

2. Proto-affirmative action: Indigenous Fijian development from cession to independence

Although the term 'affirmative action' was not used until after the 1987 military coup, various policies aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of indigenous Fijians were adopted from the early days of colonialism. However, there were contradictory perceptions and policies as to how the question of indigenous Fijian 'progress' was to be dealt with. The first view, advocated by Governor im Thurn in the early 1900s as well as many white farmers, was that there should be a total liberalization of the indigenous Fijian system including the commercialization and individualization of the landownership system. On the opposite side of the continuum were those like Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor, and later Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, an indigenous statesman, who wanted a tight communal system which would facilitate the gradual evolution of indigenous Fijians in a social Darwinian way. In between was the perception that, while locked in communal organization, indigenous Fijians could be integrated slowly into the cash economy through participation in the copra and banana industries as famers and salesmen. It appeared that the third view prevailed because, as we shall see later, a number of projects to introduce indigenous Fijians to the cash economy were introduced, but within the ambit of communal hegemony.

The interaction with the market economy was not based on sharing the control of the production process but on the provision of labour for village-based cash crops. Village-based semi-subsistence production was a low-cost production system that greatly subsidized the production cost, which enabled middlemen and exporters to make sizeable profits. Nevertheless, despite these economic engagements, the impact of such interaction with the market economy on the indigenous Fijian community in terms of socio-economic development was minimal. One of the restraining factors was that full entrepreneurship was considered destructive to the fabric of Fijian social life.

From 1874, when Fiji became a British colony, to independence in 1970, two separate but related modes of development were in place in Fiji. On the one hand was the entrenchment of communalism under the colonial native policy put in place in 1876, and on the other was the consolidation of the capitalist economy. The communal mode of production sustained a semi-subsistence way of life under the hegemony of chiefs, at the same time as capitalist economic development was creating fundamental socio-economic changes such as the growth of an embryonic indigenous Fijian working class whose new mode

of consciousness which came into conflict with the communal ethos of the native policy. After the 1940s serious attempts were made to reform the native administration with a view to strengthen communal hegemony rather than liberalize it. The liberalization process did not take place until the 1960s, as independence approached.

This chapter looks at some early attempts to assimilate indigenous Fijians into the mainstream market economy and some of the consequent challenges. The first part looks briefly at the period from 1874, when Fiji became a British colony, to 1970, when Fiji gained independence.

Indigenous Fijians in the embryonic market economy

A quick glance at the growing capitalist economy in Fiji in the 19th century should give us an idea of the broader socio-economic space within which the indigenous communal system existed. The growth of a capitalist economy had direct bearing on the use of indigenous Fijian land, labour and a lukewarm involvement of indigenous Fijians in the market economy. The colonial economy from 1874 was dominated by sugar production, which was under the monopoly of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). The colonial state played a direct role in facilitating the accumulation process, such as the importation of indentured labourers from India (Gillion 1962; Lal 1989). The use of indigenous Fijian labour was restricted by the native policy and there were reservations concerning the use of indigenous labour because of a fear of the breakdown of the indigenous social system, already threatened by western influence. By the beginning of the twentieth century, CSR-produced sugar accounted for about 80% of total export value (Narsey 1979). Like sugar, copra production was also an activity dominated by Europeans, using indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian labour. But use of indigenous Fijian labour in this case was piecemeal and officially controlled under the Native Labour Ordinance. An Australian Company, Burns Philp (BP), one of the biggest companies operating in the Pacific, was responsible for the purchase and shipping of copra. In 1903, copra exports were worth 91,051 pounds sterling, compared to sugar exports worth 403,301 pounds sterling. Heavy subsidies by the colonial state for sugar and copra production accounted for the high rates of return. For instance, there was a dramatic increase in copra production to 98,382 tonnes in 1970 from a mere 29,969 tonnes in 1900. While this boosted the involvement of indigenous Fijians in the copra industry, they participated only as small-scale semi-subsistence farmers and labourers.

By the beginning of the twentieth century expatriate capital had substantially increased and virtually controlled all merchandising, insurance, banking and overseas shipping. Competition between European-run companies such as BP and Morris Hedstrom (MH) provided dynamism in the economy. Local companies, which consisted mostly of retailers, were too small to compete. The growth of European capital on the one hand and the rigid communal existence of indigenous Fijians on the other raised some concern. Governor Im Thurn saw authoritarian chiefly rule as a stumbling block to the progress of the indigenous Fijian people. This view was reflected in a speech to the Great Council of Chiefs in 1905, in which he accused chiefs of unfairly becoming prosperous through the imposition of exactions which prevented "... (ordinary Fijians) from gaining anything for themselves – any property to make life interesting to them". He advocated "individuality" as "the habit of thought which we (government) and you (chiefs) should encourage in the Fijians" (Fiji Government 1905: 2-3). The means of social reform suggested by Im Thurn included teaching English in village schools to enable indigenous Fijians more cultural liberalization and social mobility, and the "freeing up" of some of the communal land for individual ownership and settlement by indigenous Fijians under the Native Land Ordinance No.14 of 1905. The idea of liberalization was resisted by chiefs, who preferred to continue ruling over an obedient community (Grattan 1963). Nevertheless, some of the land was "freed up" and sold and, as Scarr (1984: 112) noted, between 1905 and 1908, about 105,000 acres of land were sold as freehold and an additional 170,000 acres were put on long-term lease. Land liberalisation was later stopped after a fierce campaign in London by Lord Stanmore (Sir Arthur Gordon), who saw it as a threat to his native policy. Lord Stanmore vigorously defended his policies in Britain's House of Lords in reaction to Im Thurn's reforms (Routledge 1985). It was also realised that speculation, rather than settlement, was taking place and the policy was stopped in 1911.

