

Sere dina ni Lotu Wesele e Viti:

“True Songs”

**The History, Culture and Music of Fijian
Methodist Indigenous Liturgy**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The
Australian National University.

I testify that this thesis is entirely my own original work

Preface

My connection with the Fiji Islands dates back to 1879 when my great-great grandfather Leslie Walker sailed to Levuka, then capital of Fiji, with his wife and family. Fiji had just ceded to Great Britain (1874) and was a young colony. Walker accepted the job of Colonial Postmaster and is credited with establishing the postal system. Since then our *mataqali* (extended family) has lived continuously in Fiji until migrating to Australia in 1970.

My interest in the indigenous music of the Methodist Church was aroused on a fieldtrip to Fiji in 1994 when researching Fijian women's lullabies for my Master of Music degree. I was told of the indigenous liturgy of the Methodist Church and in particular the singing of *same*. Although I was well aware of fine Methodist hymnody, this music sounded intriguing and on completion of my degree I hoped at some time to undertake a full study.

When such an opportunity came, my husband Edward and I went to Fiji in 2001 on a six-month fieldtrip to record and collect the music of which I had only, as it transpired, a very sketchy knowledge. It was difficult at first, even with my Fijian background, to know the protocol involved, the right people to consult, the logistics of travel and communication or even what to record. Fortunately I had been a judge at the Annual Methodist Choir Competition and met Qalo Rokotakala, the convener of the Competition, who was to be my mentor. Through her work at Methodist Headquarters, Epworth House, Suva, Qalo had all the contacts and the authority to help me along the way. I am indebted to Qalo for her help and friendship and to her daughter Vono Kula, interpreter and scribe, who often accompanied us.

Part of the difficulty of working in Fiji is distance, access and timing. Most but not all recordings were made during Sunday worship. Village protocol demanded we explain our presence to the chief through a spokesman, and meet with the Methodist pastor before any service or recording session. This took serious and at times frustrating organisation, especially if the journey was long and in times of floods hazardous. To accomplish all this we needed to arrive early in the village to complete formalities and

be in the church half an hour before worship to record the singing of the catechism (*taro*), followed by a two and half hour service conducted in the vernacular to record either a *same* or *polotu*. These three indigenous or indigenised compositions comprise the liturgy.

To collect the fullest possible representation from the different Fijian communities I was greatly assisted by Miriama Dituvaluva who through her many connections particularly in Vitilevu and Cakaudrove organised excellent recording opportunities. Miri is my translator, interpreter and friend whose generous help and patient guidance through the minefield of Fijian custom gave me an understanding of Fijian society in breadth and depth. To Miri I owe deep gratitude.

Fiji is a collection of different social groups each with its own dialect and customs, facts overlooked by many researchers who make sweeping generalisations about Fiji and the Fijians. I was to discover those differences as I travelled, particularly when it came to the naming and placing of vocal parts. The text of the two indigenous compositions *same* and *polotu*, in indigenous poetic form, are oral compositions and dependent on faithful memories. Lauan *polotu* in particular with its indigenised form (early Western and Tongan hymns) utilises names not necessarily Fijian for vocal parts. I discovered many interesting variations and had to be vigilant to correctly identify parts regardless of the name. This liturgy involves the whole congregation in participation and is particular to the Lauans who are proud of their connection to the initial missionary endeavour in Fiji.

Over six months of fieldwork I amassed a considerable and rare collection, acquired an intimate knowledge of the many communities visited, and received kind and generous hospitality throughout Fiji. Above all was the realisation of the value of this research for the future preservation of this unique indigenous liturgy. So many people generously and patiently sat with me by the hour answering countless questions about their music and communities. To those men and women and to the Methodist church for all their help and encouragement I will always be grateful and hope that this research will inspire congregations to keep singing their liturgy.

Back in Australia began the work of researching, discovering, transcribing, analysing, and writing; in all of this I was guided by my two longsuffering supervisors, Stephen Wild and Bronwen Douglas, whose extraordinary patience has at long last guided this thesis to completion. Well done both and many grateful thanks. So too the friends who patiently read through the many drafts and gave valuable advice. And to my Edward – what a journey – through rain, heat, *yaqona*, mosquitos, flies, mountainous seas, leaking boats, nonexistent roads: you saw the value of this music and patiently stayed, supported and cajoled me into finishing – as you say – ‘for the Fijians’. Thank you.

Abstract

In 1835 Fijian society was a complex web of discrete social groups, connected either by common ancestry or political affiliation, ruled by chiefs with varying degrees of authority. The largest and most powerful were the political *matanitu* (confederations) whose paramount chiefs ruled through *turaga bale kei Viti*, a powerful chiefly system sustained through tribute, approbation and reciprocity. Maintaining their power was a paramount force at the time of missionary contact when constant warfare embroiled all Fijian societies to a greater or lesser extent.

The Methodist evangelists, first Westerners to make an impact of consequence on Fijian society, realised the overwhelmingly challenging task of introducing Christianity to so complex a society: tyranny of distance, deified chiefs, rigid mores, dialectic differences, diverse religious beliefs, priests with a vested interest in maintaining power; all these strands omnipresent in an ancient society with limited Western contact. Acceptance of the Christian God would challenge fundamental tenets of chiefly authority and power, as well as Fijian spiritual belief and worship. Making meaningful progress involved the missionaries acknowledging Fijian authority, working within the Fijian social system and, of paramount importance, training and providing Fijian Christian acceptors with the tools for their work of evangelisation.

Most effective of all the tools of written language, single dialect, literacy and education, was the utilisation for a Christian liturgy of the *meke*. *Meke*, all indigenous sung poetry, is the repository of Fijian oral culture and the one unifying factor in Fijian societies at the time of missionary contact. Events of consequence, past and present, are recorded in the music text known and sung by all indigenous Fijians. Here then was the vital tool for imparting the principles of Christian theology in the semiotics of their first language. Known as *taro* (catechism), *same* and *polotu*, these compositions together with Methodist prayers gave Fijians a complete theological framework in the tradition of their music.

This thesis examines the pivotal role of Christianised *meke* as an evangelising tool in the introduction of Christianity. The text of this music spoke directly to Fijians in their oral tradition. Understanding the impact of that contact is to know the elements constituting Fijian society at the time of missionary contact, to be studied with the ethos of the missionaries and the process of adjoining Methodist theocracy to a polytheistic society. Examination of the music and text of the liturgy will show how an indigenous form so completely and uniquely accommodated a rubric for Christian worship.

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Chapter 1

Overview, Methodology and Chapter Summaries

Background

The introduction of Christianity into the Fiji islands was a consequence of the emerging new social orders and ethos in Europe and Great Britain in particular in the late 18th and the early 19th centuries, beginning with the Enlightenment, followed by the Industrial Revolution, the Romantic Movement and the Protestant Evangelical Revival. With these new orders came social upheaval that challenged the fundamental tenets and spiritual ethos of the old order.¹

As the Industrial Revolution progressed, Britain began to look outside Europe for new trade and investment opportunities, and consequential new spheres of influence. Attention turned to the Pacific, a vast region of unknown possibilities, yet to be comprehensively surveyed and mapped. To this end Captain James Cook of the British Royal Navy was dispatched to the Pacific in 1768 to map still uncharted territory. He subsequently made three remarkable voyages. At the time of his death in 1779 he had charted many of the Pacific island countries (though not Fiji or Samoa) opening the opportunity for new trade routes and British expansion. Cook's expeditions comprised scientists; artists and other documenters who kept meticulously detailed accounts, records, drawings and diaries and brought back strange and wonderful artifacts from the journeys. Many of these written accounts were published and made accessible to a now more literate public. On a political level there followed an expansion of British imperialism when the English followed Cook into the Pacific with the establishment of a convict colony in New Holland in 1788.²

In parallel with the scientific, industrial and political changes were religious changes. From the mid 18th century a group of ordained English clergymen of the established Church of England, disaffected with the governance of the church's hierarchy and the

¹ See Briggs 1978, Young 1966 and Royal 1987.

² For recent histories of Cook's voyages see Salmond 2003 and Thomas 2003.

spiritual neglect of the working class, formed a group within the church of likeminded clergy and laymen to bring to these people a fundamental Christian theology and ethos based on the Bible. Under the spiritual guidance of John and Charles Wesley and others, these Evangelical Christian groups eventually became separate entities from the Church of England, the Wesleyan group forming the Wesleyan or Methodist Church. As these evangelical Societies gained in popularity, establishing themselves as a viable Christian alternative to the Establishment, their influence and appeal spread to middle class liberals attracted to the moral and effective organisation of these Christian groups. In due course, like their politicians, the Evangelical groups turned their attention to the peoples of the Pacific. It was perceived that this vast field of souls was in need of salvation, and to this end British and later American missionaries came to the Pacific island countries in a spirit of evangelical zeal, not only to save the souls of the Pacific islanders but in the process to gain or prove their own spiritual salvation.

