

Chapter 7

A Tartan Clan in Fiji: Narrating the Coloniser 'Within' the Colonised

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People continue to think of contemporary Fiji as belonging to natives who look and behave in anticipated ways. The popular notion of a Fijian thus becomes someone who is a considerably different creature to the rest of the people living in Fiji. In most peoples' minds, a Fijian is someone who is friendly and lives in a village; whose menfolk play superb rugby and participate in kava ceremonies and tribal dances; whose womenfolk sing, dance and weave mats and baskets in their villages. Above all, a Fijian is someone who speaks the Fijian language and is a smiling, God-fearing Christian with big hair and dark skin.

As a light-skinned, English-speaking Fijian who does not fit this profile, it is my view that people inside and outside Fiji find it difficult to accept anyone claiming to be a Fijian who falls outside this strict ethno-biological profile. In Fiji, anyone who lives and looks like me is relegated to the realm of otherness and prompts those familiar questions, 'what are you?' and 'to which side do you belong?' I am certain that changing this mindset is a tall order in a land where colonial racial thinking is an inherited part of life that few have bothered to interrogate or challenge.

The antithesis to the 'Fijian realm' is the 'Indian realm', those folk whose ancestors arrived on our shores more than a century ago to work the sugarcane plantations as indentured labourers, and whose descendants must tolerate a reputation as land/money-hungry dissidents locked in perpetual turmoil with their ennobled landowning hosts, the indigenous Fijians. The landscape is thus dominated by two contrasting cultures that reinforce the image of Fiji as a xenophobic backwater, lacking in human diversity and cultural complexity. Persons born of this landscape who do not belong to the Fijian or Indian realms have a tough time getting a hearing and are doomed to irrelevance and invisibility.

A Culture of Forgetting

Where do I begin to tell the story of an invisible people who simultaneously claim a European and Fijian heritage that gives an alternative history of Fiji? I shall begin by acknowledging invisibility and describing what it means to come

from an invisible people. By invisible I do not mean that we are a ghostlike people with transparent skins. No. We are invisible by virtue of how others react to us. They do not accept our reality and act as though they do not see us—because the system we live in has been created this way.

Take for example Fijian *kailoma*—known also as ‘Part-Europeans’ or still in some circles ‘half-castes’, many who live in villages and towns across Fiji and whose presence and histories go mostly unnoticed owing to their ambiguous looks, language(s) and lifestyles that defy racial pigeonholing. This paper seeks to overcome a ‘culture of forgetting’ that many Fijian *kailoma* have learned to internalise in their own homeland.

In the colonial environment, the prevailing thinking was that Fijian mixed-bloods were a fragmented identity and therefore were neither authentic Fijians nor Europeans. Yet as the fine grain in my story reveals, Fijian mixed-bloods by virtue of their racially-mixed heritage have routinely crossed all barriers of their mixed heritage that were designed to determine race, culture and place of belonging. Nevertheless, in such an ecology one of the dilemmas for most Fijian mixed-bloods was that human diversity could not be comprehended by colonial administrators schooled in black/white thinking; so when they were confronted with the human evidence of the fusion of the European ‘within’ the native child, that truth was not easily grasped nor accepted.

Background to a Colonial ‘Problem’

The colonial obsession with herding citizens into separate, tidy, racial boxes meant that the separation and management of Fijian mixed-bloods in relation to their natural families was often a haphazard operation and a bizarre, sometimes harsh experience. It is something that is seldom discussed among those who were ‘ethnically’ at the receiving end of such treatment.

The management of ‘ambiguous’ Fijians was conducted in ways that involved the systematic carving-up of Fijian society into elites, commoners, half-castes or Part-Europeans. For example under certain colonial conditions a half-caste child born of a Fijian chiefly mother and a European or half-caste father could be deemed a Fijian chiefly ‘elite’ with land rights and colonial privileges; another child from the same family could be deemed a commoner with no land rights and a village-bound existence; while yet another could be judged to be a Part-European and allowed to live in town with rights to private property and a Western way of life. At certain points in a mixed-blood’s life it was not uncommon to receive different treatment (sometimes different race classification) to another member of the same family since physical appearance played a major role in determining racial belonging, with those most resembling Europeans having the greater privileges.