This dramatic sequence of events showed that indirect rule through the chiefs continued to provide institutional resistance towards indigenous Fijian enterprise. Later, in 1915, a motion in the Legislative Council by council member Sir Henry Scott, which required that government was to take all the land that was not required for use by indigenous Fijians for European settlement, was defeated. According to Spate, "this date at latest may be taken as marking official endorsement of the view that Fijian interests were completely paramount" (Spate 1959: 16). The notion of the paramountcy of Fijian interest was initially conceived as a protective mechanism to shield indigenous Fijians from contesting forces; but later, especially as a result of the rise of ethno-nationalism from the 1970s onwards, it became a rallying cry for indigenous Fijian political dominance.

Although largely 'marginalised' from the mainstream colonial economy by a paternalistic native policy, indigenous Fijians were still subject to the demands of a modern economy through seasonal labour recruitment and taxation.¹ The taxation burden compelled many indigenous Fijians to 'commute' between subsistence life and cash employment.² They had to pay tax in kind and a significant number left their villages to work on European plantations and cane farms in order to be able to pay tax and avoid the penalty (Burns 1963). In fact by the 1880s 35% of indigenous Fijians paid their taxes in cane. This piecemeal 'proletarianisation' was strictly controlled by the Native Labour Ordinance, which restricted the use of native labour (Narayan 1984). After the indentured system stopped in 1916, there was a growing demand for indigenous Fijian labour to work in the plantations, docks and other areas of commercial growth. Slow liberalisation of indigenous Fijian labour was still subject to the hegemonic control of the colonial state-chiefly system historical bloc.

Indigenous labourers were, however, continuously constrained by increasing demands, by chiefs for provision of communal labour and by the colonial state with its attempts, against the current of its own introduced capitalist economy, to contain Fijians in villages as subsistence producers. These constraints limited the involvement and active participation of indigenous Fijians in the developing colonial capitalist economy. The dilemma for indigenous Fijians was the minimal opportunities they had to earn an income in the face of increasing capitalist penetration of the economy and villages (Plange 1996: 215).

By the 1930s, the real growth was in mining, which was largely controlled by Emperor Gold Mines of Australia. Many indigenous Fijians were recruited from villages, with the help of the chiefs, to provide labour.³ Emberson-Bain (1994) observed that the recruitment of indigenous Fijian labour into the mines was done within the context of communal labour and under the supervision of

1 From 1874, when Fiji became a colony, indigenous Fijian labourers were recruited piecemeal from villages to work on plantations, and within eight years indigenous plantation workers totalled more than 4,000, about 25% of the total able-bodied men. The trend continued into the 1920s and 30s with the setting up of mines. In the mines, ethnic-Fijian workers were "subjected to class and racial exploitation" under a hierarchy of European, part-European, Rotuman and Indian bosses (ranked in that order). See Emberson-Bain (1994). The growth of the ethnic-Fijian working class did not lead directly to the development of a fully-fledged and independent proletarian class, as they were in many ways still subject to the patronising hegemony of the chiefly system. The development of class consciousness was subsumed under ethnic hegemony and provincial division and conflict within the indigenous Fijian labour force. At the time of the recruitment of Indian indentured workers, ethnic hegemony and the uneven development of capitalism laid the foundation for the separate production and reproduction of ethnic identities.

2 This practice is still very common today. While many indigenous Fijians who live in villages commute to work every morning, a large number who live far away from urban centres 'commute' between villages and towns once a month or so to look for casual employment.

3 The extent of the deplorable working conditions in the mines has been well documented (Emberson-Bain 1994). The conditions in the mines led directly to the formation of the first indigenous Fijian labour union. Strikes in the mines were suppressed through the intervention of chiefs, acting on behalf of the colonial state and mining companies to remind indigenous Fijian miners that striking is "un-Fijian" and a sign of disrespect for Fijian chiefs.

chiefs. At the mines, indigenous Fijian miners maintained their province-based communal identity. But in the context of the wider class structure, indigenous Fijians were at the bottom of the socio-economic strata, *vis-a-vis* Indo-Fijians, Rotumans, part-Europeans and Europeans (in that upward order of hierarchy). Chiefs were used effectively to break strikes and neutralise working class consciousness through ethnic and communal appeal (Howard 1989).

The inter-war years were characterised by increased politicisation and mobilisation of class-consciousness. Colonial hegemony and the degrading working conditions it created were being challenged by the increasingly confident mobilisation of Indo-Fijian workers. In 1920⁴ and 1921 two major strikes were organised to demand better wages and working conditions.⁵ Both strikes were repressed by force, using the largely indigenous Fijian militia. The use of indigenous Fijian military and police by the state against the Indo-Fijians helped to buttress the ethnic wedge of “divide and rule” entrenched by the Native Policy in support of capital. This became a common trend throughout the history of Fiji, where the alliance between chiefs and the state consolidated a power bloc to protect capital accumulation as well as “Fijian interest.”

On the political front, although Indo-Fijians were granted elected representation to the Legislative Council in 1929, indigenous Fijians were still “represented” through nominations. The indigenous Fijian representatives were mostly chiefs who, in effect, were the link between the ‘separate’ Native Administration mentioned earlier and the central government. The structure of the Legislative Council from the 1930s to the 1960s was an institutionalised form of ethnic segregation, reflecting the ethnic division in society generally.⁶ Through the nomination system, indigenous Fijians continued to be subservient to the chiefly authority and were deprived of direct experience in formal democracy. This was to contribute to the ambivalent attitude of indigenous Fijians towards democratic politics in later years.

