

Chronology

- 3000 BP The Fiji Islands are occupied by the Lapita people. While it is possible they landed on the Suva peninsula, archaeological evidence suggests other areas of Fiji are settled first. Later, iTaukei may have traversed the island of Viti Levu, from Saivou in what is now Ra province, or from Matailobau, close to the junction of the Wainibuka and Wainimala rivers. The people of Suva peninsula speak two languages. The Walu communalect is spoken by the fishers and carpenters who live in or near what is now called Walu Bay, and the Suva communalect is introduced by people from the hill country.
- 1643 AD The Fiji Islands are sighted by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman. They were later visited by Captain James Cook and Captain William Bligh, who were followed by traders in the early 1800s.
- 1800s European accounts suggest there are at least four habitations on the Suva peninsula: a ring-ditch fortification known as Solia, and three hillforts known as Nauluvatu, Nairairaiwaqa and Vatuwaqa. Solia is a new settlement, and later becomes the combined village of Suva. The title of the chief is Rokotui Suva. Different accounts attribute its founding to one of the sons of Roko Saketa, namely Batilekaleka (also known as Batileka or Tuivuya) or Tabakaucoro (also known as Rō Ravulo or Ravulo).
- 1835 Methodist missionaries David Cargill and William Cross arrive in the eastern Lau group with the intention of converting Fijians to Christianity.
- 1839 A mission is set up in Rewa, east of Suva.

- 1840 Methodist missionary Thomas Jagger records that one Suva man became Christian on 22 February, and Methodist missionary David Cargill records the conversion of the 'King of Suva' (Ravulo) and two of his people on 17 May. That same year, the United States Exploring Expedition surveys Suva Harbour.
- 1841 The *matanitū* of Rewa and Suva prepare for war.
- 1842 On 23 June, the Rewa army attack Suva. Englishmen William Diaper and Robert Stevens visit Suva to harvest *dakua*.
- 1843 On 5 April, the Rewa fleet and its allies land troops at Suva and begin their assault. Over several days Suva is sacked and burnt. On 9 April the people surrender and are massacred shortly after. Ravulo, the Rokotui Suva, and the survivors flee Suva.
- 1844 In January, Bau and Rewa are at war and the Suva army joins the fight. The war concludes in December when Lomainikoro, the chiefly village of Rewa, is sacked.
- c. 1845 Suva is rebuilt with the assistance of its allies. Ravulo sends a delegation to Bau to ask for the hand of Adi Elenoa Mila, and later they will have four children.
- 1849 On 4 July the store of an American trader, JB Williams, is destroyed by fire on nearby Nukulau Island. The Americans claim a debt is owed by Bauan chief Ratu Seru Cakobau.
- c. 1850 Suva wins a battle against Vuna and kills their leader Rō Camaisala.
- 1852 In the passage on the reef opposite Nukulau, the Sydney whaling ship *Solomon Saltus* drifts ashore and is wrecked.
- c. 1854 Suva probably becomes Christian at this time, following the conversion of their overlord Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau.
- 1855 Cakobau and his Bauan forces secure victory over Rewa at the Battle of Kaba, aided by Tongan warriors.
- c. 1857 Ravulo dies in Bau. His widow and children return to Bau. His son Avorosa Tuivuya (also known as Ratu Aporosa or Ambrose) succeeds him as Rokotui Suva.

- 1860 The settlement at Levuka grows as white settlers begin to arrive in larger numbers. Colonel WT Smythe recommends to the British Government that if it chooses to annex the islands, the capital should be moved from Levuka to Suva to allow for expansion.
- 1861 British war ship HMS *Harrier* destroys the towns of Vutia and Kinoya.
- 1864 The Polynesian labour trade begins, as labourers recruited from the islands of New Hebrides and Solomons are brought to Fiji to work in the cotton plantations. They later become known as *kai Solomoni*.
- 1868 Cakobau persuades the Rokotui Suva to allow him to sell most of the Suva peninsula to the Melbourne-based Polynesia Company to settle his debts.
- 1869 The first issue of the *Fiji Times* appears on Saturday, 4 September in Levuka. In May, the *Springbok* carries 18 passengers to Suva. One of the passengers, Frederick Cook, is the Polynesia Company's manager who is sent to investigate the delays in obtaining titles to all 200,000 acres granted by Cakobau. The *Springbok* is followed by the bulk of the new settlers on the *Alhambra* on 4 September the following year. These travellers include shareholders in the Polynesia Company with the intention of planting cotton or sugarcane.
- 1871 A serious cyclone causes extensive damage to Suva. The first sitting of the House of Representatives of Cakobau's government begins in Levuka on 1 August.
- 1872 The first cane sugar mill in Fiji is built in Suva and is owned by Paul Joske and William Brewer. Known as Naiqaqi, it is located just off Victoria Parade (near the present-day Fiji Broadcasting Commission building). In November a major disturbance breaks out on the premises of the Suva Sugar Plantation Company.
- 1872 Suva is designated as a Port of Entry.
- 1873 Ratu Aporosa is appointed *buli* of Suva. Cakobau's government attempts to control the interior Colo region of Viti Levu who dispute his claim to be 'Tui Viti'.