Some *kailoma* who were reared as Fijian children in their maternal villages later 'progressed' to a half-caste status after being encouraged away from their families by missionaries and given a missionary or Western education. Some 'progressed' even further to the status of quasi-whites (Part-European) who could be employed in the government or private sector and allowed to live in the towns. A select few became 'sponsored' whites and were sent abroad for schooling, sometimes returning home as strangers to a villager mother and an extended clan of full-descent and mixed-descent clan members. The legacy of such social engineering has had far-reaching effects among Fijians divided in this way to determine a child's life chances. The major difference was the way that the system determined place of residence (village or town); participation in the colonial economy; and significantly, eligibility for inclusion in the native land register or *Vola ni Kawa Bula* (VKB)¹ and recognition as a 'real' Fijian.

Much of this activity was conducted in a spirit of goodwill that separated family members along the lines of skin colour, geography, rank, education and cultural competence. This mechanism followed imperial England's patriarchal system that ignored the legitimate status of a Fijian woman in her tribe; her right to inherit and bequeath land; and her right to raise her children as full members of her clan. Thus, at every point in our history the lives of *kailoma* Fijian mixed-bloods were scrutinised and carefully managed in the ordering of colonial society.

European Assimilation

Spearheading the mustering of 'stray' half-castes into central observable locations were the state-approved Christian missions which in the early 19th century established themselves doing God's work among the Fijian chiefs and their people. Of greatest influence were the Wesleyans and Roman Catholics Marist missionaries who, as agents of the state, were given a virtual free rein to evangelise. Missionaries were charged with the elevation and management of half-caste children from plantations and squatter settlements in rural pockets into centralised day and boarding schools.

Europeans widely regarded mixed-bloods as debased, contaminated or immoral. To many whites, half-castes were the products of a regrettable union and the confronting evidence of white men's weakness towards native women. Half-caste children were thus inculcated with Christian values at an early age and taught English in a highly disciplined environment at church-run native mission boarding schools great distances from a child's home. The intensification of this mission increased from 1936 to 1970 following a government report that recommended closer supervision and training of half-castes at the earliest possible age and preferably away from their native mothers and natural families.² This drive coincided with colonial alarm at the steady increase of the half-caste

population that threatened to swamp European interests in their own colony. A schizophrenic relationship thus developed where half-castes came under the direct control of whites in an authoritarian atmosphere that variously tolerated, ostracised and assimilated half-castes into European schools. Controlled habitation, family monitoring and regular home visits were part of this state/religious campaign to instill white ways in half-castes and assimilate them towards accepting European domination.

Race Mixing and the Blended Child in a Colonial State

In much of Fiji's colonial literature, the perilous lives of the early European settlers and their mixed-blooded/*kailoma* offspring have sadly escaped the history books in the recording of frontier history. Typically, the main players in Fijian history have been European administrators, Fijian elites and Fiji-Indian leaders, a prevalent theme to this day.

As many *kailoma* will attest, our lives have been remarkably altered by the fickle hand of time. We know that both culture and the negotiation of a cultural identity are ongoing processes that can dramatically alter a life at different times and places. We know that as we move back and forth among other cultures and worldviews, we adjust our values and behaviours accordingly. We know that deep inside we are the same person of yesteryear, yet we have been permanently affected by this fluctuation of an identity that makes us quite different people from before. For instance, we see this change occurring in our European forebears who arrived in Fiji in the early 19th century, who took Fijian wives, who gave birth to a different-looking individual from themselves and their husbands, and this child being the inheritor of cultural and linguistic influences from both parents.

Because the fabric of our present is stitched deeply into our past, it is critical to view history as a two-way channel that can explain things about the way people lived and the rules that governed their lives. So it is worth reflecting on the neglected history of those who hail from Fiji's *kailoma* community in order to assess the powerful legacy bequeathed by our Fijian and European forebears during early white settlement and into the colonial era.

Narrating the Coloniser 'Within' the Colonised

At this point, I wish to provide a brief outline of my family history as a way of explaining human interaction and diversity in the Fijian landscape. In this short story of my father, William Henry de Bruce and his European and Fijian forebears, I seek to illustrate how the mechanism of racial thinking operated in a colonial state and how certain individuals challenged, and continue to challenge, the very rules upon which the concept of 'race' depended. This 'sociography' depicts the quality of life of a Fijian *kailoma*/mixed-blood born in 1917 during British colonialism.

