Appendix B

Details of three intermediate political constructs referred to in Chapter 7

The Navua Delta polities: Korolevu/Dravuni/Nabukebuke

These accounts are based on NLC records, Geddes’ (1945) study of Deuba, Parry’s (1982) study of ring ditches in the Navua Delta, and my own enquiries as District Officer, Suva/Navua, with an area of responsibility which included the provinces of Namosi and Serua. I visited all the villages at least once and was able to make widespread enquiries.

In and around the extensive delta of the Navua River, there were three main polities, each with its associated sphere of influence. The Dravuni polity, of which the paramount chief was the Tui Dravuni, comprised two recognised yavusa, the Dravuni and the Deuba. It was based at the mouth of the Navua River. To the west of the Dravuni was the Korolevu or Serua polity based on the offshore islet of Serua, which was the seat of the paramount chief, the Vunivalu of Serua. The Korolevu sphere of influence merged with the Komave people who now form the south-eastern borderers of the province of Nadroga/Navosa, and included the island of Yanuca.

To the east of the Dravuni, and up the Navua River towards the mountainous interior was the Nabukelevu or Namosi polity based at the village of Namosi where I have stayed. The paramount chief of the Namosi polity was the Tui Namosi. Namosi village was, and still is, situated on the other side of the mountain range dividing the headwaters of the Navua/Wainikoroiluva River from those of the Waidina River which flows east into the Rewa River. The district of Namosi borders to the east with the Waimaro people. The Nabukelevu/Namosi sphere of influence extended over the areas now included in the district of Veivatuloa bordering to the east with the Suva people of Rewa; and the district of Wainikoroiluva bordering to the west with the Baravi people of Nadroga and to the north-west with the Navosa people. The Nabukelevu established a military stronghold for the paramount chief, the Tui Namosi, at Delainavua, some three miles up from the mouth of the Navua River, and also at a major settlement on the coast at Veivatuloa.

Appendix B (i) The Dravuni polity

The myths and traditions of the two yavusa, Deuba and Dravuni, which comprise the polity of Dravuni, paint a complicated picture of the peopling of the mouth of the Navua River. The Deuba people are said to have been fisherfolk who lived on their boats at the mouth of the river. There are now only two mataqali recognised, and only a few members of each were surviving during my time.

The Dravuni represent a socio-political construct of several groups (now recognised as different mataqali) who came down from the interior. Two of those mataqali, the Vuanisaqiwa and the Dravuni, claim to be descended from the same original ancestor, Gusuidelana, who came from Nakauvadra. His distinguishing feature, his mouth being at the top of his head, gave rise to his name, ‘Mouth on Top’. The original settlement of the ancestors of these two mataqali was at Wainivalau, near the present village of Namosi. They then moved down the Navua River to a knoll known as Vakabalea, about 11 km up from the mouth of the Navua River. With them from Wainivalau came the Seniyale who had a different original ancestor and must have been a different descent group when they lived in the interior. However they are
now recognised as a *mataqali* within the *yavusa* of Dravuni. Later they moved on down the Navua River and settled at the mouth of the river. The Deuba fisherfolk joined the Dravuni and settled permanently on land at the site then called Dravuni. Here they were joined by the Nasoki, who had been oppressed by the Namosi and were forced to leave their village of Namelimeli, about five miles east of the present urban area of Navua. The last group to join the Dravuni were the Nasamita who lived near Namosi. Many of them were killed by the Namosi, and because a woman of the Nasamita had married a man of Deuba, the Nasamita were invited to come and settle at Dravuni. Both the Nasoki and the Nasamita were duly recognised as separate *mataqali* of the Dravuni *yavusa*. For some time after this, the Deuba and the Dravuni (then comprised of the five *mataqali*) lived together at the mouth of the Navua River, at peace and intermarrying. The two Deuba *mataqali* continued in their customary role as fishermen, while the Dravuni people were cultivators. It appears that the five Dravuni *mataqali* did not each have separate recognised roles. One, however, was recognised as the *mataqali turaga*, or chiefly *mataqali*, of which the Tui Dravuni was the chief. Two others were known as *mataqali sauturaga*, or *mataqali* of secondary chiefs. One of these was the group for the *mata ni vanua* and the *bete* (the ceremonial officials and the priests). The other provided emissaries to the Korolevu (Serua) chiefs. They all heeded the authority of Tui Dravuni, as paramount of the *vanua* of Dravuni.

