

Language Note

In 2010, the Fiji Government decreed that all Fiji citizens would be legally called ‘Fijian’, a term once reserved for the indigenous people. Now indigenous Fijians are officially identified as ‘iTaukei’ and descendants of Indian immigrants as ‘Fijians of Indian descent’. Indian indentured labourers who came to Fiji initially identified themselves as ‘giritiyas’. They and their descendants, and later Indian settlers and their descendants, have been described variously as ‘Indo-Fijians’ and ‘Fiji Indians’ in public and scholarly discourse. This text quotes historical sources that reflect the language use and attitudes of their time, such as ‘native’ (used as a synonym of ‘Fijian’), ‘coolie’ (a derogatory term for ‘giritiyas’) and ‘Polynesian’ (used to refer to labourers from other Pacific islands, including Micronesia and Melanesia).

The spelling of indigenous names also varies throughout this text, depending on the historical sources used. For example, ‘Nubukalou Creek’ was more commonly spelt ‘Nabukalou Creek’ in colonial documents and Ratu Avorosa was also known as Ratu Aporosa/Ambrose. Over time, the names of indigenous places have been spelt differently (such as Coloisuva, Colo i Suva and Colo-i-Suva, or Viti Levu and Vitilevu), and the correct pronunciation of placenames, and also the pronunciation of certain terms, may not be typically reflected in everyday usage (e.g. Rātū is more commonly spelt Ratu).

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