcy for indigenous Fijians, and development goals remained unresolved problems (Lal, 1992 p. 216).

A split between indigenous Fijian Methodists around the time of Independence did not auger well for future Church unity or for its continuing influence in Fijian society. The small number of Indo-Fijian ministers, as was to be expected, were universalists (Garrett, 1995 p. 198). Universalists believed that all races in Fiji should have equal opportunities for employment, before the law, and within the political system. Hopes for unity within the Church were dashed with the rise of the Taukei Movement, which was supported by indigenous Fijian Methodist ministers and lay preachers such as Sakeasi Butadroka (Mara, 1997 p.125). Following the May 1987 coup, reviewed in
Chapter five, a schism occurred involving the hierarchy of the Church. In February 1989, Methodists sympathetic to the Taukei Movement took over the offices of the Church in Suva, locking out the president, the Reverend Josateki Koroi, and the acting general secretary Paula Nikula, who were not members of the Taukei Movement (White, 1989 p. 406). Ratu Isireli Cacau, circuit manager of Bau, was installed as president. Manasa Lasaro, a Methodist with strong taukei beliefs, who had assisted Rabuka in the 1987 coup, took over the position of general secretary. There were two diametrically opposed groups of Methodists, one of which was prepared to perpetrate violence against the other. The schism in the Church had the immediate and continuing effect of reducing the moral leadership of the Church.

From the 1987 coup onwards, the Church lost much of the power that it had had to influence Fijian institutions and the Fijian people, despite its historical contribution to nation-making. In addition to the internal factors already noted, external factors were also involved. The Church lost face among its member churches overseas including in the Pacific and some European countries, including Germany, which subsidised some of the Fijian Church organisations such as the ecumenical Pacific Theological College. In Fiji itself, Indo-Fijian Methodists were threatened with violence and indeed some were treated badly by their co-religionists. Following the coup, many migrated to Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada. Those who remained felt diminished and neglected by the church to which they belonged (Garrett, 1995 p. 201).

The 2000 coup was provoked by the lack of resolution of the issues that had precipitated the 1987 coups. Separate development of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians created disunity and the land issue remained unresolved. In the 1999 general election, Mahendra Chaudhry, an Indo-Fijian, led the winning People’s Coalition and became prime minister. The coalition of Rabuka’s Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei and Jai Ram Reddy’s National Federation Party was defeated (Lal, B. 2003 p. 676). The Methodist Church openly supported Rabuka’s SVT party, so its leaders and followers who were part of the Taukei Movement were dismayed by its defeat and the elevation of the first Indo-Fijian to the office of prime minister (Field et al., 2005 p. 77).
The Methodist Church supported the military group that believed that the use of force against the government was legitimate. Other members of the military disagreed. The Church once again assisted others in the planning of the 2000 coup, either morally or actively. Leading Methodists advocated the “disagree-with-the-method, agree-with-the-cause theology” (Field et al., 2005 p. 150). Once again Methodists were involved in violence against a properly elected government (Field et al., 2005 p. 82).

The Unravelling of Methodist Church Influence.

The 1987 coup brought the divisions in the Methodist Church into the public domain. The Taukei Movement fed this division. The schism within the Church was discussed in chapter four. Internal critics of the victorious majority foresaw harm to the Church and society. The Reverend Akuila Yabaki criticised some ministers of the Church and claimed that they were “ministers of nationalism rather than ministers of the Christian faith”, while Reverend Daniel Mastapha, leader of the Indian Division and former president of the Methodist Church, also spoke out against the equivocation of the Church (Barr, 2004a p.11). However the divisions in the Methodist Church meant that there was disunity in the way that the Church influenced the state after the 1987 coup and that the influence of the Church was diminished.

Involvement in the 2000 coup set in train a series of fractures which beset the ruling elites in which the Church had long had a secure place. It also advanced the influence of the Church’s central organisation over its grass-roots. According to Lal, “[t]he 1987 coup, it can be argued, was carried out on behalf of, and blessed by, the Fijian establishment. In 2000, George Speight and his men carried out a coup against the Fijian establishment” (2000 p. 281). The establishment meant upper and middle class indigenous Fijians, the majority of whom were Methodists.