SUVA STORIES

- 1874 On 10 October, Fiji formally becomes a colony of Great Britain with the signing of the Deed of Cession in Levuka.
- 1875 A measles epidemic breaks out in Fiji, killing at least a quarter of the population. In December the first British governor of the colony, Sir Arthur Gordon, travels to Suva on a scoping trip to consider the suitability of the area as the new capital.
- 1876 Suva's first major infrastructure development, the Waimanu Road, begins.
- c. 1877 A new *buli* of Suva, Mosese Rokotalau, is appointed. The British Home Office and Queen give approval for Fiji's capital to move from Levuka to Suva.
- 1878 The Lands Claim Commission begins investigating European claims in the Suva area and discovers only some blocks claimed by company shareholders are occupied by bona fide settlers.
- 1879 Five hundred indentured labourers arrive from India on 14 May on board the ship *Leonidas*. Most of the *Leonidas* labourers work on Victoria Parade, Suva's main thoroughfare. Around the same time Ratu Aporosa is reappointed as *buli* of Suva.
- 1880 Ninety-two Suva allotments are sold at a public auction under an *ivi* tree by Nubukalou Creek on 22 November. This place, later known as the 'ivi triangle', is distinct from another *ivi* tree located just over 100 metres south, next to the ocean.
- 1881 The first legislation for the control and management of towns is passed – Suva was first proclaimed a town under this Ordinance on 2 July and a Town Board was established. Ordinance No. 4 for Regulating the Alignments of Streets in the Town of Suva is passed. Early reclamation work begins along Thomson Street; the Queens Wharf is constructed and a botanical gardens established near Waimanu Road. George L Griffiths launches the *Suva Times* on 29 October.

- 1882 On 30 August the governor and his staff move from Levuka and Suva formally becomes the capital. By August or September the iTaukei of Suva village are moved to Narikoso, which became known as Suvavou ('New Suva'). The land they once occupied becomes the grounds of the Governor's Residence, and later the Fiji Museum and botanical gardens.
- 1883 Suva Town Board is established and Suva Public School is founded.
- 1884 The Public Lunatic Asylum is established. On the night of 11 May the Indian immigrant ship *Syria* is wrecked on Nasilai reef in 1884. It is one of the worst maritime disasters in Fiji's history – 59 people die in the tragedy.
- 1885 The Fiji Medical School is founded, training students from around the Pacific region. Pacific Islanders from Wallis and Futuna are brought over to assist with the construction of the Sacred Heart Cathedral (which will be consecrated and completed in 1902), and are then settled in Villa Maria, a piece of Catholic-owned land, located just below Mead Road.
- 1886 On 3 May several gangs of labourers at the plantation in Koronivia (Lower Rewa) organise a strike, with at least 40 of them walking to the Immigration Office in Suva town. The first telephone line is installed between Government House and the Colonial Secretary's Office in March. Tramways are also constructed on Pier Street, Victoria Parade, Pratt Street, Scott Street, Thomson Street and Renwick Road.
- 1887 The *Fiji Times* moves its offices from Levuka to Suva and incorporates the *Suva Times* into its publication. One hundred and thirty labourers from Nausori plantation march in protest to the agent-general's residence on 6 April.
- 1888 The Suva warden (mayor), Simeon Lazarus, and the Suva Town Board attempt to prohibit 'Indians, Natives of Fiji, and Polynesians' from using the Suva Sea Baths.
- 1890 A market for the sale of produce is finally completed. The road from Vatuwaqa to Nasova (in Nasēsē) is completed.

