CHAPTER EIGHT

Devolution in a Divided Mission

During the 1950s, European missionaries struggled to reconcile the segregation of the mission with a growing international movement for self-government and independence, blowing on the ‘wind of change’.¹ This chapter revolves around the politics of race in discussions about independence within the church, debated most consistently around the mission’s bases at Davuilevu at Nausori, and in Suva. Self-representation in synod became an important focus for Indo-Fijian Methodists as the mission neared independence and they attempted to assert their identity within this overwhelmingly Fijian institution. The ‘three selves’ church policy continued to shape the work of European missionaries and their support for training both Fijian and Indo-Fijian ministers, but devolution was occurring at a different pace in each mission branch. This chapter traces European anxieties about Fiji’s demographics, and investigates how these ideas influenced mission policy for self-support, self-governance and self-propagation.

During the 1950s, European missionaries, with Fijian and Indo-Fijian ministers, deliberated problems arising from racial segregation within the mission and considered whether the two Methodist communities could be amalgamated. Gribble and Burton had deliberated the mission’s transition to independence with leaders from the Fijian branch in 1950. Ramsey Deoki attended another meeting on 30 March 1950 to discuss the findings of the constitution committee. The committee sought a constitution that would ‘provide for all Methodists in Fiji and hold us as one church’.² However, plans for a united Fijian church were superficial, as the strategies discussed did not entirely eradicate racial boundaries.

² Meeting called by R Deoki to ‘discuss the findings of the constitution committee in the circular of 23 March 1950’, 30 March 1950, F/3/1948–1960B, NAF.
The conciliatory rhetoric of ‘one church’ conflicted with the entrenched segregation of the two major ethnic spheres of the Methodist community. The committee believed that unity and diversity could both be achieved if the powers of this united synod were limited; the district synods would have great authority. The committee discussed how they might achieve these outcomes, and believed that they needed open lines of communication between district superintendents and the mission board, and the ability to bypass the existing united synod. The united synod had previously stifled the initiatives of the Indo-Fijian branch, so if the committee members could circumvent it, they could more easily take advantage of the historic support offered by the mission board for ‘younger’ churches. The consensus of the meeting was to not diminish the mission’s Fijian identity, but rather to secure a strong Methodist church run by Fijian and Indo-Fijians. The desire to continue the racial division demonstrates a variation on the trend that anthropologist John Kelly has noticed from this period. Kelly has argued that Indo-Fijians were now the ‘racial majority’, which caused anxiety about Fijian futures, Indo-Fijian leaders sometimes aspiring to a ‘minority status’ to try and mute their presence, so as to minimise the potential for conflict. However, in the Methodist community, where Indo-Fijians were the minority, Indo-Fijians had to assert their rights to ensure that their own positions were not diminished, which they decided could be best achieved by requesting the continuation of segregation.

The mission had remained a primarily Fijian institution, despite the growing numbers of Indo-Fijian Methodist ministers and members (there were 236 Indo-Fijian members in the Methodist church in 1947). Creating a Methodist church that was both ‘indigenised’ and met the needs of both existing mission districts was going to be difficult. The Reverend T C Carne, who had worked in the Methodist mission to India before relocating to the Pacific to work with the Indo-Fijian community, wrote to Gribble in 1951 to discuss who might become chairman of the united synod. Carne said he would rather not, feeling it essential that the chairman of the united synod be from the Fijian district and know Fijian language and culture:

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
I feel very deeply that the Fijian Church needs the Head of our Church in Fiji to be one of themselves. Maybe many of my views about the future of this colony are wrong, I hope they are, but I want the Fijian community to have every bit of honour and every chance of leadership.7

Encouraging Fijian leadership in the mission fostered an alliance between European missionaries and talatala, to the exclusion of the Indo-Fijian community. Despite having worked with the Indo-Fijian community, Carne believed that a talatala should take the lead. Carne resisted blurring the lines between the mission’s two districts, despite recent discussions indicating that talatala were interested in having greater movement across the mission’s internal boundaries.

Deoki continued to push for increasing ministers’ wages, still resenting European missionaries’ control of pays and accounts.8 In December 1951, Carne supported this, recommending that Indo-Fijian ministers have their pay raised.9 Gribble, however, suggested that there would be ‘difficulties’ if the talatala found out that the Indo-Fijian ministers started on a higher rate than themselves. He admitted that there were ‘different standards of living and the ability of the Fijian to receive much more help from his people than the Indian, but it bristles with difficulties’.10 Maintaining the racially codified pay system had been justified through the practical needs of the ministers in each district, on the basis of cultural difference, because missionaries had believed that talatala would be sustained within the communal system with contributions from villages towards their food and housing. However, by the 1950s, urban drift and industrialisation had made it increasingly difficult for villages to provide for ministers. Deoki’s pointed remarks highlighted the racial base of this system and outweighed the claims that the system catered to the cultural needs of any staff member. The essentialised notions of Fijian culture that led Europeans to assume that talatala would receive hospitality in the villages could no longer be depended on in post-war, industrialising Fiji.