Little is known about this period between 1881 and 1911 when miscegenation between whites and non-whites was at its peak, and subsequently when this population began to interbreed and steadily outnumber Europeans between 1921-1946 to the present day. The story of this racially-mixed Part-European/Fijian born in 1917 tells us about 'life on the border' for someone who recounts what it was *like* to live ambiguously under a system that could not account for a person's racial hybridity nor their routine interactions with members of their natural families.

It shows how the mechanism of race functioned across colonial Fiji and how the lives of half-castes were closely monitored and manipulated in the ordering of Fiji society. The outstanding feature of this narrative is the creativity and fluidity of racially mixed/*kailoma* Fijians as border-crossers between all aspects of their racially mixed heritage and between other ethnic groups. This chapter shows the great difficulty in creating single races and maintaining them within tightly controlled ethnic borders when the very large presence of racially mixed people like William Henry de Bruce continue to defy racial thinking in Fiji. This begs an important constitutional question: are such persons at risk of having 'no race' in a land obsessed with 'race'?

The following narrative highlights the quality of relationships between two distinct cultures, Fijians and Europeans who, for whatever reason (food, sex, guns, concubines) found mutual benefit and intimacy at a certain place and time. Inspirationally, it shows that the life of an ordinary Fijian citizen can be as compelling as that of a prominent citizen. I especially seek to fill a wide gap in Fijian-European interactions and to provide a fresh look at the peopling of the South Pacific.

An American Tartan Clan in Fiji

The original William Henry Bruce, my great grandfather, came to Fiji from Portland, Maine. My father said he had fought in the American Civil War as a private and was in the 16th Maine Infantry Volunteer Regiment, Company B, mustered in 1862-1865. His regiment fought in many of the major Civil War battles including Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and Petersburg. No one knows exactly how Bruce came to Fiji, but his occupation as a shipwright was a needed skill in 19th century Fiji. Bruce settled in Levuka, the old capital of Fiji, and is listed in the Fiji Planters and Commercial Directory of 1879. Another person listed in the same directory was a Miss Sarah Watts. On 18 May, 1881 at the Church of England in Levuka, Bruce married Sarah, an Australian spinster 15 years his junior, who came from the Melbourne suburb of Collingwood. Some say she was a schoolteacher, others say she arrived with the 'Fiji rush' of Australian women looking for husbands in the 1870s. Like many of Fiji's first

white settlers, Bruce was a shipbuilder, island trader, and landowner who served as the American Commercial Agent in Fiji during the 1880s.

Still, he became dispossessed of 2,000 acres of his land in 1892. Bruce's land-claim battle against the British in 1892 along with several other American citizens in Fiji proved fruitless. Nonetheless, he retained possession of 705 acres of freehold land. Following his wife's death in 1892, Bruce had transferred his estate to the Roman Catholic Marist Missionary Fathers of Levuka, Fiji, whom he appointed as trustees and potential guardians of his estate and his three children upon his death. In 1909, the Mission transferred the land to Bruce's two eldest children when his son Donald attained the age of 21. Bruce had four children in Fiji but not all of them survived him. They were Essie Atalanta Callerohoe, Cora-Mona, Douglas William Washington and Donald William Henry Bruce (my grandfather). Bruce was considered independent, hardworking, respectable and comparatively prosperous considering he belonged to the unstable planter class of his day.

Despite being an American, W.H. Bruce and my Fiji-born grandfather still identified with Scotland, the land of their forefathers. Following in his American father's footsteps, my Fiji-born Grandpa Donald Henry Bruce took up a similar line of work in planting and boat-building, receiving his early education in Fiji at Levuka Public School, then at Marist Brothers Fiji, and later at St Patrick's College in Wellington, New Zealand. Upon the death of their pioneering American father in 1897, Grandfather Bruce and his older sister Essie jointly inherited 705 acres of sugar cane plantations in the Ba province of northwestern Viti Levu, that were held in trust for them by the Marist Fathers of Fiji which they received in 1909. The untimely death of their Australian-born mother Sarah, in 1892, at the relatively young age of 40, had brought the Bruce children and their American father under the pastoral care of the Marist Catholic Missionary fathers of Levuka, Fiji, who saw to their spiritual and educational needs.

It is thought that the children were given to the Mission when their widowed American father could not cope following his Australian wife's death (a pattern that was to follow in his son's generation). Bruce nevertheless remained in touch with his children through the mission and in close friendship and counsel with the Marist fathers. It is clear from family correspondence that his children benefited from their American father's wisdom and foresight. Bruce's second child, Donald, my Grandpa, had an older brother, Douglas, who died as a baby and in whose grave Grandpa's Australian mother was also buried.