These highly organised new Protestant groups formed mission societies for evangelisation within and without Britain. Privately funded by their middle class adherents, the missionaries were trained and supported by members in the spirit of the Christian ethos of bringing souls to Christ. As they moved into the Pacific after 1797 the Protestant missionary societies, realising the confusion of imparting different Christian philosophical and theological interpretations, agreed to a division of labour in 'assigning' particular island countries groups to specific Christian denominations. Fiji, Tonga and Samoa were to be the province of the Wesleyans (Methodists).

Methodist missionaries, William Cross, David Cargill and their families arrived in Fiji in 1835 to begin their Christian mission³

At the time of the missionaries' arrival, Fiji had been variously populated over the course of some 3,500 or more years BP and was a complex society of disparate social

³ On the Protestant Evangelical Revival in Britain and the formation of missionary societies see Hempton 1984:20-111, Royle 1987:254-345 and Gunson 1978:Chapter 2.

groups with their own dialects, customs and organisation. At the apex of the social groups were large political confederations known as *matanitu*, lead by paramount chiefs who ruled through a complicated cognatic system known as the *turaga bale kei Viti* (real chiefs), a chiefly system with varying degrees of power, exercised within complex class structures. Fijian chiefs were the living deities – avatars of deified past ancestors – and with the support of the priestly caste (*bete*) maintained rule over their own and extended social groups through institutional relations, reciprocity, tributary approbation and spiritual and agnatic connections. They were in constant power struggle as they strove for political supremacy.⁴

In this maelstrom of factional civil wars, political ambition and complex social relationships, the Methodist missionaries strove to establish their Fijian mission.⁵ They arrived under the umbrella of the King of Tonga, Taufa'ahau, cousin to Tui Nayau the paramount chief of the eastern Lau group, the Fiji islands geographically closest to Tonga with who Fiji had strong traditional links dating back over 3,000 years. The Tongan Methodist Church had been established some thirteen years before and it was there that the missionaries Cross and Cargill prepared for their Fiji mission. Taufa'ahu's relationship with the paramount chief of Lau ensured the missionaries' safe entry and protection of the powerful chief. They were granted land to build their church in Tubou, the chiefly village in Lau, and freedom to preach their gospel. However there was no encouragement from Tui Nayau who could or would not accept the new religion until the powerful Bauan chief Cakobau, to whom he owed political allegiance, either gave his approval or converted to Christianity himself. Here was the real stumbling block for the missionaries: to make meaningful progress, they had to work through the *turaga bale kei Viti* underpinning Fijian society because, without at least the tacit support of the chiefs, progress would be at best difficult and at worst impossible. So the initial converts came from the many Tongans or *tongavivi* (Tongans who had intermarried with Fijians) living in Lau and other provinces of Fiji at the time European of contact.

⁴ On indigenous Fijian culture and politics see Thomas 1986, Routledge 1991.

⁵ On early missionary work on Fiji and Fijians acceptance of Christianity see Garrett 1985:102-115, Wood 1978:25-67 and Calvert 1985: Chapters 1-5

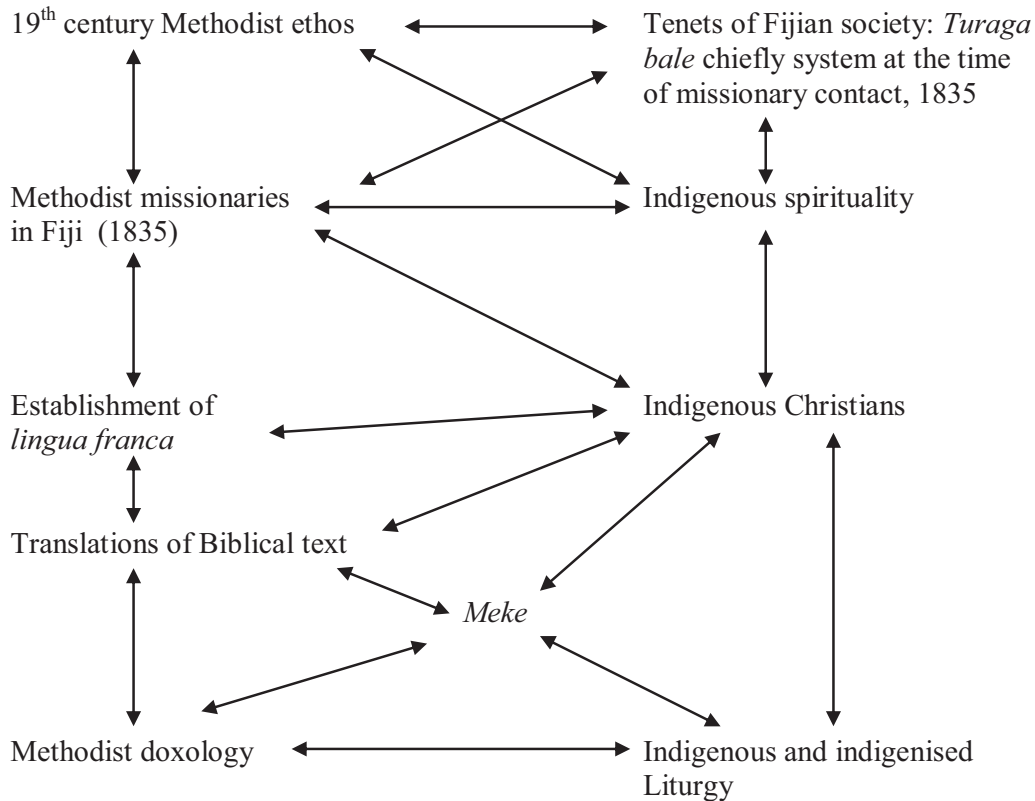
It quickly became obvious to the missionaries that Lau was too far from the principal areas of influence: the eastern confederations of Bau, Rewa and Cakaudrove.⁷ So in 1837 two years after their arrival Cross moved to Rewa in Vitilevu and, after two unsuccessful attempts at establishing missions, was finally granted land on the island of Viwa by the chief Namosimalua. However this was only achievable by following Fijian social custom (*vaka viti*) which involved introduction through an intermediary (*mata ni vanua*). In Cross's case it was a Fulagan chief from southern Lau, Josua Mateinaniu, who having brought the missionaries to Lau from Tonga two years earlier achieved the introduction to the paramount chiefs. Establishing the mission was no easy task for there was suspicion, prejudice and hostility, as much from chiefs as from the *bete* (priests) who saw in the Western religious ethos a serious eroding of their authority. Without the conversion or at least the blessing of their chiefs, acceptance of the new spirituality for most Fijians would be an almost impossible task. Situated between the two most powerful confederations of Bau and Rewa, the Viwa mission became the first missionary headquarters with the tenuous protection of Namosimalua, enabling the missionaries to work in the centre of greatest influence at that time.

Fijian acceptance of Christianity came slowly and it was obvious that, for the mission to achieve any meaningful success over such a vast geographical area, the few Western missionaries would have to rely on early Christian converts to conduct most of the evangelising. Help came in 1838 when the Christian Tongan King sent six Tongan Christians to Fiji to aid the Western missionaries. Working initially in Lau amongst their kinsmen, they were able to learn a Fijian dialect (Lauan) while preparing themselves for missions outside of Lau. The most outstanding of these men was Joeli Bulu later to be the first ordained native minister in Fiji. Some of the Tongan missionaries were of chiefly descent and were accorded the customary respect due to their station by the villagers. So without the customary constraints binding Fijians, conversion among their own people came quickly. As conversion progressed however there were also some early outstanding successes among the Fijians. The most dramatic occurred on the island of Ono in southern Lau, where all five villages had accepted Christianity by 1842, only seven years after the arrival of the

⁷ See Calvert 1985:1-33.

missionaries. It was from this island that the first Fijian teachers and catechists were prepared for missionary work in other parts of Fiji.