The colony’s racial demographics were also central to European missionaries’ responses to Fiji’s involvement in the Malayan conflict. Fijian commandos were enlisted for service, under Britain’s direction, to fight against what was

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7 T C Carne to C Gribble, 27 December 1951, MLMSS Meth Ch OM (MOM) 527, ML.
9 T C Carne to C F Gribble, 7 December 1951, MOM 527, ML; C F Gribble to T C Carne, 15 April 1952, MOM 527, ML.
10 C F Gribble to T C Carne, 14 May 1952, MOM 527, ML.
considered to be a communist insurgency.\textsuperscript{11} The deployment of 850 soldiers from Fiji stirred heated discussion within the mission, particularly because 800 of these troops were Fijian.\textsuperscript{12} The Reverend Stanley Cowled, the mission's new chairman in 1951, had worked in both Papua and Fiji, and had served alongside Fijian troops in the Solomon Islands during World War II. He served on the Fijian Legislative Assembly during his time as chairman. He was a highly mobile chairman, and the Reverend Stanley Andrews repeatedly had to stand in for him. He went to visit the troops in Malaya after their deployment. In Cowled’s absence, Andrews wrote to Gribble outlining a critique of the lack of Indo-Fijian involvement. He had read correspondence printed in Fiji’s newspapers that revealed concerns that the Fijian battalion might use their jungle warfare tactics against non-Fijian peoples when they returned to Fiji.\textsuperscript{13}

Andrews had spoken to talatala about the battalion being sent to Malaya, and he found that no one supported the war but, due to an agreement between Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna and the British military, and the longstanding alliance with Britain, they felt that the troops must go. The chiefs were encouraging people to enlist by quoting the Bible. He had heard some say: ‘Without the shedding of blood, there is no progress for our people.’\textsuperscript{14} Some talatala had asked Andrews whether they could enlist, but he had refused their requests, concerned for their moral wellbeing. Ratu Edward Cakobau, who had been involved in recent discussions about church independence, was no doubt playing a role in rallying troops as one of the battalion’s leaders.\textsuperscript{15} This was evident from Gribble’s comments in March 1952 that there was a racial undercurrent to European missionaries’ concerns. Addressing church colleagues in Australia, Gribble said:\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{quote}
... Fiji was fighting for its racial existence as the Indians had increased to 127,000, thus exceeding the Fijians in population by 7,000. The action of sending 1,000 young Fijians between the ages of 18 and 26 to Malaya would alter its racial balance.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} S Andrews to C F Gribble, 21 November 1951, HO/1/1951, NAF, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} ‘Methodist Crusade to Continue’, \textit{Northern Star}, Lismore, NSW, 6 March 1952, p. 8.
Gribble appealed to the secretary of state for Britain’s colonies, Oliver Lyttleton, to allow Fijian troops to remain at home in Fiji:

One cannot see the growing strength of the Indian community in Fiji without realising that the Fijian is involved in a struggle for his very existence. It seems to us that to take a large community of their chosen young men at this time is to do Fiji an injustice.18

Gribble’s concerns about racial demographics perpetuated the sense that the vanua was under threat. Despite there being no outright conflict between the two communities in Fiji, there was a sense of competition over which race would be the majority in the islands.19 Gribble was wary of Fiji becoming a ‘little India in the Pacific’, and had taken to monitoring changes in this Pacific population.20 Far from being an irrelevant, isolated view issued from Australia, Gribble’s comments travelled into the Fijian mission field through Tuilovoni, who acted as conduit between the mission board and field. Tuilovoni translated the correspondence into Fijian and reported Gribble’s opinion to his colleagues at a district meeting in February 1952.21 Australian anxieties about race in Fiji were therefore moving from Sydney’s mission board into the mission districts, and was no doubt discussed by ministers as they travelled back to their villages.

