Conclusion

In order to assist in my investigations of the origins and development of various polities in pre-Colonial times, current oral accounts were recorded in the course of discussions with representatives of all the polities in my three study areas comprising Rakiraki in north-eastern Viti Levu; Nadi/Nawaka/Vuda in Western Viti Levu; and the western archipelago of the Yasawa Group. For comparative purposes, the project took into account polities in areas other than the study areas. In the course of the project a record was made of the current oral accounts of Fijian myths, traditions, histories and symbols associated with eighty-seven *yavusa* in the Nadi/Nawaka/Vuda and Yasawa areas, and with thirty-six *yavusa* in the Rakiraki area. These accounts were recorded by me, first as District Officer in the areas in the early 1950s (see Preface), and later as a researcher at The Australian National University in the 1990s. These were all the *yavusa* currently recognised in my areas.

**Common features and themes for polities**

The term ‘polity’ refers to both *yavusa*, or descent groups, and socio-political constructs or federations, such as *vanua*. An analysis of the current oral accounts recorded indicated how the Fijians with whom the matter was discussed understand and explain:

- the origins, structure and dynamics of polities in pre-Colonial times;
- the basis of pre-Colonial socio-political and military leadership;
- pre-Colonial intra- and inter-*yavusa* relationships; and
- the internal and external influences that brought about and affected such relationships.

From these accounts and from accounts of polities in other parts of Fiji, features and themes emerged as common to the pre-Colonial polities studied. These accounts indicate that:

(a) each *yavusa* had myths of origin and ancestral spirits;
(b) each *yavusa* exhibited certain symbols of group unity and identification;
(c) each *yavusa* had a pattern of social hierarchy and a recognised basis for leadership;
(d) a number of *yavusa* often joined together and formed a socio-political federation referred to as a *vanua*;
(e) a number of *vanua* sometimes joined together and formed a socio-political confederation referred to as a *matanitū*;
(f) there were patterns of linkage and bonding between polities at all levels;
(g) there were recognised channels of communication between certain polities at *yavusa* or *vanua* level; and
(h) the spirit world of ancestral and other spirits, such as war spirits and defending spirits, was important in:
   (i) achieving and maintaining unity and ‘proper behaviour’,
(ii) validating group activities and appointments to chiefly office of leadership, and
(iii) maintaining some degree of stability in a society faced with outside influences from Tonga, Christianity, and European visitors and settlers.

Common themes
Two common themes emerging from the accounts of pre-Colonial polities in the study areas were the following contrasting sets of ideologies and realities:

(a)  
(i)  the ideology of social unity and integrity, and  
(ii)  the realities of social fusion and fission; and

(b)  
(i)  the ideology of allocation of power based on the concept of inherited mana or spiritual power, and  
(ii)  the realities of achieved secular power, leadership disputes and external leadership, based on the war club and the spear.

A key focus of the research has been to assess the linking of and synthesis between these two contrasting sets of ideologies and realities.

Social unity, fusion and fission
The current oral accounts may reflect an ideology of social unity and integrity at the yavusa level, but they also indicate how a yavusa was seen to develop not only on the basis of natural increase but also on the realities of social fusion and fission. The latter occurred not only internally through factors of ambition and jealousy, but also on the development of good and bad relationships with other polities.

Current accounts of the past are also important to a yavusa as symbols of its unity and identification. They recount its supposed victories and successes that are a matter of pride, and its supposed defeats. The victories and successes are recounted in order to explain how a yavusa became the paramount of a polity consisting of a number of yavusa, either by defeating its neighbours or by associating with weaker yavusa which came to it for protection or by forming military alliances with other yavusa. The defeats could have been included as an explanation for the yavusa’s formal association with the strong, respected polity that defeated it and brought it under its authority. Currently the yavusa may well take pride in this association, however it may have developed in reality. In this way, the accounts can turn successes and defeats to the advantage of a yavusa in its position in current Fijian society.

Spiritual and secular power
The current accounts also indicate an underlying ideology of allocation of power based on the concept of maximum mana inherited through the most direct male line of descent from the original ancestral spirit. They also indicate how leadership may have been based not only on inherited mana and descent but also on the realities of internal leadership changes or disputes, as well as the acceptance (forced or voluntary) of external leaders.

Such themes are relevant to the understanding of Fijian society past and present, and also, to a limited extent, to an exploration of Fijian society in the wider context of neighbouring Tonga, Rotuma and even Samoa as forming a quadrilateral interaction zone in late prehistoric and proto-historic times. There is archaeological evidence of such interaction before the period covered by this monograph. In Chapter 2, the forms of structure and leadership of Fijian polities were
considered synchronically and diachronically in the general perspective of neighbouring Oceanic polities. The study was placed in the context of an overview of relevant literature relating to Fijian polities, places and spirits.