Fig 1: **Interconnecting elements in the introduction of Christianity to Fiji**



Fijian Christians were initially educated in the mission schools for the work of evangelisation. However once increasing numbers began to accept Christianity, demands for teachers outstripped supply and many of the early evangelists had only rudimentary training before beginning their fieldwork. They toiled in difficult circumstances, many of them alone for long periods at a time, yet their presence among their people speaking directly to them according to their own custom, language and music ensured that the Christian message was imparted in the Fijian way. These men, their wives and families lived in the villages, working and socialising on their level. To this end complicated theological concepts were explained in the semiotics of their own dialects, although in time the need for a single

dialect for universal communication and Biblical translation necessitated the choice of the Bauan dialect as the *lingua franca*. The responsibility for the introduction of the new spirituality then fell largely to the Fijian Christians who utilised those of their cultural practices that transposed well to Christian ones. Where once the beating of the *lali* (large slit drum) had ominous overtones (war or cannibal feasts for example) it now summoned people to Church or to meetings; the *bure ni kalou* (temples), largely unadorned temporary structures used in times of social upheaval, now became permanent places with churches for Christian worship: where once the *sere ni meke* (singing) in the temples led by the priest were prayers of supplication to local gods and spirits, they now formed part of an indigenous liturgy with Christian theological text. There was also worship in the vernacular, opportunities for community leadership through family and community prayer meetings, and the administration of the sacraments. The structure of the Methodist Church mirrored in many ways the structure of Fijian societies: there was full congregational participation in all aspects of the church Connexion (the Methodist word for church organisation) administered by Fijian Christians in the form of *vakatawas* (catechists or lay-preachers), *vakavuvuli* (teachers), and *talatala* (ministers). The administration was organised from village level through the circuits (which comprise up to five villages) to a central organization at the head of which is the *Talatala Qase* (President).

The most outstanding and successful evangelising tool of the Fijian Christians was the utilisation of their *meke* with Christian text for their liturgy and theological instruction. *Meke* is the generic name for all Fijian sung poetry which includes both dance and non-dance *meke*. It is the unifying factor across the whole of Fiji regardless of language, sociopolitical status or musical differences and is the most effective form of communication. Within *meke* texts are records of past and present events, of cognatic identity with ancestral connections, and a collective memory of a diverse culture. Central to Fijian culture, this highly developed art of poetry and music is a historical repository of genealogies, ancestral myths and legends, events of importance, in fact everything connecting Fijians directly with their land (*vanua*) and identity. Through the performance of ancient ceremonies such as the sacred ceremony of *meke ni yaqona vaka turaga* (*yaqona* ceremony) which has strong religious and

social significance, Fijians reinforce their chiefly connection to ancestral spirits.⁸ Although many of the texts of the older *meke* have archaic words – their meanings long out of memory – they were still performed as a continuing affirmation of Fijian *yavu* (sense of self and place). *Meke* are not relics of the past but are continuing musical and poetic forms rooted in the past but an all-important part of the present (Ravuvu 1987:4-6). Fijian Christians took the music of the non-dance form of *meke*: *vucu* (the epic), *meke ni yaqona* (the ceremonial), *vu* or *vakatulewa* or *i talanoa ni gauna makawa* (the genealogical and historical) and *lālē* (lamentation) as the musical form for their liturgy and inserted Christian text in their own poetic form. Western missionaries realising the value of this music in Fijian culture encouraged their compositions and included them in the liturgy. Fijian Christians by imparting their faith through the music and poetry rooted in their culture connected their people directly to the new spirituality.

The musical form of the *meke* is Fijian polyphony composed around tonal centres. The intervals are close and comprise: seconds (major and minor), thirds (major) fourths and occasionally fifths. The melodic movement is small and mostly stepwise with the *laga* (principal line) in the middle. The *laga* is the leader of the *meke* and sets the tempo and pitch. Above the *laga* is the *tagica* (meaning to chime in) and below is the *druku* (bass), also a reference to a harmonising chorus. There are duet riffs involving the *laga* and *tagica* sung in a close polyphony of seconds, thirds, occasionally fourths and unison. The chorus involves all the singers and is usually in a block chordal pattern. There may be two more parts: *vakasalavoavao* (a descant) the highest part, sung above the *tagica*, and *vaqiqivatu* (a tenor part) weaving a polyphonic line between the bass and the *laga* providing harmonic interest without being integral to the whole. There is also a two-part polyphony known as *vakalutuivoce* (meaning dropping of the oars), usually sung by two men in close polyphony on long sea voyages or river trips. There may be a *vaka-tara* (prelude or introduction) before the main *meke* (*i kau meke*) begins, as well as several changes of tempo and some accompaniment.⁹ There are *meke* for every occasion, some regional

⁸ *Yaqona* is Fijian for the beverage known as *kava* in other countries of the Pacific.

⁹ It will be noted that some Fijian words beginning with *vaka* are hyphenated while others are not. In Fijian orthography *vaka* is hyphenated when used as a prefix. Thus in the word *vaka-tara* the *vaka* in this case is causative, indicating that the procedure (*tara*) will take place. For further explanation see Capell 1991:251.

and some a collective: from those sung within the family and extended groups to the very large and impressive dance *meke* involving hundreds of participants. All of them form the Fijian musical canon together with instruments such as *lali* (large slit drums), *lali ni meke* (small *lali* for *meke*), *derua* (bamboo stamping tubes) and *cobo* (clapping with cupped hands). There are other instruments such as the *davui* (end blown triton shell) and the *bitu vaka tagi* (Fijian nose flute), but these instruments are not included in *meke* performance. The actual singing of *meke* involves an unspecified number of performers: men, women and children in any combination, sitting in a tight circle around the leaders.

Texts of *meke* are arranged in stanzas and composed in oral indigenous poetic style. There are no limits to the numbers or the lengths of the stanzas; rhythm and rhyme are paramount. The text is fitted to the music and it is not unknown for the musical phrase to finish in the middle of the line. If the vocal line falls short of the musical phrase, vowels and tags such as *ga* and *ya* are added to complete the phrase without altering the sense of the text (Quain 1942:14, Capell 1991:283). The rhythmic stress of the music is paramount but does not necessarily duplicate the tonic stress of the text. So a long note may fall on a weak vowel or in the middle of a word. All notes fall on vowels and there may be more than one vowel in a word. This poetic configuration of thought-rhythm is considered particular to Fijian *meke*, enabling composers to fit the text into musical phrases and the configuration of the stanzas as a whole (Tippett 1980:29).¹⁰ Great importance is also placed on the use of assonance at the end of lines where accented vowel combinations of the last two syllables of the first line of the first stanza are repeated in every succeeding line (Quain 1942:14). Success of *meke* compositions is judged on their use of assonance, metaphor, imagery, riddle and symbolism: these are most difficult to achieve successfully and require great skill on the part of the *dau ni vucu* (composer) who is responsible for every aspect of the composition and is a person of position in the community. Before Bauan was established as the *lingua franca* all *meke* text were in a dialect particular to the composer or family group.

¹⁰ For further detailed examination of rhythmic and textual relationship see Chapter 6.

Such was the vehicle used by Fijian Christians to impart Methodist theology: a method of instruction well suited to such an ancient oral culture. It took time for schools to be established and Fijians to become literate, especially those who lived away from the mission stations, yet this liturgy, in combination with Christian instruction, enabled these early Christians to have a rudimentary theological framework from the instruction in the vernacular and a liturgy in the style of their own musical canon. Initially the harmonic structure of Western hymns, so different from the close structure of Fijian polyphony, was difficult for Fijians to sing. So the *meke* with Christian text known as *taro* (catechism), *same* (theological texts) and *polotu* (theological texts) and prayers such as the Lord's Prayer, Te Deum and Creed were utilised creating their indigenous form of liturgy. While musically different, the texts of *same* and *polotu* were composed in indigenous poetic form with the same textual divisions on subjects ranging from Biblical themes, fundamental aspects of Methodist theology and important events of Church history. *Same* and *taro* on the other hand, while composed in the same musical style, have a different textual approach, *taro* being the singing of the Methodist catechism.

Although limited to the small island of Oneata in the south-eastern Lau group, the first Christian based music heard in Fiji were the hymns of three Tahitian missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) who began their missionary work in Lau in 1830. It is difficult to ascertain the exact style of hymnody sung by the Tahitians or how much of an influence these hymns had on the Lauans, for Tahitians were not fluent in any Fijian dialect.¹¹ The Christian music of real influence though was the Wesleyan hymns of the Western missionaries who came in 1835, followed by Tongan hymns of the Tongan teachers three years later. The *hiva usu* (Tongan hymns), based on Western harmony with a substituted minor third for a major third, were compositions of Tongan Christians who had only recently accepted Methodism. It is not possible to date conclusively the first *polotu* or *same* compositions but certainly Fijian Christians were composing their own liturgy with the blessings of the missionaries very soon after Christian acceptance. *Polotu* is a name adopted by the Lauans for their own liturgy which includes hymns with text from the Fijian Hymn

¹¹ See McLean 1999:434-435 for clarification on Tahitian hymnody at the time of the Tahitian missionaries in Fiji. See also Chapter 3:58-59 of this thesis for further discussion on the missionary activity of the LMS missionaries in Lau.