4 The strikes were organised by an Indian barrister sent by Gandhi to organise Indo-Fijian workers.

5 In fact the very first strikes in Fiji occurred in February 1886 and March of the same year. The grievances concerned low wages.

6 For instance, under the amended 1937 Constitution, the Legislative Council consisted of: the Governor as President; 3 ex officio members; 13 official members; 5 European members; of whom 3 were elected and 2 nominated; 5 Fijian nominated members; and 5 Indian members, of whom 3 were elected and 2 nominated. Voters were male only (voting was later extended to women in 1961), there was a minimum voting age of 21 years and voters had to pass certain property and income qualifications (Fiji Government, 1938). Voting was strictly on the basis of the communal franchise system.

Reforms and transition to independence, 1940 to 1970

By the end of the Second World War a number of major changes had been made to the Fijian administration by Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna⁷ and Governor Mitchell. Amongst these were the setting up of the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) or *Vale ni Volavola ni Qele Maroroi* under the 1940 Native Land Trust Ordinance to administer Fijian land. The setting up of the NLTB ensured that administration of all native land was to come under a central authority. The NLTB was to oversee the leasing of land, codification of the ownership system and was to ensure that native land was put into productive use (NLTB 1990). As part of the reform, the post of Secretary for Fijian Affairs was created, with Sukuna as office holder, under the Fijian Affairs Ordinance of 1945. His title was *Ai Talai ni Kovana* or governor's representative. This new structure was a shift towards a more indirect rule, and, culturally, became the prism through which indigenous Fijians continued to define their collective identity in later years. It was "...a system empowered by law to organise some of the activities of the Fijian people for their own social, economic and political development as well as for the preservation of their traditional way of life" (Nayacakalou 1975: 85). These changes further consolidated chiefly hegemony within the indigenous Fijian political sphere, at the same time acting as leverage for communal segregation. But these changes were deemed to be justified because of the perceived political 'threat' from Indo-Fijians, who, as shown in Table 2.1, out-numbered the indigenous Fijians by the mid-1940s.

Table 2.1 Population changes 1921-1946

Year	Fijian (%)	Indian (%)	European (%)	Others (%)	Total (000)
1921	54	39	4	4	127
1936	50	43	4	3	198
1946	45	46	4	4	260

Source: Fiji Government 1974.

The reforms of the 1940s effectively reversed some of the earlier attempts at liberalising the Fijian Administration, attempts which in the 1930s had been in abeyance. Some of the early 'liberal' reforms included Im Thurn's revision of the Native Regulation in 1912, by which the Governor attempted

⁷ Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna is regarded by many as the most prominent indigenous Fijian to date. He was the first indigenous Fijian graduate as well as the first to be knighted. He became speaker of the Legislative Council and is considered to be the founder of the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) and a number of policies and institutions that govern indigenous Fijian political and land rights. See Scarr (1980), for a detailed biography of Sukuna.

to reduce the hegemonic power of chiefs; the modification of the Native Administration in 1914 by Governor Bickham Sweet Escott, to ensure more European administration at the district levels; and the increase in the number of Europeans in the Native Administration in 1915, followed by the abolition of the Native Affairs Department in 1916. The Native Affairs Department was revamped as the Fijian Affairs Board (FAB). However, Sukuna tried to complement consolidation of chiefly hegemony with neutralisation of worker consciousness and solidarity by deliberately fostering exclusively ethnic labour unions to ensure that indigenous Fijian workers were directly under chiefly control to maintain communal cohesion. In 1946, as part of the consolidation of indigenous communal solidarity, the racially exclusive Seaman's Union was formed (Europeans were not allowed membership) and the wholly indigenous Fijian Fiji Mine Workers Union was formed in 1948. This, as Howard (1985: 115) puts it, "not only served to divide further organised labour, but it also obviously was intended to create unions that were less likely to be militant since it was felt that the chiefs would exercise a restraining influence on the members of such unions."

Part of the reform was to incorporate indigenous Fijians into mainstream institutions slowly through gradual evolution within the Fijian Administration structure (NLTB 1996). Sukuna suggested in the Legislative Council on 25 February 1944, that it was necessary to train chiefs and people in orderly, sound and progressive local government the better to fit them eventually for the give-and-take of democratic institutions. Hence a number of initiatives were made within the framework of the Fijian Administration in the decade after the war to facilitate indigenous Fijian development. Apart from the restructuring of the Fijian Administration, these included: the setting up of the co-operative movement (*Soqosoqo Cokovata ni Veivoli*) under the Co-operative Ordinance of 1947; the setting up of the Fijian Banana Venture in 1950; the setting up of the Fijian Development Fund (*Lavo Musuki in Veivakatorocaketaki*) by Ordinance No.14 of 1951; the creation of Economic Development Officer positions in 1954 (following the incorporation of an economic development agenda into the Fijian Administration); and more rigid control of the *galala* (independent farming) system. These changes were part of attempts to gradually introduce indigenous Fijians into the market economy but within the context of communal hegemony under the rigid regulations of the Fijian Administration. However, one could argue that these initiatives were perhaps amongst the very first forms of affirmative action consciously carried out specifically for the purpose of enhancing the socio-economic position of indigenous Fijians.