Factors affecting variation in polities

An analysis of available evidence based on current accounts has indicated that during the earliest periods to which these accounts relate, the simplest form of polity, the independent *yavusa*, or descent group, was, generally, the earliest form of polity recognised in these accounts. More complex forms of polity, such as *vanua* based on a federation of *yavusa*, were usually a later development. However polities developed in the pre-Colonial period, they retained certain common features and themes as already described.

Whether or not there had ever been a golden age of homogeneity, an analysis of current Fijian understandings of the structure and dynamics of pre-Colonial polities indicates a considerable variation in the degree of complexity of these polities. Variation was manifested in such factors as socio-political unity, and structure and dynamics, including leadership, especially as socio-political federations developed, at any rate towards the end of the pre-Colonial period. An analysis of the factors affecting the variation between polities can be undertaken from the point of view as to whether they were internal or external to the system of polities being studied. Internal factors are those which can be considered within the parameters of the three elements of the ideological concept of *vanua*; that is, people, places and spirits. This ideological concept of *vanua* permeated all forms of polity, including the *yavusa*, or descent group, and such socio-political constructs or federations referred to as *vanua* or *matanitū*.

**Internal factors**

**People and places**

Variations in pre-Colonial socio-political unity and structure, in fusion and fission, and in federation and confederation, may have been due in part to internal factors, such as ease of geographical access between polities, availability of planting land in the areas involved, insults and quarrels, and ambitious and able leaders with military and naval powers, such as Cakobau.

**Spirits**

Another significant factor affecting the variations in the unity, structure and dynamics of polities is the extent to which they were connected with important centres of the spirit world, often based on dramatic natural features. For instance, the settlements of the various *yavusa* of the polities in the Rakiraki area lay just below the glowering Nakauvadra range and one of the most respected of Fijian spirit centres on the peak of Uluda. Those of the various *yavusa* of the polities in the Vuda area were adjacent to the spirit path along the dramatic Tualeita Range and a most respected spirit centre based on caves at Edronu at the west end of the Range. Uluda was associated with the spirit Degei and the other spirits who settled there with him and later spread throughout Fiji as progenitors of many *yavusa*. Edronu was associated with the first mythical arrivals in Fiji, many of whom went on and settled on the Nakauvadra range. The Rakiraki and Vuda *yavusa* had close traditional connections with these places. They gained considerable spiritual and political prestige from their close association with these spirit centres and from their spiritual connections with other *yavusa* whose progenitors had spread from these centres to other parts of Fiji.
External factors

Variation between polities may also have been due to factors external to the polities being studied, such as:

- the influences of Tongan ideologies of paramountcy and eventual monarchy on ambitious and able Fijian chiefs, especially Cakobau of Bau. They were fully aware of Tongan monarchical ambitions as reflected in the patterns of political, military and religious rivalries between the leaders of the three major groups in Tonga during the early 19th century. These culminated in the uniting of Tonga under King George Taufa‘ahau in 1845. He became Tupou I, the first King of Tonga. There had been for many years considerable social intercourse between Bauan chiefs and Tongans, and Cakobau aspired to follow the example of Taufa‘ahau in Tonga, and achieve the position of monarch in Fiji;
- Tongan expansionist ambitions in Fiji, culminating with the arrival of Ma’afu in 1848;
- the introduction of Christianity, accelerated through the arrival of the first European Wesleyan missionaries in 1835, and Roman Catholics in 1844;
- the demands of European settlers for land and security to conduct their agricultural and trading activities, culminating in their meaningless crowning of Cakobau as King of Bau, in 1867, and their proclamation of him as King of Fiji, in 1871, in the hope that he would protect their interests; and
- the need for the Cakobau Government launched by certain Europeans at Levuka in 1871, to assert its authority on a pan-Fijian basis, especially in the independent west.

West-east continuum of varieties of polities

Immediately preceding Cession in 1874 the polities in the Yasawa Group, the west and north-east of Viti Levu, and eastern Fiji, especially Bau, Rewa and Cakaudrove, had developed with different degrees of socio-political complexity and internal stability, of which the simplest were generally in the west and the most complex and stable were in the east.

The simplest polity was an independent yavusa, a group which claimed descent from a single original ancestral spirit and which maintained its internal unity and its independence from any external authority.