Book, hymns with text of their own composition, and compositions with *meke* style poetic Christian text. The latter is the subject of this study and comprises the true indigenised liturgy of Lau, still the principal Lauan liturgy of worship, including *taro*, *same*, anthems and Methodist hymns sung in congregations in other parts of Fiji.

Same, a transliterated name, are not psalms but wholly indigenous liturgy with Christian text composed in Fijian poetic form fitted to the music of the *meke*. The origin of *same* is not clear but as the centre of early missionary activity was focused on eastern Fiji, it could be safely assumed given the style of composition that this music was appropriated by these early Christians in that region for their liturgy. The missionary John Hunt as a musician was cognisant of the importance of this music and encouraged indigenous Christians to compose their own text suitable for imparting theological principles (Tippett 1980:28). The ceremonial and epic *meke* were eminently suitable for liturgical appropriation, and it was these *meke* in particular that were utilised for the liturgy. The musical form, vocal parts and textual structure of *same* are entirely indigenous, only separated from the secular *meke* by the Christian focus of the text. *Same* like *polotu* are oral compositions passed down from one generation to another and from one social group to another.

Taro, the singing of the catechism which begins half an hour before the *So Kalou* (Sunday Service), has the same compositional structure as *same* without the poetic text. Within the Methodist catechism are the fundamental tenets of Methodism arranged in fourteen chapters of various lengths. The *taro* is a perfect lesson in theology sung in a familiar compositional form. Originally memorised, the text now forms part of the Fijian Methodist Hymn Book. The text is arranged in a question and answer format: the question is spoken and the answer if longer than a line is sung in response. At the end of the half hour, singing ceases and the text is taken up the following Sunday until all fourteen chapters are completed. In every respect this music is an example of a seamless transposition of Christian text translated into the vernacular and fitted to Fijian polyphony.

Such then is the indigenous and indigenised liturgy of the Fijian Methodist Church, a complete theological framework within their indigenous tradition, with which Fijians from earliest contact identified. Unlike other Pacific countries at the time, Fijians

from the outset of the introduction Christianity were encouraged by the missionaries to utilise their *meke* with Christian text as the foundation for their liturgy.¹² These oral compositions were the liturgy long before Fijians became literate and remain so to the present day. Fijians' Christian identity from the beginning was rooted in their culture: Bible in the vernacular, indigenous pastors and teachers living and teaching in communities, a *lingua franca* for common communication and an indigenous liturgy.

Literature review

The name Fiji was adopted by the early missionaries for the island group commonly called by its inhabitants “Viti” or fifteen variations of it (Williams 1982:1). The literature pertaining to the settlement of Fiji and its people is a comprehensive but recent body of work, since the discovery of pottery called Lapita was linked to the original settlers (Chapter 2). These seafaring people refining their navigating skills finally sailed into the South Pacific, arriving in Fiji over some 3,500 years BP. From the time of initial settlement to the 15th century various immigrants settled in the islands, forming disparate communities. We have come to learn a great deal about the original inhabitants of Fiji through the comprehensive research and documentation made possible from radiocarbon dating of their pottery in the 1950s. There are books, journals and collections written and dedicated to knowledge of these people as well as many conferences conducted to further this geographical, archaeological, linguistic and anthropological research.¹³

Before the 19th century very little was known or written about Fiji the country or its people. Western explorers, Tasman, Cook, Bligh and Wilson charting the southwest Pacific between 1643 and 1796 had visited only outlying islands. Some beachcombers and convicts escaping to Fiji had stayed under the patronage of a chief but did not document their visit. There were very few reports on this period and certainly no analytical accounts of place or people. The first accounts of Fijian societies came from English and American traders in Fiji for the sandalwood or *bêche-de-mer* trade in the early part of the 19th century. The earliest record of this time seems to have

¹² For discussion on the hymnody of other Pacific countries see Stillman 1993:89-99, McLean 1999:Chapter 26.

¹³ For a detailed discussion on Lapita with particular reference to Fiji see Chapter 2:31-35.

been written by the sandalwood trader William Lockerby in Fiji 1808-9.¹⁴ His story and that of another American, Samuel Patterson, shipwrecked in 1808 on the island of Narai in Lomaiviti, give a glimpse of village life without much depth of analysis, the intelligence being coloured by usual 19th century European bias and experience. The biggest drawback in these and subsequent accounts was the assumption that Fijian society was homogenous: before the advent of Christianity it was certainly not, references to Fijians really meant those few with whom the author had come in contact rather than the whole multifaceted society.

As visitors came in greater numbers and spent longer time in various parts of Fiji accounts and journals of their experience appeared in print. These were more comprehensive, though still hampered by the European bounded culture of their authors. The American Mary Wallis (sailing to Fiji aboard her husband's trading ship) named her first book published in 1850: *Life in Feejee: Five Years Among the Cannibals*. The title is disingenuous and sensationalist: there were still cannibals in Fiji, but she did not live among them. Instead she was fêted and shown great kindness by those Fijians she met, including some of the most powerful chiefs still reputedly cannibals. Though her opinions were coloured by narrow religious conservatism her account is valuable in her length of time in Fiji and for her insights into a Fiji new to Western influence. More balanced accounts came later from ships' captains including Jules Dumont d'Urville of the French Navy, Charles Wilkes of the United States Navy and John Elphinstone Erskine of the British Royal Navy who, exploring various parts of Fiji for political and scientific purposes, wrote comprehensive reports on their observations of the Fijian communities they encountered. These reports are valuable for their insight into Fiji five to fifteen years after the arrival of the first missionaries contact. There are other published and unpublished reports worthy of closer inspection to be examined in the course of this chapter.

Over the course of the 19th century other visitors passed through Fiji and their published accounts too are worth reading for the variety of points of view. Among the more outstanding observers were Constance Gordon Cumming, and Berthold Seemann. Cumming's observations in her book *At Home in Fiji* 1882 are particularly

¹⁴ See Lockerby 1982:1-83 and Patterson 1982:85-110.

worthy of attention as she travelled extensively through Fiji and was an astute observer as well as a talented painter. Her account provides insightful social comment on the many villages she visited, a valuable resource for the comprehensiveness of the information missing in previous accounts of earlier visitors. Seemann's survey of Fiji entitled: *Viti: An Account of a Government Mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands 1860-61*, was commissioned by the British Government before Fiji became a Crown Colony of Britain and is more than just a report about flora and fauna, because he like Cumming, commented on those social and political aspects of Fijian society to which he had reasonable access. Both these observers were intelligent and insightful and gave more sympathetic, less partisan accounts than most of their predecessors.

However the most comprehensive ethnological accounts of Fijian culture came from those who introduced Christianity to Fiji, the Methodist missionaries whose work included:

- Introduction of Christianity to Fiji
- Establishment of missions throughout Fiji
- Introduction of a *lingua franca* in the Bauan dialect giving Fiji a written language
- Establishment of schools, hospitals and training institutions for teachers and ministers
- Printing of written material such as Biblical translations, prayer books, catechisms, sermons, hymnbooks and schoolbooks.

The documentation of their work can be found in the minutes, correspondence, letters, journals, reports, diaries, books, Circuit Papers and articles held in various repositories and provide a first hand insight into the meeting of two cultures socially and spiritually. These of course are one-sided observations (there is only a small amount of written material by Fijians), and must be read accordingly: 19th century bias aside, this is rich source material on missionary activity in Fijian society.