The Co-operative Society, set up under the 1947 Co-operative Ordinance, was seen as a viable alternative for indigenous Fijians instead of fully-fledged individualism. Although the Society was intended to be independent, over time

it was progressively influenced by the dictates of the Fijian Administration. It was initially assumed that because of their “communal” orientation, “Fijians were naturally inclined to co-operative effort” (Fiji Co-operative Dept. 1948: 49). Within ten years of formation, the ethnic distribution of co-operative societies in Fiji were as follows: 51 for indigenous Fijians, 5 for Indo-Fijians, and 22 for other ethnic groups and mixed membership (Fiji Co-operative Dept. 1958). Nevertheless, the co-operative movement encouraged self-help, self-management and self-discipline and this came into conflict with the authoritarian communal requirements of the Native Administration. There was conflict at the level of leadership between elected co-operative officials and hereditary chiefs and in many cases local chiefs used their power to control local co-operative movements, and as a result many collapsed. There were constant attempts by hostile Fijian Administration officials to intervene and direct policies in keeping with the Fijian Administration agenda, away from what they saw as a movement which would threaten communal cohesion. There were other problems such as reckless extension of credit to kinsmen and inter-village jealousies (Spate 1959). The main focus of conflict was between the communalistic structure favoured by chiefs and Fijian Administration officials on one hand, and the collectivist co-operative system based on mutual co-operation, democratic leadership and expectations of financial bonus (depending on performance) favoured by many ordinary villagers, on the other.

Thus over the years one of the biggest barriers to the efficiency of the co-operative movement was the way the authoritarian chiefly rule and communal obligations interfered with the operation of many co-operative societies (Young 1984). In a major review in 1959, Spate concluded that “the movement’s history of difficulties illustrates perhaps better than anything else the inherent obstacles to economic advance imposed by the traditional system” (Spate 1959: 55). I take issue with Spate’s modernizationist generalization here. The problem was not so much the “traditional system,” but rather how certain individuals in the system used their status to siphon off benefits to themselves. Belshaw (1964), who was doing fieldwork almost around the same time, found cases of village-based enterprises which were running well.

The Fijian Banana Venture (FBV), sponsored by the Fijian Administration in 1950 as a way of developing banana cultivation and marketing amongst indigenous Fijians, had mixed results due to a number of factors including the difficult logistics involved. Production was principally at the village level on a communal basis, although some producers were independent farmers. Banana cultivation went through difficulties and did not perform as expected, and in many parts of the banana growing area such as Nadroga production was in a “sorry state” (Belshaw 1964: 45).

In his seminal study of rural socio-economic life in the 1950s, Belshaw observed a number of “specialized or expansionist enterprises” in various Fijian villages in Vitilevu, including village store keepers; cash-oriented farmers, some of whom engaged also in auxiliary business; cattle raisers; and marketing middle men. These were relatively small in number but at the same time they provided the engine for socio-economic development in villages. A problem was that these enterprises were tied up with a complex array of institutional forces such as the Fijian Affairs Board, cooperatives, community associations, provincial government and national government; and faced community obligations.

The setting up of the Fijian Development Fund (FDF) in 1951 was one of the first of a series of attempts to encourage saving amongst indigenous Fijians. It was set up primarily for copra farmers, to ensure that part of their earnings was directed to communal development. The initial success of the FDF was due to the high post-war copra prices. The FDF dealt with items in three main categories: first, relatively small items, say up to F£1,000 in value, which were widely distributed (ploughs, bullocks, tractors, cocoa machines, copra driers and surveying); second, ‘intermediate’ projects, about F£5,000 in value (fisheries, small mining, cattle); and third, projects requiring high capitalisation and skilled management (land development, purchase and development of estates, timber projects).

Rather than mobilising resources for generating income on a long-term basis, the FDF was concerned mostly with improvement of communal life through the development of village amenities (Fijian Affairs Board 1990). A compulsory deduction of F£10 per ton of copra produced by copra farmers was collected by the Fijian Affairs Board and credited to accounts of individuals or co-operative producers and sometimes to village accounts, bearing a 2% interest rate, and requiring a flat rate ledger fee of 10 shillings per account. Copra was sold only to Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) agents or licensed buyers. The FDF was controlled by a board of which the Secretary of Fijian Affairs was the Chair. Other members consisted of FAB members; legal and financial advisors to the board; and a number of European and indigenous Fijian nominated members. The FDF was highly bureaucratic and paternalistic and discouraged individual economic enterprise outside the ambit of the Fijian Administration.

Aside from the development institutions, agents responsible for the day-to-day operation of Fijian development were the Economic Development Officers (EDOs), who were appointed in 1954 for the purpose of bridging the divide between the development policies of the government’s Agricultural Department (which encouraged individual farming) and the Fijian Administration (which encouraged communal farming). By employing EDOs, it was hoped that there would be “less danger of conflicting policies being pursued and that agricultural assistance for Fijians would be developed within the framework of the well-established communal system rather than as in the past concentrated

on a comparatively few individuals” (Fiji Government 1954). The EDOs’ development program was laid down in a 1954 resolution of the Great Council of Chiefs: cultivation of economic crops should be organised as a communal service on family lands; building and repairing of houses to be done outside the development program; and EDOs were to see that programs of work were drawn up in consultation with those concerned and that those programs were in fact carried out. The EDOs were mostly high chiefs with diverse communal responsibilities and charged with the task of consolidating communal cohesion through economic development along the old *tikina* and *koro* program of work (Fiji Government 1957). Two of the EDOs, Ratu Sir George Cakobau and Ratu Penaia Ganilau, later became Governor General and President of Fiji respectively. Other EDOs included the paramount chiefs of Rewa and Nadroga. These were men of power with no expertise on ‘development’ who used their traditional status to act as comprador for the colonial state to keep the state system operational and to control indigenous Fijian labour. Most of them had influence at various levels of the state system from the top to the bottom, as shown in the case of the EDO for the Northern provinces (in Vanua Levu). Ganilau was the Roko Tui Cakaudrove (a state-designated civil servant/chief of Cakaudrove Province) and was a member of the following: Legislative Council; Legislative Council Standing Committee; Fijian Affairs Board; Fijian Development Fund Board; Central Road Board; Macuata Road Board; Taveuni Rural Authority; Taveuni Hospital Board of Visitors; Taveuni Native Land Trust Board Local Committee; and Taveuni Liquor Permit Committee. This example provides an indication of the extent of political authority and influence EDOs had.