The paradox of the Methodist Church’s position was revealed in several ways in 2000. Publicly, the Church condemned the coup, while supporting calls for the formation of a Christian state that would link the Church to government (Robie, 2000 p.1). This would actively discriminate against non-Christian believers in Fiji, most of whom were Indo-Fijians. On the other hand, Methodist Church leaders visited George
Speight in Parliament House, in an attempt to persuade him to release the hostages (Robie, 2000 p. 1). Reverend Tuwere, secretary general of the Methodist Church, said that he gave his support to Commodore Bainimarama who initially took over control of the parliament, to “clear the air with the ordinary people” (Robie, 2000 p.1).

Whatever the merits of that initial support for the Commodore, the outcome of the Church’s ambivalent stance has proven disastrous for the Church’s influence in Fijian society. It consolidated Methodism’s identification with the Taukei Movement, thus destroying any bridges to Indo-Fijians and enthusiasts for the rule of law in a secular state, and ultimately alienated those elements in the army elite led by Commodore Bainimarama, who were opposed to the influence of the chiefs and the taukei cause.

Following the 2006 coup, which installed Commodore Bainimarama as the prime minister in an interim government, the Methodist Church remained silent for two months. It found its voice following a direct threat to one of its staff members. A Church staff member was arrested inside the offices of the Centenary Methodist Church in Suva. The Church was shocked when Ratu Iloilo said on 5 January 2007 that he fully supported Bainimarama’s actions as he had acted in the interests of the nation (Fraenkel, 2007 p.438). Ratu Iloilo was the president of Fiji, head of the GCC and a Methodist, so his speech was humiliating for the Church and seen as a betrayal of Methodism.

Too late, following this sign of dissension within the Methodist leadership, the Church issued a statement on 3 February 2007 protesting against the illegality of the military removal of a democratically-elected government and doubting that the military could “clean up” corruption in Fiji or improve its economy (Fiji Times Online, 2007a p.1). Several Church officers were taken into custody following this statement. It was now obvious that the Church’s influence in and through the elite institutions of Fiji (the army and Great Council of Chiefs) was greatly diminished. Further, its ability to make pronouncements through the media was reduced. These dislocations of Methodist influence at the highest institutional levels were accompanied by deep and extensive demographic, economic and cultural changes which undermined its position and influence at the grass-roots. These changes and their implications for the Church are briefly discussed below, under the appropriate headings.
Demographic Changes

A census was carried out in September 2007. The total population of Fiji is 827,900; of these, the Indo-Fijian population is 38 per cent, the indigenous Fijians 57 per cent, and 5 per cent are of mixed race, whites and Chinese (Field, 2007). The indigenous Fijian population in the urban areas increased by 49,427 and the Indo-Fijian population in rural areas decreased by 36,708 since the 1996 census. Half the population of Fiji now lives in urban areas (Vunileba, 2007). The vanua–lotu–matanitu nexus is now under stress as indigenous Fijian Methodists move to the towns and cities. Many of the young people in urban areas, uprooted from the way of life and the control of rural communities, have lost their attachment to the Church. Reverend Waqairatu sees the anomie of young people as one of the Church’s biggest problems (interview 11/4/06).

Economic Downturn

The Fiji Retailers Association claimed that the 2006 coup led to economic collapse in Fiji (Fiji Times Online, 2007f) and although this is an exaggeration there has certainly been significant economic decline. In this Fiji Times Online article, Fiji Islands Hotels Association president, Dixon Seeto, said Fiji tourism was far from normal as the industry was struggling to move forward. Casual workers from hotels are still without jobs and some of the permanent staff are still working short hours (Fiji Times Online, 2007f). The sugar industry feared that it would lose $350 million from the EU Sugar Adaptation Strategy Programme, when this programme was suspended following the overthrow of democracy in 2006 (Sera, 2006). There has, in any case, been a downturn in profits from the sugar industry and many workers have left the country or remain unemployed in the towns. The Vatukoula Gold Mine in northern Viti Levu laid off all its workers in 2006. These are only instances of a deep economic downturn that has meant that many Methodists are unable to pay their annual soli of $10 per person to the Church. A more indirect effect of short and long-term economic downturn has been an acceleration of the demographic changes already noted. The Church appears to have nothing to offer to and little attraction for the new urban underclass that is the product of these economic and demographic changes.
Rise of Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches

In 1976, Methodists represented 73 per cent of the total Christian community. By 1996 this had dropped to 66.5 per cent (Newland, 2006 p. 337). Lynda Newland argues that:

In the 10 years leading up to 1996, Fijians joined denominations such as the Apostolic Church, Baptists, Christian Mission Fellowship, Gospel Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Latter-day Saints and the Salvation Army for the first time...These denominations have drawn their congregations mainly from the Methodist Church and are therefore perceived as a threat to the Methodists (2006 p. 338).