Gribble sent out a questionnaire to gauge the sentiments of missionaries and local ministers regarding the mission’s education committee, and many took this as an opportunity to comment on a variety of issues. Gribble’s survey was distributed at a time when public criticism of missions was on the rise throughout the Pacific. At the government–missions conference at Port Moresby in 1952, an unnamed government officer had claimed that:

Christian missions of long experience handle native customs unsympathetically or attempt to destroy or interfere with native practices except where human life and health are involved, or where, in partly civilised communities, standards of decency are ignored.22

18 C F Gribble to Lyttleton, n.d., MOM 527, ML.
20 The imagining of Fiji as a ‘little India in the Pacific’ had been reiterated ten years before in J W Coulter, Fiji: Little India in the Pacific, Illinois, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1942.
Gribble argued that the missionaries’ training in anthropology had helped to eliminate colonial tendencies in mission. The course that Elkin and Burton had endorsed during the 1930s remained in place, and the anthropological training supplied to missionaries became part of their defence when accused of destroying indigenous cultures. Several denominations now sent their missionaries to do the anthropology course at the University of Sydney as a standard part of preparation for the field, ‘in order that the life and culture of the people may be approached with understanding and appreciation, and some of the past mistakes of both Government and missions avoided’.23

One anonymous mission worker’s response to Gribble’s questionnaire seemed to display the qualities that anthropological training would provide, arguing it was imperative that Fijian language be used in synod, lest the ‘contribution’ of the *talatala* be ‘lost’.24 Discussing mission business in the vernacular was considered crucial to building the confidence of the indigenous leadership. Another unidentified respondent suggested that the ‘Fijian and Indian churches are at very different stages in their respective evolutions; nor can it be said that they are evolving in the same form’.25 It was evident that missionaries were still thinking in terms of cultures progressing through stages of development, and while the cultures in the two mission branches were not being described as incompatible, they were still seen as markedly different. Missionaries dared not divert from grounding the church in culture and indigenisation. They believed that segregation would preserve the ‘individual rights of the Fijian synod’, and create a viable ‘young church’.26

Another respondent was concerned that ‘the present social and political situation in Fiji indicates a grave danger in any attempt to short-circuit Fijian rights’,27 which might give rise to nationalist, anti-colonial movements amongst Fijian congregations. The reification of indigenous culture still seemed to be the way in which to demonstrate support for their rights in the face of the growing Indo-Fijian population. The concerns that missionaries had aired in the past were evidently still provoking a protectionist discourse, devised in response to the seemingly ever-growing Indo-Fijian community.

For all of their anthropological training, missionaries maintained a distance from Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities through the style of ministry, which involved a lack of personal interaction. In the Indo-Fijian branch, the mission’s strategy of evangelisation through institutions such as orphanages, schools

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23 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 3.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
and hospitals had led to a sort of indirect evangelisation. Methodist members begrudged the lack of personal interaction with missionaries, taking it as a personal affront. The Reverend John Robson, an Australian missionary who arrived in Fiji in 1952, commented on how much he enjoyed being among his Australian colleagues in the Davuilevu grounds. Giving some perspective of the larger ramifications of missionary seclusion, Gribble warned that there was a ‘danger’ in socialising only with expatriates, and also warned that Robson would not develop his Fijian language skills ‘as quickly or as easily as if you were out close to the village life’. More diplomatic than some of his predecessors, Gribble identified the propensity of the European missionaries to exude an air of superiority. He attempted to facilitate change through mentoring.

Missionaries recognised the importance of training non-European ministers to fill their positions, but in 1952 Gribble still felt it essential to keep the European staff in Fiji. Even the most progressive missionaries, such as Alan Tippett, who had worked hard to improve the theological curriculum and break down barriers between Fijian and Indo-Fijian students at Davuilevu during the previous decade, struggled to abandon a critical perspective of non-European ministers. Tippett admitted that the time had come to increase the number of Fijians working in administrative positions but that ‘such leaders are certainly very hard to find this year’. More training was deemed necessary before indigenous people would be able to take over the mission. Potential leaders were trained both locally and overseas, assisted by American scholarship programs which sponsored theological education for Pacific ministers. The Reverend Setareki Tuilovoni, the mission’s rising star, had received the American ‘Crusade for Christ’ scholarship in 1947 and encouraged other talatala to apply, having since returned to Fiji to lead the Youth Department. As Tippett said in 1952: ‘He is doing a European’s job. He is the first-fruit of the scholarship system and the Fijian Church is very proud of him.’