Thus, paradoxically, under the EDO Fijian development was far from being a liberating process to catapult indigenous Fijians into the entrepreneurial world. Rather, it was part of a bigger design to help indigenous Fijians engage in the cash economy – but within the ambit of the state, province and chiefly control.

Another significant change was the increased regulation of the *galala* system (individual farming) in 1955. Under Governor Gordon’s Land Ordinance XXI of 1880, it was envisaged that indigenous Fijians would eventually be granted individual holding when the time was ripe. In the early twentieth century, Governor Im Thurn, as we saw earlier, also favoured liberalisation of land holdings. In the 1930s, with the encouragement of the Department of Agriculture, there were cases of independent farmers settling outside the communal system, although special exemption had to be granted by the District Administration. The number of exemptions increased during the war in the 1940s as part of the effort to produce supplies for the forces. Sukuna, alarmed by the increasing number of exemptions, declared in 1944 in a memorandum to the Administrative Officers Conference that, while a number of indigenous Fijians desired to “live as peasant farmers, independently of the system, either

on their own lands or elsewhere”, government and the Fijian Regulations were prepared to “encourage” it -but “within the limits laid down in the Native Regulations” (Sukuna 1944: 1). In 1955 changes to the *galala* conditions under Native Regulations No.6 made commutation between the village and independent settlement more rigid. It also specified a number of conditions related to production which the *galala* should strictly follow.⁸ These conditions ensured that while independent farming was encouraged, it was to be carried out under the terms of the Native Regulations.

If anything, the ‘reforms’ mentioned above merely further crystallised communal hegemony by reinforcing chiefly control and did little to advance the economic situation of indigenous Fijians, at a time when the colonial economy had progressively shown a clear link between ethnicity and socio-economic position. The class structure in the 1940s and 1950s had a distinctive ethnic dimension. The economy was dominated by expatriate and local European capital; below was a growing class of Indo-Fijian and Chinese petite-bourgeoisie and at the bottom was a large mass of impoverished Indo-Fijian cane farmers and indigenous Fijians in the semi-subsistence sector (Narayan 1984; Plange 1996). However, it needs to be mentioned that amongst the indigenous Fijians was a class of comprador chiefs who were co-opted into the civil service or who, through the native regulations, wielded substantial power over the indigenous community.

In addition, ethnic relations worsened during the war because of the refusal of the Indo-Fijians to join the army to fight the invading Japanese, and their demand for equal rights with Europeans as a condition for signing up. Instead, in 1943 the Indo-Fijian sugar workers went on strike to demand better prices for cane. Unlike the 1920 and 1921 strikes, the 1943 strike was led by union leaders. The organising unions were the Kisan Sangh (formed in the late 1930s) and the Akhil Fiji Krisnak Maha Sangh (All-Fiji Farmers’ Great Association), formed in 1941. The 1943 strike, like the previous ones, reinforced the indigenous Fijian nationalist stereotype (encouraged by the ‘ethnic wedging’ technique of the colonial state) that Indo-Fijians were ‘scheming’ and were not to be trusted when it came to situations of national and security interest.

During the post-war period there was a concerted effort to increase exports (Knapman 1987). Europeans still dominated agricultural production, despite the increase in the number of Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian farmers. In the late 1950s, for instance, 557 Europeans were able to produce and export produce to the value of £2,159 each; 22,000 Indo-Fijians produced exports worth about £337; and indigenous Fijians produced exports to the value of £72.10s.

⁸ The 1956 Census estimated that there were about 1,300 *galala*. This represented a little over 3.5% of all ratepayers and a little over 5.5% of all indigenous Fijians engaged in agriculture.

Europeans had much larger and more productive commercial estates, while at the other extreme, indigenous Fijians were mostly subsistence village farmers with occasional semi-commercial farming operations.

By the 1950s little had changed in relation to indigenous Fijian participation in commerce. The Fijian administration still played a hegemonic role and largely controlled the political and economic direction of indigenous Fijian 'development', in a way that promoted communalism and undermined independent enterprise. In terms of the latter, communal ownership of land was a major obstacle. For instance, by 1956, a mere 0.2% of freehold land, which constituted the most productive commercially used land, was owned by indigenous Fijians. Within the commercial farming sector (excluding cattle farming), ethnic distribution of average per capita acres (land under commercial farming) in 1958 showed that there were 131.0 acres for Europeans, 7.0 acres for Indo-Fijians, 6.4 acres for Chinese and other Islanders and 4.8 acres for indigenous Fijians. If we include 36,000 acres of improved pastureland for cattle farming and 600 acres of fodder crops under European ownership, then the average per capita area in use by Europeans was over 192 acres or 27.7% of the total farm land in Fiji (Narayan 1984: 67). In sugar production (the largest industry in the colony) in terms of tons harvested, indigenous Fijians produced only 4.3% in 1953; 4.84% in 1954; 3.49% in 1955; 4.43% in 1956; and 3.25% in 1957 (Colonial Sugar Refinery 1959). Despite efforts to increase indigenous Fijian productivity in sugar farming – including the setting up of a CSR school in Drasa, to train young indigenous Fijians in a three-year practical course on sugarcane farming – indigenous Fijian production never exceeded 5% of total production. Most of the indigenous Fijian cane farmers leased their own communal land and a few leased land from the Fiji Sugar Corporation (Belshaw 1964).