Father Kevin Barr, a Catholic priest, argues that the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches appeal to the homeless and impoverished who look for “signs and wonders and visions and prophetic messages” (Barr, 2004b p. 1), as well for the material blessings that are expected to follow conversion. These churches leave behind the formality of Methodist worship for more exuberant worship and are relatively free of the pressure of constant money-raising. They are happy to include Fijians of whatever gender, and all classes and races. The vanua–lotu–matanitu nexus is not of great importance to them and they appear to provide an alternative identity and sense of belonging.

Divergent Class Interests in the Methodist Church

As a result of the coups of 1987 and 2000, upper class indigenous Fijian Methodists benefited financially through their relationships with the NLTB, government ministers, the GCC and senior civil servants who had already established a hierarchy of financially advantaged members. Lower class Methodists struggled financially and increased in number as more swelled the numbers of the urban poor (Halapua, 2003 pp. 126-7). Decisions made by the NLTB further disadvantaged poorer Methodists in favour of the interests of the Church itself and its wealthier members, as discussed in chapter five. Class conflicts, especially over land, have pitched Methodist against Methodist and the Church hierarchy against the poor rank-and-file laity. This in itself has helped unravel the vanua–lotu–matanitu complex.
However, as has been discussed, other factors have been involved in this unravelling. The Church hierarchy’s adoption of taukeism is the most important because of its ultimate corrosive effects on the Church’s authority and because of the repercussions of the coups provoked by taukeism (including, in a sense, the 2006 coup), on the Church. But demographic changes, economic downturn, the rise of Pentecostalism and increasing class conflict have all contributed to the unravelling of the vanua–lotu–matanitu complex. The Church itself can, to a certain extent, be blamed for the increased class conflict. But the other factors are largely outside the control of the Church and indeed have much to do with the impact of globalisation, economic and cultural, on Fijian society.

**Prospects for the Methodist Church in the Future**

The Church faces a future in which some factors ensure its continuity and stability, and others pose a threat. On the positive side, the Church remains well resourced. It is still one of the largest land-owners in Fiji. Despite increasing competition, it remains the largest church in Fiji, with 36.3 per cent of the total population recorded at the 1996 Census. Other Christian denominations represented 21.8 per cent (Newland, 2006 p. 337). The Church also remains a powerful presence in education and retains influence at the grass-roots level through its school system. As the rural/urban drift continues there will be fewer children attending its village schools and more competition from other faiths who have established their own educational systems, but the Methodist schools still predominate.

The chiefs in Fiji, most of whom are Methodists, still play an important role in the Church. The Church in turn has looked to the chiefs for leadership and support, and this is still forthcoming. However, on 13 April 2007, members of the Fiji military were sent to close the GCC and this rendered the chiefs as a group politically impotent (Pareti, 2007), at least for the time being.

Another source of strength for the Methodist Church is internal. It has a willing and able hierarchy to organise it and help it to adapt to changing times. This was amply illustrated on 26 August 2008, when Reverend Waqairatu was elected general secretary of the Methodist Church in Fiji. He displayed a keen sense of the need for change and was reported as saying that “…there was a need for a constitutional review
because of new policies adopted. We have to be clear with the vision of the Church and the corporate plan of the Church” (Fiji Times Online, 2008c). His report of Church organisation reminds us of the formidable range of social services provided by the Church: “Under the General Secretary there are many secretaries like the educational secretary; evangelism; social services and Christian citizenship; lay pastors; women’s fellowship; men’s fellowship; and young people’s department” (Fiji Times Online, 2008g).