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28 H Bock to J W Burton, 13 October 1941, response to questionnaires regarding state of Indian work in 1941, CY3465, MOM 238, ML.
29 C F Gribble wrote to D T Niles, 11 March 1952, 1953 correspondence, MOM 527, ML; ‘Findings and comments on “Memorandum concerning our church schools in Fiji”, meeting 16 May 1950, minutes. Meeting held in Lautoka, chaired by Deoki.’ File: towards and independent conference Fiji 1950, ML.
31 C F Gribble to J Robson, 15 June 1953, 1953 correspondence, MOM 527, ML.
32 C F Gribble to Telfer, 12 June 1952, 1952 correspondence, MLMSS MOM 527, box 97, ML.
33 A R Tippett to C F Gribble, 4 January 1952, 1952 correspondence, MLMSS MOM 527, box 97, ML.
34 A R Tippett to C F Gribble, 29 May 1952, 1952 correspondence, MLMSS MOM 527, box 97, p. 2, ML.
Theological ideas, particularly the ‘three selves’ church concept, continued to guide missionary approaches to church development. In 1953, Tippett methodically listed the ways in which Fiji’s mission was already self-supporting. \(^{35}\) The mission’s broadcast programs in Fijian and English on station ZJZ, making use of new technology as radios became increasingly available for Fijians during the 1940s and 1950s. \(^{36}\) Tippett said that those listening to the program would be witness to the mission’s autonomy, describing it as ‘an organism living its own life, developing, struggling in its own environment, facing its own problems, making its own decisions, financing its own enterprises’. \(^{37}\) Tippett adopted a paternalistic discourse to describe the Fijian mission’s relationship with Australia, suggesting that ‘special gifts show the mother love of the Home Church for her children, and the children appreciate it’. \(^{38}\) Despite the paternalism, he believed in the potential of indigenous Christians to be capable of a full and rich religious life. \(^{39}\) He believed that Methodism was not something simply transplanted and forced upon indigenous society, but had evidently become self-propagating.

Gribble reflected on the mission’s role in colonialism in his speech to the annual mission board meeting in 1954. Here he stated his concern that the church had been accused of ‘identification with Western influence, with colonialism, and economic exploitation’. \(^{40}\) These perceptions had challenged the mission to ensure that it was truly a ‘church of God’. Mission policy was changing to incorporate this analysis, ‘with emphasis on the fact that the Christian community is above nationalism and race’. \(^{41}\) Gribble considered Fiji to be particularly problematic case study, because of tensions between the Indo-Fijian and Fijian communities. He said: ‘We have a great hope that these two members of the human family will learn to make a home together in Fiji.’ \(^{42}\) As the shift to independence progressed steadily throughout the 1950s, the mission still sought to increase its Indo-Fijian membership. Gribble believed that the biggest of the mission’s challenges in the post-war years was the evangelisation of the Indo-Fijian community and

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35 B Stanley, ‘The Church of the Three Selves: A Perspective from the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2008; Tippett kept copies of 1949 Ecumenical Review, for example, which was produced by the WCC. See Tippett collection, St Marks National Theological Centre, Tip 69/43/1.
37 A R Tippett, ‘The Methodist Church in Fiji’, *The Spectator*, 3 June 1953, p. 338
38 Ibid.
40 ‘Missions Have World Problem’, *Courier Mail*, Brisbane, 22 May 1954, p. 6.
41 Ibid.
encouraging their ‘reconciliation’ with Fijians. European missionaries and *talata*la seemed united by the challenge of Indo-Fijian evangelisation, with the Indo-Fijian community depicted as a problem that the other two shared.

While speaking of reconciliation, the acculturation of faith remained paramount. Gribble, Germon and Tippett continued to try to enhance indigenous theological training. Tippett believed that teaching should be culturally appropriate in order to induce greater individual engagement with the Bible and elicit new indigenous theological perspectives. Ministers were trained in biblical translation, and increasingly believed that western cultural perspectives of Christianity had inhibited indigenous theologies. In 1954, Tippett boasted that the mission was publishing translated Christian literature, including a series of articles written by mission chairman Stanley Cowled and a brochure on the centenary of Cakobau’s conversion. Tippett had been personally preparing a prayer book for use by Methodist class leaders: ‘fifty-two studies of Scripture passages showing the use and nature of prayer, and each is followed by suggestions for a prayer: a study for a year of Sunday mornings.’

While translating material into Bauan dialect — now the standardised Fijian language — tended to reinforce the cultural divisions in the mission, Tippett argued, as his predecessors had, that Christianity embedded in culture reflected a truer engagement with the Word of God. There were, by this time, Fijian theological students who understood Hindi and were able to transcend some of these linguistic boundaries if they chose to.

Acculturation was also under way in the Indo-Fijian district. Working in the Indo-Fijian district, the Reverend Alan Loy had noticed a ‘resurgence of India’s historic faiths’. Loy held missionaries responsible for the resurgence in culture amongst Indo-Fijians, as they had made recent efforts to ‘retain and built up Hindu custom, culture and belief. Hindu and Muslim festivals, Indian religious films, and singers from India all are used as a media to build up a living religious culture.’ Promoting culture was only just starting to gain momentum in the Indo-Fijian branch of the mission. The cultural revival Loy noticed was probably also due to the growing surge in diaspora identity creation in the Indo-Fijian

49 Ibid.
community. Missionary efforts to embed Hindu and Islamic customs within Christian — particularly Methodist — practice were thus combined with efforts within the broader community to celebrate Indo-Fijian culture.\(^{50}\)