The most complex form of major polity was a stable matanitū or confederation of several vanua, or federations of yavusa, with a leading yavusa and a recognised paramount chief. Such a confederation included a number of bati or military allies, and of qali or tributaries, being minor federations of yavusa (or vanua), or of single yavusa, which might have been conquered or have sought protection from hostile neighbours or have simply recognised the socio-political advantages of a formal association with a strong and respected leading group and a powerful and generous paramount chief.

In between these extremes, analysis showed that there were forms which manifested varying quantitative degrees of federation of yavusa or parts of yavusa or of groups of yavusa, experiencing varying qualitative degrees of stability.

The monograph has considered the extent to which such differences can be explained historically or whether oral accounts as now recorded are driven by current concerns for prestige or by more mundane issues such as access to a higher share of money derived from rents of native land or of money derived from tourism. The key factors in the emergence of differences between polities as they developed were:

(a) local ambitions and quarrels within the yavusa, leading to fission and fusion with other yavusa or to the establishment of a separate yavusa;
(b) recognition by a *yavusa* that another *yavusa* was particularly strong and worthy of respect and subservience;

(c) regional pressures from other *yavusa* with ambitious leaders wishing to expand their sphere of influence through the development of socio-political relationships or through warfare;

(d) external pressures from expansionist Tongans in Fiji, Christianity and the missionaries, Cakobau, the European-crowned King, and later the Cakobau Government established with the connivance of some European settlers;

(e) the ideology of Tongan authority and eventual monarchy, of which ambitious Eastern chiefs especially of Bau, had had first hand experience during visits to Tonga;

(f) proximity to spiritual central places such as the Nakauvadra or Edronu, and the interplay between the spiritual unifying force derived from a common place of origin of ancestral spirits, and the secular sense of security derived from association with a strong and protective paramount;

(g) the degree of availability and loyalty of allied military and naval forces which could enable an ambitious leader to expand his traditional sphere of influence and to maintain his position of paramountcy in the face of internal dissidents and external hostility; and

(h) the realities of *kaukauwa* or secular power as symbolised by the war club and the spear, and the ideology of *mana* or spiritual power as a legitimising force.

As far as the east is concerned, the most important and significant factors in the dynamics of polities were the highly ambitious and remarkably able chiefs, the external influences of Tongan ideology of paramountcy, Tongan military power and expansion ambitions, and the acceptance of Christianity (partly in return for Tongan military assistance).

As far as the central regions are concerned, the most important factors were:

- the proximity to the main spiritual centre of the Nakauvadra as a unifying force;
- warfare to the south of Nakauvadra resulting in people being forced over the range to take refuge with the polities on the north side; and
- quarrels between ambitious leaders who gathered people together to assist them in their warfare.

As far as the west and the islands are concerned, the polities were noteworthy for the spirit of independence and local pride that prevailed, especially as regards the east. This spirit was symbolised by the myths of origin of several groups which relate not to the Nakauvadra but to the central spirit place at Edronu near the traditional first landing, where those who did not go on up to the Nakauvadra remained. Edronu was regarded as more important than the Nakauvadra because it was an earlier and therefore more respected site. The factors listed had a minimum effect on the west, until the time of Cakobau and the forced introduction of Christianity, which was regarded as a device of Cakobau and of the eastern polities. These outside influences were regarded with grave suspicion in the west, as likely to affect their independence, except perhaps in those areas in Vuda which regarded themselves as having become Christian before the east.

This monograph is particularly concerned with this variation between polities following a general geographical pattern. This pattern represents a broad continuum of polities of differing degrees of complexity, with the simplest in the western areas of Fiji, and the most complex in the east. Previous studies (Schütz 1962; Pawley and Sayaba 1971; and Geraghty 1983a, 1983b) have contrasted the east and the west in terms of linguistics and mutual intelligibility of communalects. They have indicated a broad dichotomy between an eastern group of communalects and a western group, whilst pointing out that within each group there is a chain of communalects of differing degrees of mutual intelligibility. No explanation has been put forward which accounts satisfactorily for the dichotomy between the linguistic groups or the continuum of communalects within each
group. This study puts forward an explanation for a pan-Fiji continuum of differing degrees of complexity and stability of polities taking into account the various internal and external factors as well as the patterning of communalects.

Such factors variably affected different polities at different times, depending on local circumstances which were liable to vary from time to time. Such differences could sometimes be explained by recourse to the current oral accounts. Other differences, especially those involving outside pressures from Tonga, could be explained by recourse to sources other than the current accounts and also by taking into account the proximity of the polity to the source of the pressure.
This text taken from *Dogei’s Descendants: Spirits, Place and People in Pre-Cession Fiji*, Edited by Matthew Spriggs and Deryck Scarr, published 2014 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.