- 1891 The Suva Sea Baths are opened to the public near the current site of the Suva Olympic Pool. Later, perhaps in 1927, a smaller pool of inferior quality was constructed for non-Europeans beside the main baths.
- 1892 A Native Dances Ordinance prohibits all *meke* or ceremonial dancing and singing within town boundaries without a permit. A curfew is also imposed between 11 pm and 5 am for 'Indians' and all Islanders.
- 1898 Ratu Aporosa leads a group of eight Suvavou elders and presents a written submission to government expressing their dissatisfaction with the £200 that villagers were given as compensation for their move to Suvavou. Miss Hannah Dudley establishes the first Methodist school in Toorak for the education of Indian girls. It later becomes Dudley House School.
- 1902 The Trans-Pacific cable reaches Fiji, connecting North America with Australia and New Zealand.
- 1904 The Fiji Museum is founded. It is moved several times over the next few decades, to the Town Hall, Veivueti House and Carnegie Library. The first motor car arrives in Suva on 28 December.
- 1905 The Queen Victoria Memorial Hall (now Suva Town Hall) is opened. The Australian cricket team plays a game against Fiji at Albert Park on its way to tour England.
- 1909 The Suva City Carnegie Library is opened on 20 November.
- 1910 A fierce cyclone damages Suva on 25 March.
- 1911 Reclamation works to the north of Nubukalou Creek for the new Kings Wharf and the Public Works Department depot. The Queens Wharf is demolished and a new wharf constructed the following year.
- 1913 The botanical gardens are moved to their current location, at Governor Thurston's request.
- 1914 The Grand Pacific Hotel is built by the New Zealand-owned Union Steamship Company.
- 1915 The first Fijian contingent sails for war in Europe aboard the RMS *Makura*.

- 1916 The Indian indentured labour trade (known as *girit*) ends. An estimated 60,537 Indian *giritiya* came to Fiji between 1879 and 1916.
- 1917 The Fiji Labour Corps departs for the European warfront on 19 May, the day after a farewell at the Grand Pacific Hotel, and a march through the town to the wharf.
- 1918 Suva Grammar School is officially opened on 9 July. A few months later on 14 November the Spanish Flu is carried to Fiji aboard the New Zealand ship *Talune* from Auckland. Approximately 9,000 people (5 per cent of the population) died between November 1918 and April 1919.
- 1919 Suva Methodist Boys' School is established for Fijian and Indo-Fijian boys in Toorak.
- 1920 Indian workers at the Public Works Department and the Suva Municipal Council go on strike. It spreads beyond the capital and leads to imprisonments and violent reprisals.
- 1921 Government House is struck by lightning that starts a fire. It is rebuilt seven years later.
- 1923 A fire breaks out in Cumming Street on 11 February, destroying a large number of buildings including the market.
- 1928 On 5 June, the first aircraft to land in Fiji touches down in Albert Park. The *Southern Cross* is captained by Australian pilot Charles Kingsford Smith. That same year, the Central Medical School (formerly Fiji Medical School) is established.
- 1934 Ballantine Memorial School is founded in Muanikau for the education of girls. The Bank of New South Wales building (now Westpac) is constructed on the site of the old post office. This site is formally the site of the first market.
- 1935 The Methodist Centenary Church is established in Steward Street. Broadcasting services begin in Fiji by a local subsidiary of Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd.
- 1936 The Public Lunatic Asylum is renamed the Suva Mental Hospital.
- 1937 The foundation stone is laid for the Government Buildings opposite Albert Park. It is finished in 1939. A new wing is added in 1967.

- 1940 Following the outbreak of World War II the previous year, the 18th Army Troops Company arrives in Suva, followed by the 8th New Zealand Infantry Brigade. A number of alterations follow – a main camp is established at Samabula. Nausori Airport is built, Suva Girls' Grammar School is converted into a military hospital and construction begins on air raid shelters, underground tunnels and defensive guns as part of the war preparations. The Native Lands Trust Board is established with its headquarters in Suva to oversee land tenure for the welfare of indigenous Fijians.
- 1941 Another damaging cyclone hits Suva on 20 February.
- 1942 On 18 July, the United States army assumes full responsibility for the defence of Fiji. Air raid alarms are tested, night-time blackouts and a curfew are imposed.
- 1943 The Royal New Zealand Air Force's Catalinas start arriving at the newly constructed air base at Laucala Bay in April. The 164th Infantry Regiment is allocated the role of defending Suva and the coast to the west.
- 1945 Union Club, Fiji's first multiracial social body, is formed in Suva. A Victory Parade marches to Albert Park on 16 August.
- 1946 The national census confirms Indo-Fijians outnumber iTaukei for the first time.
- 1950 The first South Pacific conference is held in Suva.
- 1951 A commercial flying boat service by Tasman Empire Airways Limited begins operations from Auckland to Suva and then to Apia and Rarotonga. The service to Suva is replaced by DC-6 aircraft flying to Nadi in 1954.
- 1952 Eight hundred men of the 1st Battalion Fiji Infantry Regiment board the troopship *Asturias* for Malaya on 8 January. Another damaging cyclone wreaks havoc on Suva on 29 January. The town boundary is increased to an area of over 6 square miles.