At the Pacific Forum held in Tonga in 2007, Bainimarama promised to hold democratic elections in March 2009, but has since reneged on that promise (Ratubalavu, 2008). During the South Pacific Forum held in Niue in late August 2008, Forum members, including Australia and New Zealand, discussed the possibility of expelling Fiji because it would not agree to hold a general election in March 2009 (McKenna, 2008 p.4). This did not occur, but Fiji was left out of the Australian government’s farm work deal which will make available 2,500 visas over three years for work in Australia. Remittances can then be sent home to Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea (Raicola, 2008).

One of Bainimarama’s first actions after becoming interim prime minister was to co-opt Archbishop Petero Mataca’s support to co-chair the Building a Better Fiji For All, A People’s Charter for Change and Progress (the Charter). Mataca is the head of the Catholic Church in Fiji. The Catholic League protested to the Pope in Rome and the Apostolic Nuncio in Wellington against this appointment (Fiji Times Online, 2007b). Mataca apologised to those who felt wronged by his decision, but was satisfied that his decision would help Fiji move forward in a time of great difficulty. The overall objective of the Charter is:

To re-build Fiji into a non-racial, culturally vibrant and united, well-governed, truly democratic nation that seeks progress, and prosperity through merit-based equality of opportunity, and peace (Bainimarama, 2007 p. 4).

Some of the support for the Commodore comes from surprising sources, such as the Catholic Church and the Human Rights Commission, and these suggest that the Methodist Church will remain on the defensive for some time as Bainimarama continues the attack on taukeism. Father Barr of the ECREA notes that some people,
including himself, argue that the 2006 coup “…was held not to support indigenous Fijian rights and extreme nationalism but rather to promote multiculturalism, reconciliation and greater racial harmony”(2008).

Graham Davis, a reporter for *The Australian* newspaper, argues that Bainimarama has many friends among the Indo-Fijians and members of other ethnic groups who, like the Commodore, attended the Marist Brothers High School in Suva. Davis claims that Bainimarama is a “committed multiracialist who subscribes to the vision of Fiji’s founding father, Ratu Kamisese Mara, of a nation in which Fijian rights are respected but all races are treated equally” (Davis, 2006). On the other hand, the Methodist Church in Fiji and the *taukei* have much to lose as Bainimarama tightens his grip on power in Fiji. The Charter was listed for discussion at the Methodist Church Conference in August 2008. The Church decided that it regards the People’s Charter as unlawful as it does not have a basis in the Constitution and the interim authority has no mandate from the people (Fiji Times Online, 2008a). The Church and Bainimarama are on a collision course, as the Church strenuously influences its people to reject Bainimarama’s Charter, and he promotes the document. Support for or opposition to the Charter is also dividing two major Christian Churches, the Methodists and Catholics, who should be working together for the good of the people.

Fiji’s place in the Pacific is being significantly challenged by the influence that China now has in the country, as Australia and New Zealand withdraw financial support and the Chinese government promises large sums to bolster the country’s infrastructure. On 8 September 2008, the Fiji Electricity Authority signed a deal worth F$230 million with the Sinohydro Corporation of China. Bainimarama welcomes this investment to improve efficiency in the production of electricity by a hydro dam instead of through the use of diesel fuel (Fiji Times Online, 2008b). The Zhongze Oasis Environment Technology Development Company has also promised F$55.3 million to set up a plant that converts waste to electricity. Fiji will hold a controlling 72 per cent of the in the project and the balance will be held by the company (Fijilive, 2008). Fergus Hansen from the Lowy Institute argues that China is donating development money to Fiji so that it does not turn to Taiwan for support, not for altruistic reasons (Hanson, 2008). It will be interesting to see, in the future, how far Fiji turns away from the South Pacific toward Asia for assistance.
Where does the future lie for Fiji and the Methodist Church? What will happen if Bainimarama stays in power? He has significant support within the country from Indo-Fijians, the Catholic Church, non-government organisations such as the ECREA, and the Fiji Human Right Commission. Is this a good opportunity to break the power of the taukei for all time and create greater access to land for all citizens? Is this the time to introduce more open seats where people can participate in the political process, not through their particular ethnic compartments but as citizens of Fiji, as Brij Lal suggests? (Ali, 2006). Bainimarama’s rationale for the coup was to “clean up” Fiji of corruption, poverty and a failing economy. He suggested that the army would play a caretaker role in a country which has produced unsuccessful democratic governments.