Family correspondence reveals that Grandfather was most unhappy during his schooling years at St. Patrick's College in Wellington, New Zealand. He seemed like an oddball to the New Zealand Marists and he did not get along with the school's superintendent, Father 'K'. Letters between him and the Marist Fathers in Fiji reveal that Grandpa was anxious to return to Fiji to work the land

he had inherited. New Zealand during 1905-1907 was experiencing a downturn in the economy with an oversupply of immigrants from England and Europe. New Zealand was a dismal place to live and find work. Consequently, Grandpa followed his dream back to Fiji in the footsteps of his American planter/shipwright father. In Fiji, Grandpa was a loner who shunned the company of other white men, preferring to live alone among the natives, being his own man, and always with his guns close at hand.

My father remembers my gun-toting Grandpa roaming the beach spraying the air with bullets to remind the natives he was armed. (More than a few discovered he was serious as they abandoned Grandpa's boats and fled for their life.) Paybacks were frequent, but Grandpa didn't seem to care since he was brought up among Fijians and knew their ways well. In some ways he was a Fijian in a white man's skin, coming and going between both races. He seemed happy with his lot living at the edge of both societies, operating as a shipwright, copra planter and trader. Unlike his Fijian neighbours, Grandpa was a reserved and fiercely independent man, some say mean and unfriendly. Despite this he was tolerated by the Fijians and to some extent befriended by a nearby village chief, whose daughter he later married—my grandmother, Marica Kenona.

Like many white men of his day, Grandpa Bruce spoke Fijian as well as a native and kept company with native women. He had grown up among them and felt comfortable in their presence. The piano-playing white girls of his old Levuka Public School were not for him. After a previous de-facto marriage and three children to a Fijian woman from another island who had died young, Grandpa took up with Adi Marica Kenona, my chiefly grandmother, from the Navitabua tribe on the neighbouring island of Nacula. Her father was Ratu Taitusi Bebe, the chief of Nacula Island; her mother was Adi Senimili, also a chiefly daughter from the neighbouring island of Malakati. (This de facto union, discussed below, took place before my father's birth in 1917 who was registered and raised by his white father, Grandpa Bruce.) Grandpa Bruce and Marica, my Fijian Grandma, made their home on the idyllic island of Nanuya Lailai which Grandpa had purchased by leasehold from the Burns Philips South Seas Trading Company. Six half-caste children followed this union, my father William Henry Bruce being the eldest (Bill, the central character of this narrative). Bill's siblings were Sarah, David, Henry, Sophie, Joseph. The island was a copra plantation, a shipbuilding works and a happy home where Grandfather traded in *bêche-de-mer*, trocus shells and copra. The following story is based on my father Bill's life.

Bill grew up in a warm and close-knit family in modest but comfortable surroundings. Nevertheless his natural environment was pleasant and abundantly luxurious. The ocean was his playground where he learned from his Fijian uncles how to spearfish and dive for octopus at a young age. He was named after his

chiefly grandfather, Ratu Viliame Taitusi Bebe, but was known by his tribal name, Bebe—pronounced ‘Bembeh’, meaning butterfly in Fijian. Both Fijian and English were spoken in the home. The family homestead was a large grass hut (*bure*) built by the menfolk of his mother’s clan. There was no electricity and water was brought in from a nearby stream that trickled down from the lush tropical hills. At night kerosene lamps lit up the *bure* that gave a hushed and cosy atmosphere under the stars. With his guns and Bible at his bedside, Grandpa slept with his family amid the breakers of the vast South Pacific Ocean. The *bure* had Fijian and European furnishings and native mats covered the floor. There was a high wooden bed for his parents with its firm coconut mattress and soft Fijian mats for covers. The embroidered pillowcases were the work of Grandma and her sisters. The children slept huddled together on the floor on a pile of soft-hand woven mats with China blankets. A curtain divided them from their parents. Bill remembered the Blue Willow crockery on the top shelf of their cosy outdoor kitchen that also had a food cupboard made of timber and wire gauze. In the far end was a fireplace housing Grandma’s big clay pots and a collection of Indian tin pots. In the corner of the living room stood a colossal His Master’s Voice gramophone, Grandpa’s prized possession that blared out his favourite tunes, ‘Swanee’, ‘Mammy’ and ‘Yes sir, that’s my baby’. On the wall of the homestead hung Grandpa’s faithful barometer, the most precious symbol of the planter class that told him it was light showers, a passing blow or a gigantic hurricane and to bring the boats in and batten down.