The most astute observers in print of the early missionaries were Thomas Williams, James Calvert and Joseph Waterhouse. Williams' book *Fiji and the Fijians: The*

Islands and their Inhabitants edited by George Stringer Rowe was first published in 1858 and is an outstanding observation of Fiji before the changes brought by the introduction of Christianity. His time as missionary in Fiji dated from 1839 to 1854 and his documentations came from his missionary work in Lakeba (Lau), Somosomo (Cakaudrove) and Tiliva (Bua): on these social groups he made and illustrated his observations. Chapter V entitled ‘The People’ is of particular interest to this thesis for here Williams discussed the indigenous poetry and musical form of the *meke*, and gives the first example of what I consider to be the text of a *same* (1985:117). This is the most comprehensive analysis of the *meke* of this period detailing the style, method of composition (both textual and musical) and content of a musical canon from which Christians were composing their indigenous liturgy. Although this remarkable book was essentially Williams’ work, the documenting of his experience began while he was working in Somosomo with the missionary Dr Richard Lyth who, although not acknowledged, also contributed to the book. Lyth’s own unpublished writing about his time in Fiji is just as valuable; his notes and journals are in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. The journals of John Hunt, considered the greatest influence in the early mission, are also unpublished.¹⁵ Hunt was popular with the Fijians and Western missionaries alike and his untimely early death deprived posterity of the benefit of his astute observations beyond 1847. It is also disappointing to note that Hunt, who unlike many of the missionaries was a musician, wrote very little about the *meke* or the music of the liturgy, beyond noting both in passing. In the time Hunt was in Fiji (1838 - 47), Fijian Christians were beginning to compose their own liturgy, and yet there is no mention of this or any attempt to analyse indigenous music or compositional structure both of which he understood well.¹⁶

The second volume of *Fiji and the Fijians: Mission History*, also edited by George Stringer Rowe, was written by James Calvert and first published in 1858 at the same time as Williams’ initial volume. Calvert’s mission history covers the years 1835-56, the pioneering years up to the acceptance of Christianity by the powerful Fijian chief Ratu Seru Cakobau marking the turning point for Fijian Christian acceptance, and is a compilation of Calvert’s notes and the writings of the few missionaries working in Fiji at that time. These notes are of particular interest for their observations on the

¹⁵ There are excellent biographies of the missionary John Hunt, the latest being Thornley 2000.

¹⁶ See Chapter 6:124-125

Fijian Christians ('native agents') working in the field. Here Fijian Christian voices appeared in print for the first time, albeit muffled. The information does not appear in any of the correspondence to England because there was no interest in Fijian personnel, yet many personal diaries of the pioneering evangelists reveal an admiration and affection for the many Fijians with whom they worked and on whom their mission (and in some cases their lives) depended.

The third of the published early missionary books *The King and People of Fiji* written by Joseph Waterhouse in 1854 complements the first two and is of particular importance for his insights into the Fijian spiritual and mythological world. Although Waterhouse focused on the history of Ratu Cakobau and Bauan culture, he like Williams managed to transcend 19th century Protestant Evangelical thinking in offering a rare insight into the gods, myths and beliefs of Fijian worship. These observations are particularly pertinent on two accounts: first, the recording of Fijian religious practice which adds a valuable dimension to the knowledge of a spiritual culture in the early stages of change, and second and most profound, the acceptance of a Western spiritual ethos. The missionaries were also aware of the importance of Cakobau's conversion in relation to the rest of Fiji, so Waterhouse's observations were of special historical relevance. Waterhouse also offered five *meke* texts with his own translations which provide a clear understanding of style, substance, composition, subject matter and techniques. His work was also valuable for the insight into indigenous poetic form, particularly in relation to the timing of the compositions. Waterhouse collected the texts in the mid 19th century, although some of the *meke* were much older.

The final publication of special note from this period is the 'autobiography' of Joel Bulu, collected and translated it is understood, by the missionary Lorimer Fison. Joeli Bulu was an indigenous Tongan missionary who came to Fiji in 1838 with five fellow Tongans to help the Western missionaries. He was not only an outstanding Christian, but one of the few indigenous Christians to be noted in missionary correspondence and the first 'native agent' to be ordained a minister (*talatala*). This work gives an indigenous perspective on missionary activity in the early missions of Tonga and Fiji. Joeli's influence extended to Fijians, Tongans and Western missionaries alike. Often

left alone for years at a time, he commanded respect as much for his indigenous connection as for his piety, enabling him to work in difficult situations.

It is important to have discussed these particular publications in some detail because of their relevance to the thesis topic in relation to Fijian culture at the time of contact: in particular Fijian spirituality, *meke*, social structure and oral tradition. The wealth of missionary material is invaluable as much for what is said as unsaid. There was a dichotomy between the missionaries' public and private communications: the former were used to attract sympathy and support from their fellow countrymen and women at home, while the latter conveyed the intimate thoughts and observations of men and women labouring in difficult circumstances, some capable of transcending their privations to record their observations of a different, fascinating Pacific culture.

There have been comprehensive theses written on aspects of Fijian culture: those of particular importance to this thesis are the works of Andrew Thornley, Tevita Baleiwaqa, Dorothy Sara Lee, Martha Kaplan, Ilaitai Tuwere, Nicholas Thomas, Christine Weir and Hirokazu Miyazaki. Others have written on aspects of Fijian ethnology or music for degrees, journals or books including: Chris Saumaiwai, David Goldsworthy, Linda Good, R. Raven-Hart, Mervyn McLean and Wendy Ratawa. There is valuable information too from commentators on mission history in a number of well documented works by Niel Gunson, John Garrett, G.C. Henderson, A Birtwhistle, A. R. Tippet, Andrew Thornley, Raeburn Lange. Others again observed and commented on Fijian history including: A.B. Brewster, Cyril S. Belshaw, R.A. Derrick, G.K. Roth, Deryck Scarr, David Routledge, Peter France, Asesela D. Ravuvu, R.R. Nayacakalou, Lorimer Fison, A.C. Reid and A.M. Hocart. All the publications of these authors are definitive works of importance to this thesis because they add comment and informed opinion pertaining directly to the subject historically, anthropologically and musically. Also relevant because of their link to the early mission in Fiji are works contributing knowledge to Tongan missions and music, and include those of Sione Latukefu and Richard Moyle.

Several journals are comprehensively scanned for material relevant to this thesis: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*; *The Journal of Pacific History*; *Journal of Polynesian Society*; *Transactions and Proceedings of the Fiji Society*;

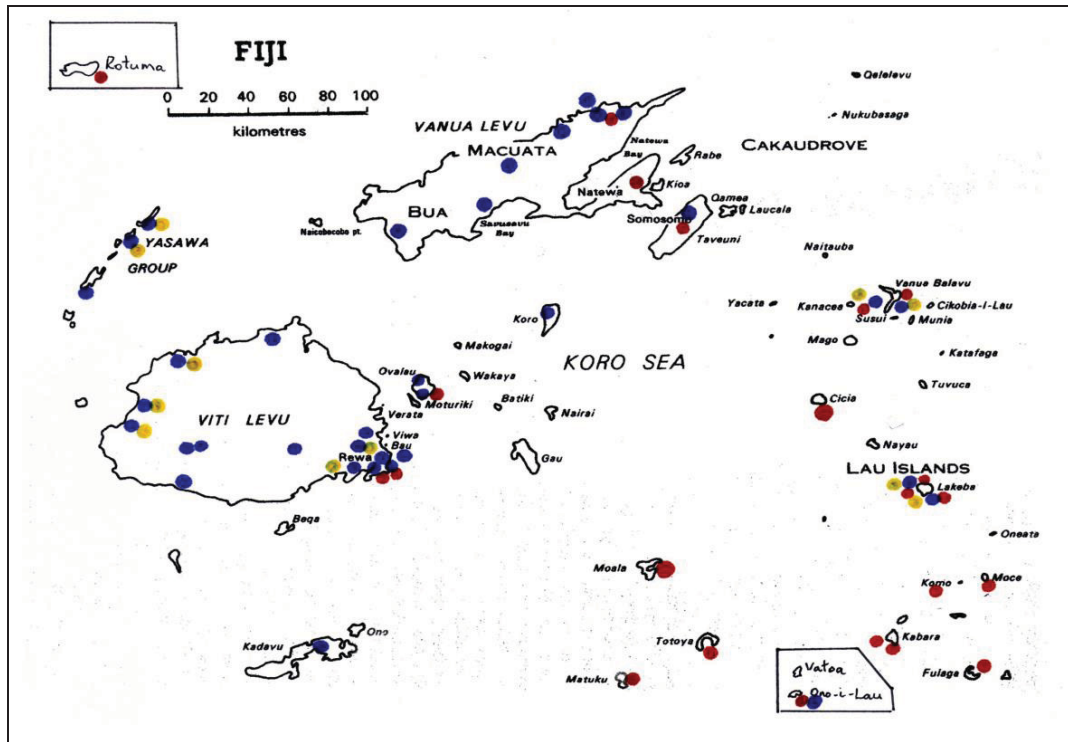
Yearbook for Traditional Music; *Domodomo, A Scholarly Journal of the Fiji Museum*; *The Pacific Journal of Theology*; *Ethnomusicology*; *Oceania* and *Contemporary Pacific*. These sources provided widely diverse scholarly information either directly or obliquely relevant to the subject, information that in some cases dated back to 1881 while others are as current as 2009.