In 1955, 15 European ministers and nine sisters remained in the mission, charged with supervising 145 *talatala* and the Reverend Ramsey Deoki, still the lone Indo-Fijian minister. There were 32,677 recorded Fijian Methodist church members (with approximately 100,000 more adherents). Indo-Fijian membership had grown, with 469 members that year.\(^{51}\) However, Indo-Fijian students had ceased to apply to Navuso Agricultural School.\(^{52}\) European missionaries were mindful of the protests occurring amongst sugar and oil workers by the mid-1950s and hoped to prevent the industrial agitation flowing into the mission, as equal wages continued to be a point of tension.\(^{53}\) Loy observed:

> Racial feeling is not obvious but is deep-going. This presents a challenge which our Church is not only well aware of but by combined services, through a United Synod and plans for co-racial Youth Club seeks to bring nearer the day when all racial groups will be gathered into one living fellowship.\(^{54}\)

Loy advocated unity and ‘creating living centres of true community’.\(^{55}\) However, most of the missions programs continued to be segregated, with youth groups coordinated for each community. A group was founded specifically for Indo-Fijian youth called the Dudley Youth Group. It was directed by T C Carne and named after Hannah Dudley, one of the first missionaries to the Indo-Fijian community. Activities included lectures, music, debates, games and singing hymns. The Dudley Youth Group occasionally engaged with its Fijian equivalent in order to ‘foster inter-racial friendship’. Carne told the youth involved, ‘we were all first Christians and then Indians and Fijians’.\(^{56}\) Carne reiterated that churches were the perfect places to form friendships, as it was ‘where the things that join are uppermost. Such Youth Clubs and joint meetings will strengthen our Methodist witness in Fiji.’ He said, ‘this is essential to our existence’.\(^{57}\) Tuilovoni also had great faith in the youth groups. By 1956, he reported that

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\(^{51}\) S Cowled to public relations officer, 9 August 1955, F/2/Vol 6 Fiji-Fijian, NAF.

\(^{52}\) Director of Agriculture to Cowled, 28 March 1955, O 10/21B, F/2/v7 1946–63, NAF; D Walkden Brown, DVD 5–8.


\(^{55}\) Ibid.

\(^{56}\) T C Carne, ‘Dudley Youth Club’, *The Spectator*, 26 October 1955, p. 4.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
they had established an ‘inter-racial’ Christian Youth Group, which he hoped would bring the ‘two peoples together’.\(^{58}\) Observers commented that culturally specific institutions in Fiji should be abolished, and in this instance the mission was keeping up with public opinion.\(^{59}\)

The World Council of Churches and International Missionary Council encouraged Australia to take a leading role in training Pacific church leaders, partly at the insistence of Tuilovoni and the Reverend Sione Havea, a Tongan minister.\(^{60}\) Gribble continued to foster local mission leaders as part of what he called a ‘post-war experiment’. Ministers from Tonga, Fiji and India studied at various colleges across Australia, with Tongans at Leigh College in Sydney, Fijians at King’s College in Brisbane, and Indians and Indo-Fijians at Wesley College in Adelaide. Gribble believed that this training would build strong foundations for the ‘national leadership in the church’,\(^{61}\) and that there could be no greater support offered to the ‘younger churches’ than to help them to ‘develop their own Christian leaders’.\(^{62}\)

The President of the Victorian and Tasmanian General Methodist Conference, the Reverend A Harold Wood, who had worked in Tonga from 1924 to 1937, attended the 1956 World Methodist Conference at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.\(^{63}\) The anti-colonial attitudes held by conference delegates brought him to question the pace of devolution in Fiji, and to see if the process could be hastened. He looked for ways in which to indicate the progress made so far towards the ‘three selves’ church principle. European missionaries in Fiji demonstrated that the mission was self-propagating by sending ministers overseas for training and ministerial work.\(^{64}\) The Reverend Kolinio Saukuru was one of these indigenous missionaries. He was from a chiefly family in Kadavu, and the Reverend Charles O Lelean had identified his talent while he was still at school. Saukuru had since worked for 15 years as a missionary in Australia’s Arnhem Land before returning to Lautoka in Fiji’s Ra circuit.\(^{65}\)

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\(^{60}\) ‘Overseas Missions: The Voice of the Younger Church’, *The Spectator*, 16 May 1956, p. 13.