The family’s daily diet was fish, crab and *kuita* (octopus), eaten with cassava, taro, yams, *bele* (island spinach), *rou rou* (taro leaves cooked in coconut milk). Cooking was done on an open fire in clay pots, and on Sundays in a ground oven (*lovo*). When trading times were good, stewed beef made it onto the menu, and maybe a cake or pudding (*purini*). Grandma’s colourful dresses and shiny adornments were also subject to the whims of the copra trade. The family’s breakfast was the same each day: cabin crackers from a shiny tin box, or giant dumplings (doughboys or *topoi*) spread with CSR golden syrup and washed down with ‘Bushells Tea’ or *draanimoli* (lemon leaf tea). Sometimes there was jam, but butter was scarce. Bill’s upbringing was almost totally bi-cultural with a slight leaning towards his mother’s people owing to their proximity and her own strong influence as the daughter of a chief.

Within our Fijian *mataqali* (clan) my grandmother was from a line of kingmakers and communicators whose role to this day is to relay community news, preside at clan meetings and formally appoint tribal chiefs. At a young age Bill was initiated into his mother’s clan and became familiar with tribal songs, storytelling, dance and rituals. Fishing, planting, and learning the ways of his mother’s people were his normal childhood pursuits. My grandmother took her tribal duties seriously and despite living with a *kai valagi* (European), remained active in her clan attending frequent ceremonies and rites of passage. Bill

inherited from his father (my grandfather) an appreciation of his Scottish heritage and was fed regular reminders as to the family's links to the Scottish Crown. 'Never forget you are a blue blooded Scot and a descendant of the great Robert the Bruce, King of Scots!', Grandfather Bruce would exhort. These narratives were absorbed by the half-caste boy and interwoven with the elaborate tales of his Fijian people who had once chased the beleaguered Captain Bligh from the cannibal-infested waters of his own islands.

Bill's timeless island life in his South Pacific cocoon did not prepare him for the events that would follow. Things turned bad when his mother began a love affair with a Fijian chief from a neighbouring island and ran away to live with him, abandoning her husband and their five children. The runaway chief's daughter was pregnant with Grandpa's sixth child when she ran away. She later confirmed that the light-skinned boy with soft wavy hair was in fact Grandfather's son, not the chief's, however the boy now belonged to the chief. When a desperate and grief-stricken Bill swam out in pursuit of his deserting mother, the angry chief struck the boy's fingers with his oars as the crying, screaming boy struggled in vain to climb aboard the chief's wildly rocking boat. A decisive jerk of the chief's oar finally sent Bill flying backwards, submerged into the depths of the Pacific Ocean, to the startled stare from a worried octopus swaying there among the seaweed. Grandpa Bruce, it seems, had paid the ultimate price for his contempt towards Fijians.

Life quickly deteriorated for the shattered white planter whose self-reliance and wealth had dwindled accordingly. After a month or two alone, he struck up a deal with an unmarried half-caste girl half his age to come and live with him and look after his family. She turned out to be a 'wicked witch' who was cruel to his children and soon became pregnant with her own brood for Grandpa to feed. One morning while Bill and his two younger sisters were playing at the back of the house, they were called to come inside by their solemn-faced father who was in the company of two strange men, one of them in a long black robe. Before the children could ask questions, they were bundled aboard the stranger's boat and transported across rough, dangerous green waters on a terrifying journey to an unknown destination on the other side of Fiji. Their captor was a tiny-framed Catholic priest, an Indian I was told. His silent oarsman was a large Fijian battling a dodgy engine in gigantic waves that sprayed the boat incessantly as the terrified children clung to each other. Bill and his sisters' journey took them five days.