- 1953 On 14 September an earthquake destroys houses and creates a tsunami that breaks over the sea wall in town, damaging the wharf and many vessels. Suva is proclaimed a city on 7 October under the Local Government (Town) Ordinance of 1947. On 17 December Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh make their first visit to Suva during a six-month Commonwealth tour.
- 1954 On 1 February Queen Elizabeth II arrives in Suva aboard her royal yacht. The Fiji Museum is moved to a permanent building at its present location in Thurston Gardens. The Fiji College of Agriculture is established.
- 1956 The first Miss Hibiscus Festival beauty pageant is held. It becomes an annual event in Suva. That same year the liquor permit system that regulates the consumption of alcohol by non-whites is relaxed, and Suva Sea Baths are no longer segregated. Residents celebrate the return of soldiers from the Malayan Campaign who march through the city. Albert Park also hosts a cricket match between Fiji and the West Indies, which Fiji wins.
- 1957 The Fiji Law Society is formed in Suva.
- 1958 iTaukei statesman Sir Ratu Lala Sukuna's casket is driven through Suva on 9 June. A Housing Authority is established to address the pressures caused by population growth and the first public housing was constructed in the suburb of Raiwaqa a year later.
- 1959 Between 7 and 12 December the Wholesale and Retail General Workers' Union goes on strike to demand a basic wage of 6 pounds sterling. The stalemate between unionists and the government leads to unprecedented rioting and looting in the city. A curfew is declared and the military is mobilised. In the same year the Derrick Technical Institute is established on a block of land located at the junction of Princes and King's roads, formerly the site of Suva's Public Works Department Depot. The Derrick Institute later became the Fiji Institute of Technology, and then the Fiji National University.

- 1960 Ratu Sukuna Memorial School is opened in Nabua. The Boys Grammar School and the Girls Grammar School decide to unite and move the combined school to Veiuto, Nasēsē. The Suva Mental Hospital is renamed St Giles Psychiatric Hospital around this time.
- 1963 Derrick Technical Institute is opened. The first South Pacific Games are held in Suva.
- 1965 The National Federation Party, the first political party to be formalised in Fiji, establishes its Suva branch. The Pacific Theological College is established.
- 1968 The University of the South Pacific (USP) is opened at Laucala Bay on 5 February. iTaukei rallies and marches in Suva and other towns protest against the Federation Party regaining all communal Indian seats in Legislative Council by-elections.
- 1970 Queen Elizabeth II presents a charter to Masiofa Fetauimalemau Mata'afa of Western Samoa, the first pro-chancellor of USP, at a grand ceremony in the former Royal New Zealand Air Force hangar at Laucala Bay on 5 March. Fiji celebrates its independence from the British Empire at Albert Park on 10 October. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara is Fiji's first prime minister.
- 1971 Fiji's first outdoor rock music festival is held at Laucala Bay. In July, the National Archives of Fiji is formally established with an amendment of the Public Records Ordinance. It has been known as the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission since 1954.
- 1972 The first South Pacific Festival of Arts is held at Albert Park and lasts a fortnight. The first general elections under the 1970 constitution are held, and the Alliance Party wins 33 of the 52 seats in the Lower House.
- 1973 Ratu Sir George Cakobau is appointed governor-general and occupies Government House on Queen Elizabeth Drive.
- 1976 The botanical gardens are renamed Thurston Gardens.