The Methodist Church opposes Bainimarama’s interim government and the Charter. It believes that the interim government is illegal and has increased suffering and grief among ordinary citizens as poverty and unemployment increases. What will be the Church’s position as the grass-roots i taukei discover that they have less autonomy than before? Will the Church gradually lose more members, albeit slowly, as people lose faith in the power of the Church to help them? The army now holds all supplies of weapons in the country. If the i taukei can join forces with disaffected army members and upper class Methodists, then another coup is possible.
Appendix 1: Questions for Religious Leaders

1. Basic Information
   a) Position
   b) Conception of roles
   c) Pastoral responsibilities
   d) Involvement in local and national issues

2. In your view what are the major problems facing Fiji?
   a) at the local level
   b) at the national level

3. Which if any of these problems do you feel as a church leader called on to address?

4. As you address these problems do you find guidance in the Bible?

5. Do you find that positions you or your church take may be identified in the Bible?

6. What do you consider to be your responsibilities as a church leader in the current situation?
   a) toward young people
   b) older people
   c) unemployed people
   d) members of other churches or other religious affiliations.
Appendix 2: Interviews with Indigenous Fijians

1. Country of Birth
2. Year of arrival in Fiji or
3. Birthplace in Fiji
4. Father’s birthplace
5. If in Fiji: village
6. Mother’s birthplace
7. If in Fiji: village
8. Gender of interviewee
9. Your citizenship
10. Highest education completed
11. Current study if any
12. Religion
Appendix 3: Personal Information/ Life Histories/Open-ended questions

1. As a child did you participate in special services for Easter?
   For Christmas?

2. Were you received into the Church?

3. Have you attended a relative’s funeral?

Information about the present:

4. Relationships:
   a) Think of your 3 best friends: are they related to you (kin)?
   b) Do you know all the adults in the Village?
      Are they all your friends?
      Are they all friends of the same type as your best friends?
      Are they all in the same church?
   c) Do you have friends or relatives who live in other villages?
   d) Do you have any non-Methodist friends?
   e) Do you have any non-indigenous friends?
      If yes, can you tell me about them?
   f) How would you feel if a Methodist married a non-Methodist?
   g) How would you feel if a Fijian married a non-Fijian?

5. Church activities:
   a) Did you attend church as a child?
   b) Do you attend church in the village?
      If yes;
   c) Do you attend other meetings associated with the church?
   d) On a scale of 1-10 how important is church attendance to you? 1 is the least important, 10 is the most important.
e) Are you associated with voluntary activities to do with the church?

   Cleaning the church
   Preparing church for Sunday worship
   Giving out books for Sunday worship
   Singing in the choir
   Other…………..

f) Do you contribute money to the Church?

6. Identity

   a) Who do you think are the real Fijians in Fiji?
   b) Can non-Christians be truly Fijian?
   c) What would have to happen for you to change your religion?

7. Help in Addressing Life’s Problems

   a) Problems: Who would you go to for help if:
      family member is sick
      personal financial difficulties
      village financial difficulties
      problems to do with land ownership
      problems to do with land leasing
      security problems of law and order in the village

   b) What can the CHURCH do in relation to the following problems?
      family member is sick
      personal financial difficulties
      village financial difficulties
      problems to do with land ownership
      problems to do with land leasing
      security problems of law and order in the village

8. Fiji and National Issues

   a) In your view what are the most important problems facing Fiji today?
   b) Where do you learn about what is happening in Fiji as a country?
c) Who is helping with these problems?

d) What groups and organizations, if any are making things worse?

e) What groups and organizations, if any are making things better?

f) Do you think that the government is doing enough to help resolve current problems?

g) Do you think that the church is doing enough to help resolve current problems?

h) Who among current leaders do you regard as being a true Fijian?

i) Can you tell me about them?

j) What is good about living in Fiji today?
Questions for Religious Leaders

Basic information
1. Position

2. Conception of roles

3. Pastoral responsibilities

4. Involvement in local and national issues

In your view what are the major problems facing Fiji

a) at the local level

b) at the national level

Which if any of these problems do you feel as a church leader called on to address-
As you address these problems do you find any guidance in the Bible?

Do you find that positions you and or your church take may be identified in the Bible?

What do you consider to be your responsibilities as a church leader in the current situation?

a) toward young people

b) older people

c) unemployed people

d) members of other Churches or other religious affiliations


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