Their first landing was at Lautoka wharf where they were taken to a small convent during its school holidays. There the white nuns gave them a bath and a meal and they slept in an empty dormitory before heading off with the priest in a public bus through the dusty canefields of Ba and Raki Raki and to the wharf at Londoni where they boarded another boat for Levuka the old capital

on the faraway island of Ovalau. Their final destination was a remote Catholic mission on Ovalau where Bill, then 14, was handed over to the brothers of St John's College, Cawaci, while his two sisters, Sarah and Sophie, aged nine and four, became wards of the European sisters at the nearby Loreto Convent where they were housed behind the main school building in a barrack called 'Sola'.³

The mission was a native residential school that trained Fijian boys and girls for agricultural work and domestic duties. A handful of half-castes were among them and European nuns and brothers gave instruction in Fijian and English. Some were not competent Fijian speakers and often made comical errors, much to the childrens' amusement. The syllabus was rudimentary reading, writing and arithmetic with most of the time spent in the fields planting staple food crops such as *dalo* (taro), *tavioka* (cassava) and *bele*. Standard English was taught only as a foreign language, otherwise Fijian was the main language of instruction. Life on the mission was physically demanding and the discipline harsh. The nuns and brothers at the mission station were understood to be French, English, Irish and Australian who often used the cane as a teaching tool, yet mischievous Fijians children retained their humour, never fully cowering to white authority.

My father told me a light story about a cane-wielding nun who once whipped a 'class clown' (a Fijian chief's son). Feigning pain, he fell to the floor, gripping his stomach and writhing in agony, but who suddenly leapt up and sought refuge under the nun's long black robe in his mischievous clowning way. The jumping, shrieking nun had to dismiss her class because the children were collapsing with laughter. Nevertheless, the children learned to pray morning, noon and night and the school bell was a constant reminder of calling them to prayer. Although supervised in the dorms and in the fields by Fijian lay teachers (*vukevuke*), the children learned to plant their own crops, cook their own meals and look after one another.

The older children took care of the young ones, showing them how to bath, dress and comb their hair. Aunt Sarah has poignant memories of Bill, her older brother, turning up at the convent gates on Christmas Day clutching a tin of corned beef that he had brought for his two sisters' Christmas lunch. This he got from the money he had earned selling his coconuts and vegetables in the town markets. No food was provided by the mission and the children's garden-grown meals were the same each day—boiled *tavioka* and *bele*. Whenever he could, Bill would go spear fishing, returning with his catch to throw on the fire and share with his friends. Apart from that, life's luxuries were paw-paws, bananas and mangos grown in the school gardens. 'We were vegetarian', Bill said.

Yet Bill often spied sumptuous meals on the tables of the missionaries who kept cows and chickens and made their own milk, butter and cheese. 'You could smell those bacon and eggs coming from the refectory', he would say. They even

had cornflakes, porridge,⁴ and roast meat on Sundays. Since no letters or money came from their father, some of the European nuns took pity on the three Bruce orphans and sewed them clothing made from scraps of material. Bill remembered his round-necked tapestry 'blouse' and his blue baggy shorts made from old convent curtains. When the homesick Bruce children inquired after their parents and the possibility of going home, they were told by the nuns that their parents were dead and that the mission was now their home. The hardest times were during school holidays when the mission would close and the other children would go home for their holidays. Only the Bruce orphans remained behind at the mission.

Bill did not consider himself a promising pupil. He was unable to understand the lessons in the classroom and he found school life confusing and irrelevant. It is now a family legend that one night he prayed to God to make him understand what was going on. God heard his prayer. Suddenly he began to read, write, and add up numbers. His mind opened up to his studies and he began to shine in the classroom and on the track field. Every night he prayed and began to find great comfort in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This man called Jesus, the apostles, and all the saints that the brothers and nuns had been teaching him about became his new family. As an orphan with now a keen interest in his school work, Bill gained access to the brothers who gave him the special attention he needed to succeed. The brothers responded to his missionary values and it also helped that he had a religious air about him and a maturity beyond his years. Bill's prowess as an athlete and track star in the 880-yard run led him to become a national champion who ran from the mid-1930s and in the war years. He retired unbeaten after the war. Unfortunately we will never know how fast he ran because in his day races were not timed in Fiji. Bill's identity had now shifted from a 'native-half-caste' to a 'de-tribalised' 'Part-European'. He became somewhat like the 'marginal man' of social theory straddling two cultures but alienated from both. His journey into a shifting and changing colonial identity had begun.

Bill became Fiji's youngest qualified school teacher at the age of 17. The Marists encouraged him to join the brotherhood and train in New Zealand, but a teaching career in Fiji appealed more. He taught at a number of Catholic missions across Fiji, learning all the regional dialects in the course of his work.⁵ At the outbreak of World War II, and like many of his Fijian compatriots, he enlisted in the Fijian army to fight the Japanese in the Pacific War. He joined the 1st Battalion attached to the New Zealand contingent that fought with the Americans in Guadalcanal and Bougainville during 1943-1945. Enlisting in the army proved an interesting exercise with regard to Bill's identity.