Similarly, the Reverend Sakenasa Rokotunidau, known to the Australian media as Sakenasa Roko, visited Australia in 1950 to attend the Methodist Theological College in Brisbane before returning to minister around Fiji’s goldfields.66

The mission also ensured that Indo-Fijians had opportunities to undertake ministerial training overseas. Two new Indo-Fijian leaders commenced probation in 1953. One of the new leaders was Daniel Mustapha, the son of one of Hannah Dudley’s converts, who was born in 1930. He was a strong scholar, but had left his studies to work for Morris Hedstrom in Suva. The other was Edward Caleb from Namosau, six years senior to Mustapha. Caleb had been teaching in Rakiraki and Wailailai. At the time of his nomination for probation he was a superintendent of the Toorak Sunday School in Suva.67 Ordaining these young men would ease Deoki’s workload, increasing Indo-Fijian self-governance. By 1955, Caleb and Mustapha were training in Australia at Wesley Theological College in Adelaide with other delegates from India. They stayed with the Reverend Arthur Blacket, who had worked in the Indo-Fijian branch of the mission and represented it at the International Missionary Conference in India nearly 20 years before. He reported that both men had positive opinions about overseas missions.68 They were part of a new generation who were benefiting from Deoki’s hard-fought efforts.

The cultural implications of training ministers overseas concerned observers. Some feared that international experience would dilute Fijian cultural understanding and practice. The Reverend Anare Raiwalui, who attended the 1952 World Council of Churches Youth Conference in Travancore, India, spoke at an event in Suva in 1955, reiterating a point that he had heard made by a ‘distinguished High Church dignitary’: ‘No Church can be said to belong to the land unless the clergy as well as the laity belong to the place in which they are operating.’69 A writer for the Australian Methodist publication The Spectator interpreted this as a show of support for training ‘men and women in the mission districts’.70 However, this remark also related to Fijian bids to assert and preserve connections between the vanua (land), lotu (church) and the iTaukei (people).71 Talatala had to maintain connection to vanua by practicing vakaturaga (respect for chiefs). However, despite the aforementioned efforts of Germon, Bock and Tippett to enhance the theological curriculum at Davuilevu, more work was required to achieve independence. They argued that drastic changes in theological education were still needed to improve the standards

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66 ‘Fijian Preacher’, Sunday Mail, Brisbane, Queensland, 11 June 1950, p. 3.
67 T C Carne to C F Gribble, box 527, 1953 correspondence, MOM 527, sheet 1121, ML.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
of the ministry and ‘meet the fast growing demands of a fast growing mixed-population’. Non-European ministers pushed for overseas training for their elite candidates while concurrently working to improve domestic theological training. Opening opportunities for better quality theological training at home would mean that there was less threat of severing the tie between the ministry and the vanua.

A Wesley Amos continued to aid self-support since finishing his missionary service in 1923. He agreed that improvements in ministerial training were integral for increasing local autonomy. In 1955 he wrote: ‘The European missionary must be prepared to hand over authority to the island leaders just as soon as they are found capable and worthy.’ Since Amos’s time in the mission field, the number of ordained European missionaries had dropped from 15 to nine. He echoed Raiwalui’s warning about the implications of foreign education, arguing that the bulk of the ministry should be trained in Fiji, as ‘those who come to Australia will merely copy our general mode of life, which is far beyond the needs and capacity of their island fields to provide’. Such arguments reflected the desire to maintain the existing social order in Fiji, and efforts were still being made to limit indigenous ministers seeking what was considered to be a ‘European’ lifestyle, which Amos believed was not sustainable in Fiji.

Despite training more local ministers, the mission continued to receive criticism about the pace of devolution. In 1955, the Reverend Austin James from Victoria, Gribble’s brother-in-law, who had worked in the mission at Azamgarh, India, declared: ‘A Church must not always go on being led and ruled by foreigners. It will remain weak and “foreign”, and never win for our Lord the final loyalty of the people.’ The missionaries of this period generally conceded that their time in the field was temporary, and most did not expect the life-long career in the mission that earlier generations had enjoyed. Austin James argued that it was now time for missionaries to leave the colonies.

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72 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
As the spirit of nationalism and independence spreads throughout the world it will touch the life of Pacific Churches. If we have not prepared for this then there will be discontent and relations between people and missionaries, between mother Church and daughter Church will tend to be embittered ... It is opportunity and training and equal fellowship that exorcises the last traces of the inferiority complex.80

James argued, as others had done, that Australia should assume a primary role in preparing indigenous ministers, and added that church members needed to do more. He noted:

Many are the signs all through the world that the period of white domination is at an end. The Church can in its own work bring this period to an end in such a way as to ensure fruitful relations of co-operation in the future. By providing the proper leadership for the Churches of the Pacific we shall so strengthen their inner life that they will be strong to resist the many forces of evil in the world.81