**Appendix B (ii) The Nabukebuke (Namosi) polity**

The myths of origin of the Nabukebuke people claim that:

The original ancestor of the Nabukebuke people, Veredrau, came from Nakauvadra. He went to Naituvutuvu near Lutu in the district of Matailobau just north of Vunidawa. Here he married Radi ni Waikalotu. They went to the Wainimala River and then followed the Wailase creek to Nabukebuke near Nakorobalavu. Here they established the settlement of Nabukebuke which gave its name to their descendants who formed the chiefly *yavusa* of Namosi, Nabukebuke. Nabukebuke is regarded as the original settlement of the *yavusa*. Veredrau and his wife had nine children; and the names of their *yavu* or housemounds became the names of nine *mataqali* descended from the nine children.

These are the nine *mataqali* which are recognised as comprising the Nabukebuke *yavusa*. Capell and Lester (1941:331) recorded the special roles of the various *mataqali* below that of the chief, the Tui Namosi. They included the roles of *mata ni vanua*, chief’s grave diggers; those responsible for putting on the chief’s *malo*, or girdle; those responsible for presenting *tabua* at *veibuli*, or installation ceremonies; the chief’s personal workers and the so-called ‘foundations of the spirit house’ who presumably served as priests.

While the descendants of Veredrau were at Nabukebuke, they were attacked by the neighbouring Waimaro people, under their leader the Roko Tui Waimaro. Some of them moved south and were again attacked. They moved on until they came to the site of Namosi where they settled. The Vunivalu of Namosi, Qereqeretabua, quarrelled with his son about some coconuts, and told him to go away to his mother’s village. The son went and collected an army, and told his father to vacate Namosi so that he could burn it. It was to be a *buka vakaturaga*, or chiefly burning without bloodshed. His father’s supporters scattered down to the south coast, where some settled with the Dravuni people. The rest were recalled by the son, to reconstruct Namosi. At Namosi, there were continual family quarrels about the leadership, and one of the chiefs, Kuruduadua, went south to Navua. Another group went southwest to Korolevu territory in Serua where they were given land at Rewalau. Kuruduadua quarrelled with a brother about a woman, and asked Dravuni for help. Kuruduadua also sent a *tabua* to the Korolevu, requesting their assistance. The Korolevu agreed to come and help, and Kuruduadua’s brother with whom he had quarrelled was killed.
The Namosi people were then based at two centres, at Namosi in the mountains, and at Delainavua (a hill, where in my time the Namosi Hotel had been built) near the coast. The Tui Namosi, Kuruduadua, made the knoll at Delainavua into a stronghold on the slopes of which his supporters were settled. Later there was a third centre on the coast at Veivatuloa, where Kuruduadua’s son, Ro Matanitobua, went to live. Here he made his headquarters, and here he lived when later he was appointed to be governor of Namosi at the time of the Cakobau government shortly before Cession.

Appendix B (iii) The Korolevu (Serua) polity

Those members of the present polity (including the renowned Dr Ratu Mara who was Vunivalu at the time) were not able to tell me much about the origins of the Korolevu people of Serua, except that their progenitors came down from the interior. Council Paper No. 27 of 1914 recording investigations by the NLC declared that the Korolevu were a fragment of the Noikoro yavusa in the heart of the interior of Viti Levu. Brewster (1922) recorded in *Hill Tribes of Fiji* that the land of the Noikoro was ‘in the central part of the hill country of western Viti Levu, on the upper reaches of the Wai Levu or Great River, of Sigatoka.’

Their original ancestor was called Nagoneva, and he was sent forth by Degei on the Nakauvadra. He wandered until he came to Noikoro where he stayed with some people already there, and was made their leader.

The people of Noikoro were building a house one day, when a stranger appeared. He said that he came originally from an island a considerable distance away in a north-easterly direction and that he had been brought to where he landed on the back of a friendly shark. He was ‘a well-favoured young man, with a fair skin, light brown, and not dark like the natives of Tholo in general’ [apparently a Tongan]. He was invited to remain in the village and was given the daughter of the chief in marriage.