At first, recruiters processed him as a Fijian, issuing him with his uniform and allocating him to his barracks where he was delighted to join many of his

old schoolmates and former pupils, some of them the sons of Fijian chiefs. But after a couple of days he was moved to the European barracks after a recruiter who knew his father pointed out that Bill was in fact 'Part-European', not Fijian. Such was the colonial attitude that rendered the mixed-race identity fluid while the war also enabled Part-Europeans to become token whites, regardless of skin colour. On 13 April, 1943, the 1st Battalion and the 1st Commando marched through the streets of Suva among sobbing crowds of relatives and friends. Among them was Don Bruce, the old planter, who had journeyed all the way from the islands to be there. That was the first time Bill had laid eyes on his teary-eyed father since he was taken away from his island paradise as boy. The two men managed a brief embrace before Bill boarded the *USS President Hayes* to join in one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific conflict, Guadalcanal.

On his first rest and recuperation leave in 1945 Bill met Andie, my mother, in Lautoka, Fiji, where they were introduced by mutual friends. It was the proverbial love at first sight for the two mulattos who lost no time in getting married. In his choice of bride it seems Bill was staring at himself in the mirror as their ethnic and social backgrounds were remarkably similar. Permission to marry Andie first had to be obtained from the European Marist sisters who were intimately involved in her upbringing—their 'little Rose', as she was often called. Bill's wife (my mother), was the daughter of a British district commissioner, Jack Charles Barley, and a Fijian woman, Nakesa Luisa Naite, from the west coast of the main island. The wedding-ring Bill bought my mother was earned from the prize money he had won at a showdown 880-yard race in Lautoka in 1945. Being already familiar with Andie's English father and Bill's reputation as a good missionary boy and an outstanding local athlete, the Marist nuns gave them their eternal blessings and sang at their wedding in Lautoka on April 7, 1945.

And so ends this narrative of a changing identity of a colonial Fijian child as played out in the hybridised life of William Henry de Bruce and his European and Fijian forebears. The outstanding features of such a narrative are the creative identities that mixed-bloods were compelled to construct in order to justify their existence in a race-conscious and artificial milieu. Contemporarily, it provides food for thought on how an evolving Fiji might manage its multi-ethnic, interracial population in its coming years when the issue of 'race', racial categorisation and place of belonging will be a far more complex determinant in the distribution of wealth and resources in Fiji.

ENDNOTES

¹ 'The VKB is a register of names of the members of each *mataqali*, or land-owning unit, maintained by the Native Lands Commission (NLC) since 1914. The registry is the product of evidence-taking by the NLC staff since the early days of colonisation. A person is usually registered in the VKB as a member of a particular *mataqali* at birth, by the filing of an application with the NLC. The VKB is highly confidential, and the names of the members of any *mataqali* are available only to other members of that *mataqali*. The NLC is a government body under the authority of the Great Council of Chiefs'. Annelise

Riles, 'Part-Europeans and Fijian', in Brij V. Lal and Tomasi R. Vakatora (eds), *Fiji in Transition: research papers of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission*, vol. 1 (Suva 1997), 128, note 15.

² CO83/215 and CO83/214; Arthur Mayhew *Report on Education in Fiji* (Suva 1937), prepared after a visit to Fiji in September, 1936. On Christian indoctrination in Fiji, Narayan noted that Fiji was not a conquered country in the sense of invasion by physical force but that Fijians were a people conquered at the level of beliefs and values. Jay Narayan, *The Political Economy of Fiji* (Suva 1986), 81-2.

³ 'Sola'—Latin, *solo*, only, alone, possibly orphan...of the 'Five Solas' or the 'Five Onlys' of Christian doctrine that teaches (1) Scripture/the Bible 'alone' teaches the authoritative word of God, not traditions; (2) Christ 'alone'; (3) Grace 'alone'; (4) Faith 'alone'; (5) Glory to God 'only'. <http://www.monerg-ism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/fivesolas.html>

⁴ This probably explains why porridge and cornflakes were Bill's cherished foods in his later, more prosperous years.

⁵ Bill even spoke the Nadroga lingo that was much like his own Yasawa language, and are two of the most difficult dialects to master.