Austin James's criticisms rang in the ears of many missionaries. In March 1957, Stanley Cowled wrote to Gribble to refute the mission board's claim that they were moving too slowly towards independence. He wanted to hand the chairmanship to Setareki Tuilovoni, but Tuilovoni had rebuffed this suggestion, because indigenous ministers were still working under Europeans in China and India, where they had access to higher quality of education through their universities.82 Cowled also said that Tuilovoni had mentioned 'that Indian and Chinese culture and intellect are of a higher standard than the Fijian'.83 It is fair to say, though, while the earlier statements suggest that there had been greater opportunities for indigenous education in other British colonies, that the final line of Tuilovoni's comment reflected the continuing influence of evolutionist ideas in the mission. The perception that Fijians lagged behind other races in terms of intellect continued to be a stumbling block. Cowled knew that the eyes of the world were upon them. He insisted that they were 'anxious to hand over responsibility. We Europeans on the staff have said again and again to the Fijians, “give us the young men of ability, and we will do the rest”.'84 A Harold Wood toured the Pacific missions as President General of the Australian Methodist Church that year. His main aim was to assess progress

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 One of the reasons given by missionaries for the infrequent promotion of Fijians within the mission was the lack of educational opportunities in Fiji. This suggested that if Fijians had access to better education, they would be able to move into the positions held by European missionaries. Yet, in colonies where education was considered to be better quality — such as China and India — non-European ministers were still often excluded from leadership positions, or, when they were not excluded, European missionaries remained in the mission field.
83 S Cowled to C F Gribble, 8 March 1957, File 1956–7, MOM, ML.
84 Ibid.
towards the goal of self-support. His report pointed to the decreasing number of Australian missionaries working in Pacific mission fields as evidence that European missionaries were encouraging self-governance:

Whatever is happening in regard to self-government is through the vote of the young churches themselves. If progress is thought to be somewhat slow this is because of the wish of these young churches. In Fiji, the Australian missionaries are stationed by the Synod, that is, by their Fijian brethren who are in a great majority.85

Wood and Gribble had enough experience with the Pacific to understand that cultural protocols and expectations were being navigated and took time. Both European missionaries and local ministers were trying to define their position in relation to the broader community and effectively train people to manage social change. The ministry in particular, with its new experiences and training opportunities, was shoring up its new position in Fiji’s society.

Tippett took his role as guide to social transition and indigenisation seriously during this time. He recalled that at the 1957 District Synod, Tuilovoni described the ‘native’ ministry as *lewe ni kabakaba* (inhabitants of the ladder):

In spite of sin and separation the ladder was there, and there was contact between heaven and earth, and the angels symbolised the restoring of the broken fellowship. You are responsible, like those angels, for going up and down in between the holy God and the sinful world, taking up the cries of needy men and women, bringing them the blessing from above. This is your ministry as mediators.86

Tippett likened the minister’s role to that of the *mata-ni-vanua*, who were responsible for negotiations between chiefs and commoners. This was a demonstrated attempt to define the ministry not as chiefs or as a replacement for chiefs, but rather as a variation on the role of the *mata-ni-vanua*.87 Typical of Tippett, he tried to recognise the ways in which Christianity was fitting into the Fijian context.

In 1958, the number of European missionaries in Fiji had dropped to 10, Fijian ministers numbered 156, and there were three Indo-Fijian ministers — Deoki, Caleb and Mustapha. Fijian and Rotuman adherents totalled 134,574, members 38,000, and Indo-Fijian adherents had swelled to 2,000, with members at 773.88 Gribble consoled Cowled, who had suggested that the political and

87  Ibid.
88  S Cowled to G Rawnsley Esq., 19 September 1958, F/2/vol 6 Fiji-Fijian, NAF.
racial situation in Fiji had slowed indigenous autonomy. Gribble wrote that ‘sometimes I think that a certain amount of pressure is to be put on the people to accept greater responsibility’. The frank nature of their discussions reflected the different dynamic that had emerged between the mission board and the field under Gribble’s leadership. Independence was considered inevitable and to be within reach.

However, discontent in the Indo-Fijian community was not so much from the continued presence of European missionaries but the continuation of the hierarchical aspects of the racialised system of governance, applied to wages for example. Cowled wrote to Wood in 1959 that even the most radical anti-colonialists amongst the Indo-Fijian ‘have repeatedly said that we need more, not fewer, European missionaries’. Cowled replied: ‘Some of these say they will “fight to the death until the inequality of salaries is dead and buried”.’ Regardless of Gribble’s efforts to ease the relationship with Indo-Fijian ministers, much of the broader Indo-Fijian community continued to associate the mission with colonialism. Cowled reiterated what he had heard from missionary the Reverend Doug Fullerton regarding Indo-Fijian perceptions of the mission: ‘Indians generally, and rural Indians in particular, identify the missionaries with the CSR Co. This Indian said, the Indians think the missionary is a supporter of the status quo and therefore are on the side of the CSR.’ This was perilous. The close affiliation between the CSR and the mission in the past still lingered. Strikes throughout the previous decades had aired the frustrations felt by Fijian and Indo-Fijian farmers with their working conditions. Until the mission was able to sufficiently differentiate itself from the CSR, known for the appalling conditions forced upon indentured Indian workers, it would have only limited success. Deoki, the most vocal opponent to the racialised nature of the church, had commenced calls for unity but was rarely heard over the din of missionary preoccupation with the Fijian branch. Cowled seemed conflicted as to how to have European missionaries continue working in Fiji while addressing the criticisms of colonialism.