One of the drawbacks of agricultural development for indigenous Fijian farmers was the difficulty in getting a commercial loan. For instance in the 1950s and 1960s, ethnic allocation of loans by the Agricultural and Industrial Loans Board (later to become the Fiji Development Bank), which was set up to provide capital for agricultural development, disadvantaged indigenous Fijians. European borrowers, who accounted for only 15% of the total number of loans, received 53% of the total loan value; Indo-Fijian borrowers accounted for 53% of the total number of loans and received 34% of the total loan value; and indigenous Fijians received 25% of the total number of loans but only 7% of the total value (Sutherland 1998). The figures for the financial year for 1960/61 showed that the average size of a loan to an indigenous Fijian was half that of loans to Indo-Fijians and one tenth that of loans to Europeans. The bank was generally blamed for "favouring" Indo-Fijians. But the real situation was that indigenous Fijian land was communally owned and could not be used as collateral for loans (Burns

1963). In law, the bank could not make a claim on communally owned land. Even houses could not be used as collateral since they were built on communal land. Because of their distrust of banks, many indigenous Fijians joined credit unions. The credit union movement was introduced by Father Ganey in 1954. At the end of 1957 there were 231 unions with a total membership of 24,148. Members were, predominantly, indigenous Fijians. Many of the loans went to meet communal obligations (Schultze 1982).

While communal land ownership was meant to 'protect' indigenous Fijian land, it also became a major barrier to economic development. On the other hand, Indo-Fijians used sugar cane crops on their leased farms as collateral for loans. A few indigenous Fijians who ventured into commercial farming on leased land were able to do likewise.

Sukuna's communal paradigm not only retarded progress in economic entrepreneurship, it also disadvantaged education for indigenous Fijians at large. Sukuna's idea was that cohesion within Fijian communal life could only be sustained through absolute loyalty to chiefs, who were the only ones with the right to be educated. It was feared that educated commoners would pose a threat to chiefly authority and communal cohesion. An educated commoner intelligentsia, according to Sukuna, would be potentially subversive by "undermining and confusing authority to their own ends" (quoted in Scarr 1980:146). The first secondary schools were set up primarily for children of chiefs (Whitehead 1981).

The overall impact of the protective and paternalistic communalism under the native policy no doubt led to the relatively low achievement of indigenous Fijians in various areas of the economy and professional service. For instance in 1953, as Table 2.2 shows, the per capita cash income of Europeans and part-Europeans (F\$468) was highest, followed by Chinese (F\$279), who were mostly shopkeepers, and then Indo-Fijians (F\$113), while the indigenous Fijians had the lowest per capita of only F\$60. However, differences in per capita income for both cash and subsistence between indigenous Fijians (F\$121) and Indo-Fijians (F\$128) was not very significant, due to the substantial involvement of indigenous Fijians in the subsistence economy (Fiji 1956). The figures show a low level of indigenous Fijian participation in the capitalist sector of the economy compared to other ethnic groups.

Table 2.2 Estimated per capita income by ethnicity, 1953 (F\$)

Ethnic Group	Income per head (Cash and Subsistence)	Income per head (Cash only)
Indigenous Fijians	121	60
Indo-Fijians	128	113
Europeans/Part-Europeans	468	468
Chinese	302	279
Other Categories	147	113

Source: Fiji Legislative Council Paper No.44 of 1956.

Also, in 1958, as Table 2.3 shows, in the various professions including lawyers, doctors and dentists, there were 2 indigenous Fijians, 58 Indo-Fijians, 1 Chinese, 2 part-Europeans and 74 Europeans (Fiji 1960). Despite their under-representation in the areas of commerce and professional services, indigenous Fijians seemed, by virtue of their preponderance in small scale, semi-subsistence agriculture, to have performed well in crop cultivation for local consumption. For instance, they cultivated about 45% of the 80,000 acres of crops for local consumption. But they farmed only a little under 32% of the acreage used for export crops. Indigenous Fijians dominated banana cultivation; but a relatively low number of indigenous Fijians participated in rice and sugar farming.

Table 2.3 Numbers qualified in selected professions, by ethnic group 1958

Ethnic Group	Lawyers	Doctors	Dentists	Total
Ethnic-Fijians	-	1	1	2
Indo-Fijians	38	12	8	58
Chinese	-	1	-	1
Part-Europeans	1	1	-	2
Europeans	17	51	6	74
Total	56	66	15	137

Source: Fiji Legislative Council Papers No.1 of 1960: 12.

This trend continued into the 1960s. Table 2.4 provides a general picture of the distribution of gross income in 1967, three years before independence. It shows that the proportion of indigenous Fijians receiving cash income above F\$5,000 was only 4%, compared to 16% for Indo-Fijians, 38% for Europeans and 24% for Chinese. In other words, indigenous Fijians were the least represented in the higher socio-economic strata. Indigenous Fijians predominated in the low-income bracket (F\$0-1,000), while there was an almost equal proportion of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians within the F\$1,001-2,000 range.

Table 2.4 Distribution of gross cash income of individuals, by ethnic groups, 1967, in percentages

Income Range (F\$)	Fijians (%)	Indo-Fijians (%)	Europeans (%)	Chinese (%)
0-1,000	30	22	5	9
1,001-2,000	35	34	14	22
2,001-5,000	31	28	43	44
over 5,000	4	16	38	24
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Fiji Inland Revenue Department, National Accounts Report 1967: 5.