The final literature for review is on Methodism (see Chapter 3). Again there is no shortage of information available on the inception of the Wesleyan (Methodist) Church or on those of greatest influence in the church. Of particular interest though are two of the founders John and Charles Wesley because they were the main influence on the early missionaries in Fiji who came as second generation Methodists. John Wesley, the principal founder, wrote a very large number of works on all aspects of Methodism including sermons for preachers and teachers, while his brother Charles gave the church a large number of hymns (text and music) for Methodist worship. These two men formed the spirituality and theological ethos which shaped Methodism in Fiji.

Methodology

The methodology employed in researching material for this thesis falls into two main categories. First, extensive fieldwork was conducted in Fiji to collect and record the music of the indigenous liturgy. Secondly, extensive archival and library research provided material pertaining to pre-contact Fiji history; Fijian spirituality; Methodism (Christian spirituality); introduction of Christianity to Fiji; indigenous pastors; *Meke*; and the published and archival recordings of Fijian Christian liturgy. Each topic building on the other supported the premise that pre-contact Fijian artifacts, modes and oral traditions were the successful indigenous tools utilised by Fijian Christians in the introduction of Western theology to their society. Christianity was introduced *vaka viti* – in the Fijian manner, for Fijians by Fijians – under the guidance of Western missionaries. In the utilisation of their cultural practices for Christian worship they preserved and transformed those practices ensuring the successful transition from old spiritual beliefs to a Christian ethos.

Fieldwork



Map 2: Fieldwork. Dots: red = *polotu*, blue = *same*, yellow = *taro*.

The initial fieldwork was conducted throughout Fiji over the course of six months and continued from time to time over the next five years travelling by car, boat, ferry or aeroplane to many villages and urban Methodist communities to record the music. The eventual collection was comprehensive thanks to the cooperation of staff at the Methodist Headquarters, Epworth House in Suva, and to several friends who organised access to many Methodist congregations in villages all over the Fiji Islands. Without these magnetic connections it would have been hugely difficult as a researcher to have the opportunity of documenting in all the indigenous communities or to gain admittance to the villages. If invited, as almost always happened, I met some of the congregation after the church service over lunch which provided the opportunity to ask questions about the music and the text. There were also many questions about my Fiji family connections and a genuine delight in my interest and concern that their indigenous liturgy be preserved for the future in my recordings.

The difficulties in collecting the music were the usual ones of distance, time and communication. Accommodation was not a problem because Fiji has a well-organised tourist industry, while family and friends organised the rest. Distance between island groups was always a problem: fortunately there were two inter-island car ferries (one sank just after we had travelled on it) which enabled us to travel from Vitilevu to Taveuni and Savusavu (Vanualevu) from where we visited Methodist congregations in isolated and remote villages only reachable by a 4 wheel-drive vehicle and punt. For distant island groups there were air services which enabled me to spend three weeks in the Lau Group (Lakeba and Vanuabalavu) and a week in Richmond (Kadavu). There is only one flight a week to these places so this enforced time, provided excellent opportunities for research and recording. My journey to, from and through the Yasawa Group was made by high-speed boat and punt. The recordings in these island groups were of particular importance as the congregations were at a considerable distance from the nearest urban centres and the singing of *same* and *taro* reflected their own intrinsic *meke* compositional styles.

The timing of the visits was sometimes difficult, especially at the beginning of my research when those assisting had no clear understanding of the nature of the research. However once I had acted as judge for the Annual Choir Competition held in Suva in August – a week long singing festival involving Methodist church communities from all Fiji – the publicity of my presence and research intentions helped ease my visits: so many people wanted to be recorded. I served again for the next two years. The competition was also an excellent venue to record with permission, as *same* and *polotu* had their own separate sections. It was a totally unique opportunity saving me valuable time and effort because many of the choirs came from remote congregations which I would have had difficulty accessing. Timing was also of the essence because of the nature of recordings: I was working with groups not individuals, and as *polotu* and *same* are oral compositions it was important for all principal singers to be present.

Communication was of the essence too because of distance and poor connections, particularly the roads in the remote inland areas of the two larger islands. The weeklong stay in Savusavu was a case in point where communication with Suva had broken down while we were in transit. When we arrived the *talatala* was absent, so

nobody understood or wanted to take responsibility for allowing performance or recording: hence no recordings. But on that visit we were taken to Tukavesi village some five hours away by car where I recorded the choir: their *polotu* became my particular choice for examination in this thesis. Connections were vital, including those through chance meetings.

My collection of this music comprises a considerable body of work, as the dots on Map 2 show, and a proper representation of Fijian indigenous liturgy. In the course of the research I also collected some of the oral texts which in due course with appropriate permission I hope to include in an indigenous hymnbook for future generations.

The technical equipment used for the recordings included: a small compact Sony minidisk digital recorder MZ-R55 with 80 minute playing discs and a Sony stereo microphone. Although the minidisk has a power supply – like the microphone – it also ran on batteries, essential in villages without electricity. The data on the discs were then loaded into an Apple computer audio program, PEAK 4 and stored in a file in iTunes for burning onto a compact disc. There are some 500 recordings. This was the most convenient recording method for portability and quality of sound. The main drawback was extraneous noises: fishing boats, pigs, chickens, barking dogs, children and the jubilant mynah birds in the rafters at the Choir Competition.

Archival repositories

The largest and most comprehensive repository of Fijian missionary history covering the period up 1874 is housed in Sydney's Mitchell Library in the Methodist Overseas Mission Collection. Here is primary material, published and unpublished, in the form of private journals and letters of the earliest missionaries: John Hunt, Richard Lyth, William Cross, James Calvert, David Cargill, Thomas Jaggar, William Lawry, David Hazlewood, Thomas Williams, Joseph Waterhouse, John Watsford, James Royce, Walter Lawry and others, as well as letters from some missionary wives. Also included is much official missionary correspondence and records: minutes of District and Circuit meetings, letters to and from the missionary headquarters in England, and

various correspondence between the Fiji mission personnel. Permission is required from the Uniting Church to access some of the material in this collection. Other sources for this material are: Fiji Museum; the Methodist Missionary Society Archives in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; John Rylands Library, Manchester University; Rare Books Collection, Cambridge University; Kinder Library, St John's College, Auckland, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, Canberra. While none is the principal repository, each institution adds to the information in the Mitchell Library collection. Key materials in Fiji post-1874 are housed in the National Archives in Suva and, like the Mitchell Library collection is an excellent source of first-hand published and unpublished texts.¹⁷ Permission is again needed from the Methodist Church to access this collection. Andrew Thornley meticulously documented all this material (1977:202-4).

One particular private collection deserves specific mention in relation to this thesis: the very large and comprehensive Tippet Collection now housed in St Mark's National Theological Centre Library, Canberra. Alan Tippet, Methodist minister, missionary, scholar, anthropologist and missiologist was a minister in Fiji for twenty years from 1941. Keen scholar and astute observer of Fijian social history, he spoke several Fijian dialects. The Fijian part of his private collection includes a large amount of material he wrote and collected on Fijian mission history; aspects of Pacific ethnohistory; journal articles on Fijian material culture; private correspondence including those to and from relatives of the early missionaries; and much material on Lorimer Fison, noteworthy English missionary, largely identified with the Australian mission who worked in Fiji 1863-84. There are also various collections of material in Fijian including ten school *meke* texts dating back to the 1899 and thirty *meke* texts from the Heighway Collection; first edition books including the Fijian Old and New Testaments, an original Hymn book and many works published on Fiji. Although not a musician, Tippet was interested in the internal process of evangelisation in Fiji and wrote at length on the indigenous liturgy of the Church in a book entitled *The Transmission of Information and Social Values*

¹⁷ In researching in this Archive, retrieval of relevant material is time-consuming due to red tape, and requires enormous reserves of patience.

in *Early Christian Fiji 1835–1905*. This comprehensive examination of ‘indigenised’ Christianity, of appropriating and Christianising indigenous forms for a meaningful spirituality, includes *same* and *polotu* in a cultural context within the Fijian church. Apart from Thomas Williams’ *Fiji and the Fijians* there is little in-depth analysis of either the music or the poetic text of *meke* or the indigenous liturgy of the Church by the early missionaries, so Tippet’s material is a vital ethnomusicological resource.