The Noikoro thus associated themselves with Nakauvadra, thereby claiming a basis for *mana* or spiritual power; and with what is presumed to be Tonga, thereby claiming a basis for *kaukaua* or secular power. From this intriguing beginning a group, which came to be known as the Korolevu after their original settlement, split from the Noikoro; though neither Brewster nor my own informants were able to give any reason as to why they broke away.

They fought their way down to the coast; and eventually through its prowess in war the group attained its position of political importance in the area of what is now the province of Serua. The paramount of the polity of Serua holds the title of Vunivalu. The Korolevu first settled in the area near the islet of Serua, but they were to be subjected to incessant attacks by their neighbours who resented their intrusion. Living with the Korolevu were a group of people known as the Qaloqalo who accompanied a Dravuni woman marrying a Korolevu chief. The Qaloqalo were formerly part of the Dravuni *yavusa* living at the mouth of the Navua River to the east of Korolevu territory. Eventually the Korolevu sent a Qaloqalo man to the Dravuni, asking if they could settle in Deuba. This was agreed to by the Dravuni, on condition that the Korolevu acted as labourers in their banana plantations; and the Korolevu then moved to Deuba in large numbers.

Appendix B (iv) The Korolevu/Namosi wars

The course of the wars that followed neatly illustrates how independent polities interacted, alternately attacking each other and forming alliances with each other against the third polity. Ambitions waxed and waned, victory alternated with defeat, polities continually got stronger or weaker, and fear from attack by a third group drove previous enemies together. It also illustrates
how polities involved in quarrels with their neighbours might seek assistance from polities outside their own immediate sphere of influence but connected to them by bonds of marriage or of some distant relationship, historical or spiritual.

After the Korolevu moved to Deuba, they willingly met their obligations to their hosts at first. Then they either became resentful at having to labour in the gardens of their hosts, or they had ambitions to dominate the Deuba/Dravuni people. Either they finally became so arrogant and rude, or they became sufficiently strong, that they forced the locals to leave. The Dravuni and some Deuba went east along the coast to Mau, and the rest of the Deuba went to the Rewa island of Beqa and the village of Suvavou on the western edge of Suva city. From Mau, the Dravuni sent a message to the Namosi people with whom they were related, asking for help against the Korolevu. The Tui Namosi came with an army including warriors from Naitasiri, and they mounted a joint attack on Nasasa where the Korolevu were living. The rest of the Korolevu came to the rescue of their co-yavusa members, and there was much fighting. The son of the Vunivalu of Serua was killed [and was buried in a cave on the island of Yanuca, where I saw his skeleton lying on a wooden structure]; and the Korolevu left Deuba and their other settlements near Navua, and returned to Serua. The Dravuni/Deuba returned to their villages which had been evacuated by the Korolevu.

The Dravuni people then presented a big feast with masi, tabua, and mats to the Tui Namosi at his headquarters at Delainavua, to thank him for his assistance against the Korolevu. Tui Namosi did not then return home to Namosi village but remained at Delainavua. From there he took advantage of his position as their saviour and began to demand tribute each day from the Dravuni. Out of gratitude for the assistance of the Namosi for driving off the arrogant Korolevu, the Dravuni initially supplied land crabs, fish or dalo pudding with good grace. However, these demands by the Namosi went on so long and became so excessive that the Dravuni found themselves virtually as slaves (kaisi) of the Namosi. Finally the Tui Namosi was demanding not only food but also women and bokola (bodies for cannibal feasts). Next to Dravuni and Deuba a village was established called Vunibau.

I was told that Vunibau was known as Tui Namosi’s chicken coop, where people were kept against his demands for bokola. When wanted, the bodies would be taken to a nearby area now called Naitata, the chopping place, and the pieces would be taken to an area near a stream, now called Naitonitoni, the place where bodies were toni or steeped in water, before being taken to Delainavua. The present government station is at Naitonitoni, and in the 1950s, when I stayed there, many who lived there were afraid of the spirits associated with the place. When I revisited the place in 1995, I was told that appropriate ceremonies of exorcism had been performed.