Tippett wrote a letter to Gribble in 1959 that summarised the confusion surrounding the perceived need for unity as the mission neared independence. He described the ‘fear of losing identity’ that had emerged in both branches of the mission. He was pleased that the revisions to the constitution, adopted

89 C F Gribble to S Cowled 22 March 1957, File 1956–7, MOM.
90 C F Gribble to R Deoki 6 March 1952, Gribble to Telfer, 12 June 1952, box 97, 1952 correspondence, MOM 527, ML.
91 S Cowled to A H Wood, 9 April 1959, F/1/1946–63 (e), NAF.
92 Ibid.
in 1946, had dissolved the European synod.\footnote{D Telfer, Of Love and Privilege, Fullarton, South Australia, Colin Telfer, 2009, p. 51.} It had been replaced with the united synod, where Fijians and Indo-Fijians could come together, yet Tippett believed that the responsibilities of the united synod were too few. The bulk of mission work was done by the Fijian and Indo-Fijian synods, independent of one another. He did not think that these two synods should merge, as he hoped to preserve culture in each community. Unity was being pushed, he thought, in a ‘western’ fashion, and to continue to force it would be fatal for worship in both districts. Tippett had recommended the mission move to independent church conference status with the existing structure of the United, Fijian and Indo-Fijian synods. He felt that it was both the natural path for the mission and would allow both Fijians and Indo-Fijians to continue to worship in their ‘respective culture patterns’, and would not necessarily stop ‘integration’ from occurring, ‘which we must achieve or perish’.\footnote{A R Tippett to C F Gribble, 26 September 1959, TIP 70/38/6.} Always considerate of culture, Tippett was concerned that most of his European colleagues in the synod ‘think in Australian and not in Fiji’, and had very different opinions to his own in terms of theology and anthropology. He was not sure whether he was outdated or ‘haywire’, and worried that the mission was taking the wrong course.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 9–10.}

Chiefs dismissed the suggestion for the continuation of separate synods. Tippett, by then a member of the teaching staff at Davuilevu, was ‘horrified’ when some recommended that a ‘purely Fijian’ church conference be established instead. Tippett had taken issue with the influence of chiefs in the church in the 1940s, and he was again critical of their ability to sway the opinion of ministers in the synod. Tippett believed that the chiefs’ main concern about integration was the feared loss of identity, which he felt was ‘not without some justification’.

He had, however, already commenced efforts towards integrating the church, with some of his students from Davuilevu ministering at monthly joint services held at Dilkusha, and evangelising at the Nausori market.\footnote{Ibid., p. 5.} In 1960, Hindi would be taught at Davuilevu for the first time. Some of the students could already speak some Hindi, and one Hindi-speaking Fijian student had already offered to work in the Indo-Fijian branch.\footnote{Ibid., p. 6.}

There were significant hurdles that had to be crossed in order for the mission to become independent. Ministerial training, both international and domestic, was an important issue that received a great deal of attention throughout the 1950s. While Pacific ministers had greater opportunities for training overseas in Australia or the United States of America, European missionaries in the field
worked to improve the standards of theological education at the Davuilevu theological school. Enhancing ministerial training would, it was hoped, increase European confidence in local ministers and encourage them to hand responsibility to the ‘young’ church.

The colony’s complex racial divisions formed another hurdle. Local ministers did not necessarily want to expel European missionaries from the islands, but they certainly wanted autonomy. The most difficult challenge was not anti-colonial sentiment, though that was a source of anxiety, but the question of whether segregation could be dissolved to create a unified Fijian church. While early discussions suggested that unity could be achieved through the creation of one church, there were still many who sought a church divided, with synods and circuits split according to race, if not entirely separate churches for Fijians and Indo-Fijians. There was a tension between the calls for unity from the international ecumenical movement and the concepts and politics around culture and race. Anthropologists and ecumenical leaders discussed the methods and impact of achieving integration and assimilation; there was resistance or lack of confidence about pursuing this path in Fiji’s Methodist communities. As the mission drew closer to independence, the mission’s leadership was perplexed about how to draw the Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities together into one church.