Transcriptions and textual examinations

It was not possible to transcribe all material collected as the collection is too large. My task has been to select the most representative in terms of compositional and regional style. Each composition had to be transcribed from the recordings; not an easy task given the loss of pitch, which if faithfully transcribed would have necessitated the writing of quartertones. As this was not the intention of either the composer or the singers I made the choice to keep the composition in the original pitch regardless of the final note. The principal features of Fijian polyphonic *meke* are: close intervals, close harmony, block chords, small melodic movement and a tonal and melodic centre in the middle of the composition around which other parts move. This close proximity with each other makes the transcription of this polyphonic style difficult. Also for much of the time in recording I was not in a position to dictate the optimum placement of the singers. Consequently some parts were difficult to hear as they were further away from the microphone. *Same* and *taro* are sung unaccompanied, *polotu* having a single rhythmic accompanying instrument for metre and tempo changes, all relying on each other and the leader for pitch. So attuned are Fijians to singing unaccompanied that any drop in pitch (usually small) is simply accommodated.

I transcribed ten *taro* from which I chose two for inclusion in the thesis; fifteen *same* from which I chose four; four *polotu* from which I chose one: all included as representative of their styles. These were not necessarily the optimum recordings but were transcriptions worthy of examination for several discrete reasons including parts, text, region and style. Analysis of the music required a close examination of:

- chordal structure
- melodic movement
- solo motif
- intervallic movement
- relationship of parts to each other
- relationship of style to *meke*
- indigenisation of another musical form.

Analysis of the text took the form of :

- relationship of style to indigenous poetic form
- representation of theological principles, including Biblical, metaphorical and symbolic references
- insertion of text to an existing musical form
- addition of Fijian poetic devices in the form of extra tags and vowels to complete the musical phrase
- employment of the ‘golden verse’ (see Chapter 6) in the last stanza as the ‘moral’ of the story.

Transcriptions when completed were put into a computer program called Sibelius, which in itself presented difficulty. Fijian music is not in Western harmonic form with key signature, bar line and time signature; instead it requires its own form of notation to differentiate it from Western notation and yet faithfully represent the music as close as possible to the oral rendition, so the reader would appreciate the music as in the original. I felt this to be particularly important as most Fijians do not read Western notation and therefore were unable to correct any mistakes I may have made. While transcribing the music I was aware of the moral dilemma faced by all those who notate oral music and present it as a definitive form in its style. So I determined to choose performances that would not only represent the form, but ones which Fijians would approve, not necessarily the most stylish, but closest to the indigenous forms from which they originated as far as it was possible to estimate.

Synopsis of the Chapters

Chapter 2 Early Fijian history up to the arrival of the first missionaries in 1835

It was important to explore what was known of the pre-history of Fiji in order to establish the broad outlines of Fijian society at the time of first contacts. I discuss the ancestral migrations, where the Fijians originated, how they got to Fiji, who they were, what language or dialects they spoke, where they settled and how their society functioned. This enabled an understanding of what constituted the roots of that society: the people's connection to the land, their spirituality and beliefs, ethos and social structure. It also permitted a deeper and better-informed analysis of the impact of a new spirituality and ethos on Fijian society, an ancient well established society at the time of first European contact, enabling a better understanding of the vital importance of their music as an instrument for evangelisation.

Chapter 3 Methodism and Fijian spirituality

Understanding Methodism is to understand the Christian ethos that challenged Fijian spirituality. Who were these people called Methodists, what impelled them to sail halfway around the world to a society so diametrically different from their own? They were young and burning with a spiritual zeal that transcended deprivation, alienation and the loneliness they were forced to face in Fiji. Spirituality is intangible: there are outward signs in revered objects and social gatherings for corporate worship, but the deeper spiritual belief in a higher or other being is a private matter. In Fijian polytheistic society, missionaries encountered the worship of many gods, including the chiefs, which pervaded all levels of society. Here was the paradox: Fijian law was governed by custom handed down by ancestor gods through the sacredness of chiefs, so how could a Christian God be accommodated in a society where the spiritual and the corporal were one? This question is explored at length.

Chapter 4 Indigenous ministers, catechists and teachers

Newly converted Fijians become the principal evangelists for their people. Under the guidance of the missionaries these indigenous Christians introduced the new theology to their people using the tools of their cultural artefacts. They lived and worked in the villages, taught in schools, conducted services and prayer meetings and preached in the vernacular. They wrote their own liturgy to which they added Christian text. The Christians knew the procedure of custom so important in Fijian society, they knew the metaphors and symbols of their language and the methods of communication and most importantly they knew the Fijian way: the subtle nuances of doing things that no Westerner could discern. Most importantly, in their indigenous liturgy they were able to communicate complex theological principles directly to their people through the semiotics of their language. They were the bridges between the old and the new ensuring a smooth transition.

Chapter 5 *Meke* and the indigenous and indigenised Christian liturgy of the Methodist church

In cultures without a written language, music is a central component in the preservation, transformation and transmission of oral traditions. Music is the expression of significant aspects of culture activity and in Fiji at the time of missionary contact the *meke* (the generic name for indigenous sung poetry) was the single unifier in a diverse society. To this end *meke* in all its forms is examined at length in relation to its Christian appropriation for an indigenous liturgy. This important component in placing the musical and poetic form of *meke* within Fijian culture lays the foundation for discussion of *polotu* compositions in the following chapter. It is important to understand these indigenised compositions of Lauan Christians for their liturgy in the evolution of this music. *Meke* compositions encompass essential aspects of Fijian society from dance to lullabies, laments, dirges, courtship, ceremonies, work songs, epics, genealogies and all manner of fellowship: the tally is endless and cover every aspect of society. This then was the single most important cultural artefact utilised for Christian worship and evangelisation.

Chapter 6 Examination and history of indigenous and indigenised church liturgy

The first Christian music heard in Fiji was Western hymns difficult for Fijians to sing for two reasons: the harmonic system of Western notation was fundamentally different from Fijian polyphony, the English language which accompanied that notation did not fit Fijian notation; nor did Fijian indigenous poetic form fit Western notation. So Fijians sang parts of the Methodist catechism and prayers brought by the missionaries in the Lauan dialect in their *meke* form, described by the missionaries as chants. Then Tongan missionaries brought their liturgy, based on Western harmony with an additional minor third instead of the major third of Western hymnody. This second source of liturgical music in the early Fijian church formed the foundation of the indigenised liturgy of the Lauans. As Christianity became the accepted form of worship in Fiji, Christian converts with the encouraging acceptance of the missionaries utilised their own musical canon for worship and evangelising. So important was this music in the psychological make-up of Fijians that the missionaries and Fijian translators used *meke* and its many nuances as biblical musical references instead of (where possible) the musical terms of the Bible.¹⁸ Examination of the music and text of *taro*, *same* and *polotu* details the musical structure, indigenous poetic form and Christian text of this unique liturgical canon at the very heart of Fijian Christian spirituality and worship.

Conclusion

The conclusion examines: an established Pacific culture; introduction of a Western Christian ethos; the impact on Fijian society and spirituality; gradual acceptance of the new religion; utilisation of cultural artifacts for evangelisation and worship by Fijians for Fijians to create an indigenised church. The central component in the successful conversion of the Fijians was the transmission of Methodist theology through the traditional musical canon of the *meke* with Christian text at the heart of worship *vaka viti* - in the Fijian way.

¹⁸ See Chapter 6:130-133.