- 1977 Suva hosts the British Lions in 1977 at Buckhurst Park in a rugby game that Fiji wins 25–21. In that same year the national soccer team defeats Australia 1–0, also at Buckhurst Park.
- 1979 The South Pacific Games are held in Suva from 28 August to 8 September.
- 1984 The Reserve Bank of Fiji is opened.
- 1987 Following the national election, a coalition government led by Dr Timoci Bavadra comes to power. Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka executes a military coup d'état on 14 May. Armed troops enter the Parliament buildings in Suva. Rabuka conducts a second coup in September, after which Fiji is declared a republic.
- 1990 A new constitution is promulgated giving Fijians 37 seats in Parliament, Indians 27, general voters five and Rotumans one.
- 1992 The first general election under the new 1990 constitution is conducted and Rabuka becomes prime minister. In June a new Parliament complex, built with indigenous Fijian designs, is opened in Veiuto. Suva hosts the World Netball Youth Cup.
- 1993 Community psychiatric nursing for the Suva area begins.
- 1997 St Giles Day Care Centre for the rehabilitation of discharged patients is established. For the first time the leader of the Opposition, Jai Ram Reddy, addresses the Great Council of Chiefs in Suva on 6 June.
- 1997 Following a Constitution Review Commission that was appointed in 1995, the Constitution Amendment Bill becomes law.
- 1999 The Fijian Labour Party wins the national elections and forms the People's Coalition Government with three other political parties. Mahendra Chaudhry is sworn in as prime minister, and becomes the first Indo-Fijian prime minister of Fiji. Hardline iTaukei nationalists are angered by this outcome.

- 2000 On 19 May, soldiers of the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit led by George Speight enter Parliament buildings and hold the parliamentarians hostage for 56 days. Civil unrest follows with looting and rioting in town. An interim government is appointed on 28 July.
- 2001 Laisenia Qarase is elected prime minister when his party, the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua, wins the majority of seats in the national election.
- 2003 The South Pacific Games are held in Suva from 28 June to 12 July.
- 2006 Commodore Josaia Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama seizes power in a military coup on 5 December.
- 2009 The Great Council of Chiefs complex is opened at Draiba.
- 2012 The Great Council of Chiefs is de-established by military decree.
- 2013 A new constitution is promulgated by a military-backed interim government. It replaces the Senate and House of Representatives with a 50-member Parliament chamber.
- 2014 Bainimarama's Fiji First Party wins the national election and Parliament returns to the Government Buildings on Victoria Parade.
- 2016 On 20 February, the most powerful cyclone to hit Fiji, Cyclone Winston, makes landfall causing massive devastation and killing 42 people. Fiji wins its first gold medal in Sevens Rugby at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. The men's team parades through the city on 12 August.
- 2019 The central building of the Great Council of Chiefs is destroyed by fire.
- 2020 The COVID-19 pandemic breaches Fiji's quarantine controls on 19 March when the first case is recorded in Lautoka, and subsequent cases are traced to Suva. Borders are closed to nonresidents, and curfews and lockdowns are imposed. The last instance of community transmission is recorded on 18 April and restrictions are gradually eased. COVID cases are limited to managed quarantine facilities at the border. Fiji celebrates its 50th anniversary of Independence at Albert Park on 10 October. By the end of the year, Fiji records 49 COVID cases in total.

- 2021 On 19 April a case of COVID community transmission in Nadi is detected and rapidly spreads throughout Viti Levu. The new ‘Delta’ variant is highly infectious, so containment areas are established in Suva, Nausori and Lami, and Suva is placed under lockdown on 26 April. The World Health Organization threshold for an out-of-control pandemic is a daily test positivity rate of 5 per cent, which Fiji passes in June. By July, COVID-positive cases exceed 1,000 per day and health services are under severe stress. On 22 July the government announces that it will no longer test people with COVID symptoms in the Suva–Nausori containment zone, and advises symptomatic people to self-quarantine at home. As the pace of vaccinations increases, some businesses are permitted to reopen. Fiji’s borders re-open to international visitors from 1 December.
- 2022 The Ministry of Health confirms the presence of a new COVID variant named ‘Omicron’ in Fiji on 4 January. Suva businesses welcome the decision of the Fijian Government to lift its nationwide curfew on 7 February. As of 15 August, Fiji has recorded 67,969 infections and 875 deaths directly attributed to COVID since March 2020.

This text is taken from *Suva Stories: A History of the Capital of Fiji*,
edited by Nicholas Halter, published 2022, The Australian National
University, Canberra, Australia.