Around the same period (1966), the ratios of indigenous Fijian lawyers, doctors and dentists to Indo-Fijians in those occupations were; 0 indigenous Fijian to 38 Indo-Fijians; 1 indigenous Fijian to 12 Indo-Fijians; and 1 indigenous Fijian to 8 Indo-Fijians, respectively (Fiji 1966).

The continuing disparity in indicators and the lack of indigenous Fijian progress in socio-economic terms were the subject of two major investigations by Spate and Burns. In his report, *The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects*, Professor Spate argued that the lack of progress of indigenous Fijians in commerce could be attributed to the rigid communal system under the native policy (Spate 1959). Later, the Burns Report concurred with Spate's findings and emphasised the fact that communal ownership of land undermined the economic progress of indigenous Fijians (Burns 1963).

By the late 1950s and 1960s, the establishment of the forestry and tourism industries provided some hope for the future development of indigenous Fijians. Both these industries became important to indigenous Fijians because of the use of native forests (and native labour) for logging and the use of indigenous Fijian land (and labour in tourism development). But in both cases, the investors were foreign companies, sometimes with local shareholders. The Forestry Department was largely Fijian staffed. This created some difficulties with local chiefs, who saw it as their right to direct department officials as to which forest to log. One of the first sawmills to be set up under the Fijian Development Fund was the Kadavu sawmill in 1957. Complicated negotiations had to take place with the 31 *mataqalis* who owned the land.

The 1956 Census showed that about 600 out of the 1,000 workers in lumbering and sawmilling were indigenous Fijians. Indigenous Fijians accounted for two-thirds of the supervisory and clerical workers and all 192 skilled workers. But over half the proprietary and managerial grades were occupied by Indo-Fijians and Europeans. Tourism, in particular, went through a period of unprecedented boom after the 1962 legislation to allow duty-free trading and the 1964 Hotel Aids Ordinance, which encouraged tourism investment. The growth of the

service industries associated with tourism (travel services, taxis, duty-free shopping and so on) largely benefited European capitalists, the Indo-Fijian petit-bourgeoisie and indigenous Fijian chiefs whose land was leased to hotel companies. The lowest-paid jobs were reserved for indigenous Fijians recruited from villages around hotel resorts. They were (and still are) largely used as marketing exhibits for the “smiling” and “friendly” Fijian image on which Fiji's tourism has thrived. This was to be the trend until independence.

Also in the 1950s and 1960s, an emergent proletarian class, and class-consciousness, had developed across communal boundaries and strikes had become commonplace (Narayan 1984). The colonial state even suspected that some were instigated by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which by then was at the forefront of worker agitation in Australia. Perhaps one of the most significant strikes in this period was the 1955 Vatukoula gold miners' strike, because it manifested a growing contradiction between communalism and working-class consciousness. Although miners lived and were organised along provincial lines in the mining town, the exploitative conditions of the work made it a necessity to seek new principles of social action. Despite pleas from four high-ranking chiefs, together with the Commissioner of Labour and District Commissioner, the strike went ahead and the arbitration ruled in the strikers' favour. Perhaps the most important class-based resistance was the first ever multi-racial strike in 1959 against European employers and the colonial state, which was seen as evidence of a growing class alliance between the Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian proletariats (Sutherland 1993). The strike led to street riots in which European shops were targeted.

Some of the strikes in the 1960s were directly linked to the demand for independence, particularly by Indo-Fijians. To strengthen their political cause, the militant cane growers' unions formed the Federation Party (FP). In a show of defiance, the members of the FP walked out of the Legislative Council in 1967 to show their support for a “common roll” (one person one vote) as opposed to “communal roll” (voting for one's own ethnic representative). The communal roll was generally preferred by the indigenous Fijians because it complemented the Fijian Administration communal organisation in ‘protecting’ indigenous Fijian interests (Ali 1982).

There were dramatic changes in the 1960s as part of the transition towards independence. The franchise was extended to indigenous Fijians (although only partially) for the first time in 1961, and further constitutional changes took place in succession in 1964 and 1965 to allow for greater electoral representation. In 1966 the first full election took place with both common and communal rolls. The distribution of seats, shown in Table 2.5, shows that of the 34 elected members of the Legislative Council, there were 12 Indo-Fijians 1, 2 indigenous

Fijians and 10 Europeans. The population distribution of 42% indigenous Fijians, 51% Indo-Fijians and 4% Europeans meant that Europeans were much over-represented *vis-a-vis* other ethnic groups.

Table 2.5 Seat distribution of Legislative Council 1966

Voters	Communal Seats	Cross voting Seats	Total
Indigenous Fijian	9	3	12
Indo-Fijian	9	3	12
General Voter (European and Part-European)	7	3	10
Total Elected	25	9	34
Elected by Great Council of Chiefs	-	-	2
Nominated by Governor	-	-	4
Total			40

Source: Ali 1982.

Indigenous Fijians were granted the franchise for the first time in 1963. The 1965 Constitution incorporated Rotumans and other Pacific Islanders into the Fijian roll. Although voting was not entirely on the basis of the communal roll, the extensive use of ethnic discourse and mobilization during the election campaigns further reinforced communalism at the local level.⁹ Communalism at the national level, through the communal franchise, acted as the legitimising framework for communal mobilisation at the local level. A universal franchise did not undermine communalism, rather it merely reinforced it.