Oppressed by the ever-increasing and increasingly unreasonable demands on the Dravuni by the Tui Namosi, the Dravuni became resentful and determined to drive the Namosi away from the Navua area. As in the earlier case of the Serua people, who asked the Dravuni people for shelter from the oppression of their neighbours, this stage of the wars illustrates how a polity can make a request to a neighbour and so put itself under an obligation when the request is granted. Both situations indicate how a polity under such an obligation would go so far in meeting its obligations but once the obligation went beyond what was seen to be reasonable, that polity would turn hostile. The later situation was then resolved not by diplomacy but by force. Unfortunately for Dravuni, it was not a great military power itself.

Tui Namosi showed himself to have become so powerful that he threatened to dominate not only the Dravuni but also the Korolevu. The latter were as anxious to overcome the potential dominance of the Tui Namosi as were the former. So when the Dravuni sent a message to the Korolevu to say that they were about to attack the Tui Namosi, and to ask for assistance, the Korolevu told the Dravuni to repair their
village fortifications. When the work was almost complete, a message came from Tui Namosi, demanding the usual tribute. Three times he came and three times the messenger was told that the Dravuni were too busy repairing their pig-fence. Tui Namosi was angry and sent some spies to assess the situation. Three of them were slain and the survivors fled back to Delainavua and reported what the Dravuni were doing.

As a token of good faith and a present for the Vunivalu of Serua, the three bodies were sent to Serua. A Korolevu army then came to Dravuni, to assist the Dravuni against the anticipated attack by the infuriated Tui Namosi. When, at the same time, the Namosi people attacked the Korolevu at Serua, the Dravuni sent warriors to help the Serua.

The Tui Namosi attacked the Dravuni at night but was repelled after considerable losses on both sides. Then the Dravuni attacked Delainavua, but they too were driven back. The war continued for a number of years, until the Namosi were ambushed and the son of Kuruduadua was killed together with a large number of Namosi. After this defeat and with pressure from both Dravuni and Korolevu, Tui Namosi and the Namosi army abandoned Delainavua and retreated to the west to Lobau and Veivatuloa, and finally the majority was forced to go back across the mountains to Namosi.

During the latter stages of this tri-partite war, the Dravuni and the Korolevu had been helping each other against the powerful and arrogant Tui Namosi. After the war, the Vunivalu of Serua, Nagagabokola, prepared a solevu, or ceremonial exchange of goods and food, to show appreciation to the Dravuni people for their assistance in the war; and the Dravuni did the same for the Korolevu people. Good relations between these two polities were further sealed by intermarriage, and some Korolevu were given land at Vunibau, at the alleged site of the Tui Namosi’s former chicken coop near Navua.

War therefore was an integral part of the life of the three polities in the Navua delta, namely Dravuni, Namosi and Serua, with Dravuni situated geographically between the other two. None of them however seems to have been able to accumulate for any length of time sufficient resources such as warriors or goods to enable it to exercise military or diplomatic power over the other two. Success on the part of one polity would be countered by a union of the other two. The two would aim at jointly minimising those effects of the success of the third which might reduce their own status and independence. The short-time conqueror soon found himself more concerned with self-preservation. A state of balance was maintained, and no one polity was able to induce the other two to form a single socio-political complex.

I have described and discussed only one particular situation to show how intermediate polities can develop, interact with other polities, disintegrate and form new polities, but there are many varieties of polity which fall in the socio-political continuum between the extremes of the simple descent group and the stable, highly developed socio-political complex or matanitū. What characterises these intermediate polities is instability caused by the fluidity of the federation of component groups or the looseness of the bond between them which may have been created simply in order to meet the needs of a certain situation. Such an ephemeral bond may be broken and the federation may simply break up either when the needs leading to the federation have disappeared, or when a party to the federation decides that it is more beneficial or prestigious to join another polity, or is forced to join another in the face of superior military strength. A federation can also collapse if senior members of the leading polity, especially ambitious and jealous half-brothers, fall to quarrelling over leadership.

This pattern of fusion and fission, which appears frequently in the development and decline in less complex polities such as Dravuni, Namosi and Serua, has parallels in the development and decline in even highly complex major polities such as Rewa and Verata, as I have shown in Appendix A.
My analysis of the stability, development and decline of polities at either end of the socio-political continuum and of those polities which fall between the extremes suggests that the procedures did not involve different kinds of patterns. Rather, it was differences in the geographical size and socio-political complexity of the arena in which fusion and fission occurred that frequently affected the stability of a polity, along with the very different external factors so prominent in Fiji since the early 1800s.