The year 1966 was also important because it was then that the Fijian Association became a prominent electoral force. It later became the dominant group within the Alliance Party, the umbrella organisation that also incorporated the Indian Alliance (for Indo-Fijians) and General Electors' Association (for Europeans, part-Europeans, Chinese and Pacific Islanders). Despite its "multi-racial" rhetoric and organisation, the Alliance Party became closely identified with the Fijian Administration and communal and chiefly hegemony.

Perhaps one of the most significant changes in the 1960s was the gradual relaxation of the rigid native policy rules. That relaxation was led by Dr Rusiate

⁹ At this stage we need to distinguish between the 'communal' and the 'common' franchise. The concept of communal franchise referred to various ethnic categories voting only for representatives within their communal constituencies. The common roll franchise allowed everyone to vote for candidates from other ethnic categories. Communal franchise, a British colonial legacy, was first introduced for Europeans in 1904, and later extended to Indians in 1929 and eventually to Fijians in 1963. It assumed that stability was possible by allowing colonised people a small parliamentary political space within which they could articulate their frustrations, without having to resort to extra-legal means. It was believed that 'communal safeguards' would help to reinforce 'national safeguards'. The communal franchise system encapsulated ethnic separation and helped make ethnic hegemony, especially the paramountcy of Fijian interest, an entrenched part of the political culture.

Nayacakalou, the leading indigenous Fijian scholar at the time. The thrust of the reform was based on Nayacakalou's perception that greater liberalization was important for adaptation to modern realities (Nayacakalou 1975). There was a general feeling that Fijians needed to be emancipated from the control of the Fijian Regulations and central authority. This emancipation was part of the gradual opening up process to introduce indigenous Fijians into democratic politics and more individualistic living. At one level, social and political liberalisation was taking place, but at another, this was not so. Although the native regulations were lifted, and legally imposed and communal mobilisation was no longer the norm, communal institutions still existed in the form of the Great Council of Chiefs, Fijian Affairs Board, Native Land Trust Board, Fijian Development Fund and a number of pieces of legislation. Importantly, after almost half a century of coerced conformity, communalism had become an entrenched component of mainstream indigenous Fijian social psyche. It continued to be the social basis for mobilisation in politics and economic development.

By 1969 independence was inevitable and negotiations over parliamentary representation started between the two major political parties, the National Federation Party [NFP] (representing the Indo-Fijians) and the Alliance Party (representing the indigenous Fijians and 'Others' category). The Alliance Party insisted on protection of indigenous Fijian communal interests. To safeguard this it was important to create a fine balance between the communal franchise on the one hand and the common franchise on the other. The result was an independence constitution which provided for a delicate ethnic balance by allocating 22 seats to indigenous Fijians, 22 to Indians and 8 to the General voters. Of these, 27 were classed as communal seats (12 Fijians 12 Indo-Fijian and 3 General Electors), and 25 were reserved ethnic seats in common-roll electorates.¹⁰ The seat allocation was intended to draw a balance between the changing demographic pattern and the need to maintain the "paramountcy of Fijian interest". Although Indo-Fijians made up 51% and indigenous Fijians only 43% of the population in 1969 and 1970, it was felt that there was a need to keep a political 'balance' through recognition of the special interests of indigenous Fijians.

The 1970 Constitution was the result of accommodation among elites, where leaders of the various communities bargained their way to an eventual consociationalist solution. Interestingly, the Malaysian consociationalist model in the form of the Malaysian Alliance, consisting of political parties representing different ethnic communities, was seen as a possible model for Fiji. In fact the Malaysian Alliance Party, which later became a national umbrella political organization, was the model for the Alliance Party in Fiji. The optimism for

¹⁰ Under the 1970 Constitution, the Fiji electoral system was quite complex. Voters had to vote on four separate ballot papers altogether in the communal and national seats (Fiji Government, 1970).

the Malaysian model was thwarted after the May 1969 ethnic riots in Malaysia, which revealed some of the fundamental contradictions and weaknesses of the Malaysian consociationalist approach.

Despite provision for a universal franchise, first given in 1963, the independence constitution still perpetuated communalism through various 'protective' mechanisms in order to ensure the paramountcy of Fijian interests. Amongst these were legislation to preserve the inalienability of native land, provisions for institutional prominence of the Fijian Administration and provisions for the communal franchise. Thus communalism at the political level also found expression at the grassroots in terms of development initiatives and other forms of social organisation.

Conclusion: Effects of the colonial native policy on the indigenous Fijian community

The native policy transformed the indigenous Fijian community in significant ways. At the cultural level it helped to shape a homogeneous collective ethnic identity. The Fijian Administration became the dominant institutional force around which indigenous Fijians defined their world view as a collective *Taukei* in relation to others. This homogeneous identity, crafted out of the diverse identities amongst the different tribes, later became institutionalised 'officially' in such institutions as the Fijian Affairs Board, Ministry of Fijian Affairs, Native Land Trust Board and even the 1970 and 1990 Constitutions. It also became the basis for political mobilisation and ethno-nationalism in later years (Norton, 1994).

At the socio-economic level, the native policy locked indigenous Fijians into the village subsistence economy, and marginalised them in terms of the mainstream commercial arena, except as a source of seasonal cheap labour in the newly created plantations and as workers in the mines. Individual entrepreneurship was half-heartedly encouraged, although individuals were later allowed to pursue commercial farming on their *galala*, or individually leased communally owned land, on a limited basis. The lack of commercial and educational opportunities was a direct consequence of the restrictions deliberately imposed by the rigid communal system. When the restrictions were finally lifted in the 1960s, indigenous Fijians found themselves at a disadvantage in terms of formal employment, commerce and education in relation to other ethnic groups. The indigenous elites saw greater economic and educational empowerment as an urgent priority even as Fiji was moving towards independence.