Chapter 2

Early Fijian History to the Arrival of the Methodist Missionaries in 1835

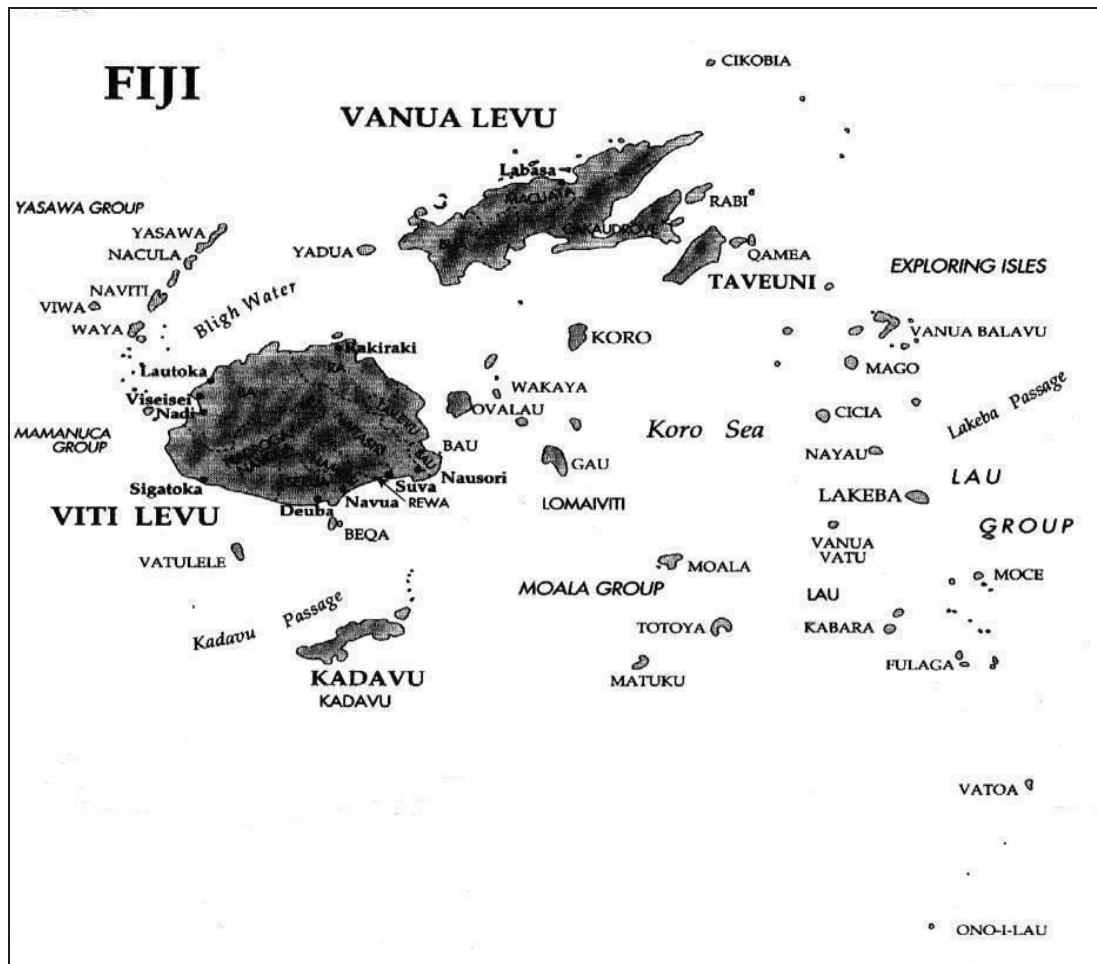
Introduction

In the South Pacific context, Fijian society is unique. Standing apart from other Pacific island countries, the result of its geography and earliest known settlements, Fiji was a well organised society of some 3,500 years BP when the first significant Western contact was made in the mid 1830s with the arrival of the Wesleyan (Methodist) missionaries from Tonga. The Wesleyans were not the first Western contact with Fiji, navigators such as Tasman (1643), Bligh (1789), Cook (1774), Wilson (1789) and others passed through without landing. The gradual mapping of the Fiji Group evolved over the course of several hundred years including charts from trading ships and culminated in the first comprehensive chart of Fiji published in England in 1814 (Derrick 1951:11-24). Others seeking sanctuary or profit such as beachcombers, visiting ships captains and traders made little significant impact on Fijian society, having little to offer but taking much. In assessing the impact of a Western religion and the subsequent methods of its introduction on this society it is necessary to examine the prehistory, geography, language and spirituality of Fijian society, so that the full impact of the resulting changes with the introduction of Christianity will be better understood. This chapter sets out to examine the early history of Fiji with a view to establishing the paradox of a diverse society with as much to unify as to divide.

Geographical location and population distribution

Fiji, the largest of the South Pacific Island groups both in terms of geography and social organization, has been described as the crossroads of the Pacific, lying between

175° east and 178° west longitude and 15° north and 22° south latitude.¹ This borderland between the anthropological tripartite division of geographic Oceania (Kirch 1999:2), the Melanesian island groups to the west, the Micronesian groups to the north and the Polynesian island groups to the east, is socially identical to none but has a biological, cultural and linguistic commonality with all.²



Map 3: Fiji

The Group consists of some 330 islands of which one-third support permanent human habitation. The two largest islands, Vitilevu and Vanualevu account for some 87% of the total landmass of 18,333 square metres dispersed over some 1.3 million square kilometres of this large archipelago. With 10,429 kilometres, Vitilevu is about twice

¹ In early contact times the name and spelling of *Fiji* had at least 15 variations. The missionary Williams gave examples of them all, but said that *Viti* and *Fiji* were correct (1858:1).

² The naming of the three geographical groupings is used for convenience, though there is some questioning about the accuracy of this broad division of such diverse cultural groups.

the size of Vanualevu and sustains the largest population. Together with Taveuni (the third largest island east of Vanualevu) and Kadavu (the fourth largest southern island), these four islands are divided by high mountain ranges. Other islands and islets 'include volcanic, limestone and coral formations' (France 1969:1) and are either close to the coasts of the larger islands or grouped together under one name. These large groupings are the Lau Group to the east, Lomaiviti in the centre, Kadavu to the south and the Yasawas in the west. The Koro Sea and Bligh Water divide the islands many of which are surrounded by coral reefs. These reef formations both protect the coastal flats and provide valuable food source and safe harbour.

Climate and agriculture

Fiji has a tropical maritime climate with continuous high temperature and humidity of about 70% a year with two seasons, wet and dry. There are also two main climatic zones on the larger islands, with smaller islands experiencing similar temperatures but with less variation. The main influence on the climate is the prevailing southeast trade winds which deposit moisture on the windward side of the mountain ranges, producing the distinct divide between the wet tropical East and drier leeward areas west of the mountain ranges of Vitilevu and Vanualevu and other larger islands (Ministry of Information, Communication and Media 2004/2005:2).

At the mouth of the many and varied river systems of the larger islands are deltas and extensive mangrove swamps supporting agriculture as well as fishing. Along some of these extensive river systems are valleys of rich alluvial soil sustaining a diversity of agriculture; the rivers also provide transport in the otherwise difficult terrain of high mountains and thick tropical jungle especially in Vitilevu whose fertile river valleys 'permitted the support of the densest population in all the Pacific islands in traditional times' (Routledge 1985:16). The terrains of Vanualevu, Taveuni and to a lesser extent some of the other larger islands depending on their rainfall also have good land for mixed agriculture. The wet and dry zones of the various islands support a range of different environments influencing the demographic development of Fijian society as earliest migrations arrived. They came from further west in the Southern Pacific

sometime about 3,500 BP, establishing what is considered to be the first human habitation in the coastal regions of various islands in the Fiji group.

Pacific migrations pertaining to Fijian society and land

The definitive reconstruction of Pacific colonisation is still subject to theories, hypotheses and speculation. We await further archaeological investigation and new developments in genetics, linguistics, botany, physical anthropology and more accurate methods of dating the archaeological data to broaden our knowledge of these Pacific voyagers before they entered the South Pacific. It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into detailed discussion on the current knowledge and theories of the complex prehistory of Southeast Asia, Papua New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the rest of the geographical area now known as Melanesia before 3,500 BP, except where the evidence relates to the early settlement of Fiji. My interest is in the period from years 3,500 BP when colonisation from Near Oceania into Remote Oceania is thought to have first begun, when the first settlers reached Fiji's shores. Remote Oceania refers to island countries east of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and includes the Santa Cruz Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Loyalty Islands, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

Lapita

The discovery of distinctive ancient pottery in a site on the western coast of New Caledonia in the early 1950s provided Pacific scholars with clues to the navigation and settlement of the island countries of the South Pacific. The pottery and other artefacts found on the beach called Lapita, giving its name to the people who made them, provided the 'road map' for anthropologists, archaeologists, Pacific historians, ethnobotanists, linguists and geographers to begin tracing the peopling of the Pacific from the west.

Defined by their distinctive pottery, Lapita, an Austronesian speaking seafaring people moved through coastal Papua New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago sometime between 4,000 – 4,500 BP. Although their exact homeland is still a matter

of debate, current theories centre on the islands of South East Asia as far north as Taiwan and in the Bismarck Archipelago. Present overwhelming evidence supports the South East Asian model. From linguistic research, material culture and voyaging technology, it seems that the Lapita were of South East Asian origin with some 'genetic admixture with populations in northern Island Melanesia' who moved through the Bismarck Archipelago, Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia over a period of about a thousand years (Spriggs 2004:55). They had a maritime culture, lived in various sized communities and occupied previously uninhabited sites in land already settled as they moved through Near Oceania. Archaeological evidence from their ovens and cooking utensils shows that although they ate mainly fish and shellfish, they also were horticulturists growing root vegetables, coconuts, some tree crops, and kept domestic animals, pigs, dogs and chickens (Spriggs 1997:58, Kirch 1997:Chapter 7, Howe 2003:76-81, Bellwood 1975:11 and many others). Their use of stone and shell artefacts, talasea obsidian and pottery also distinguishes Lapita from the original settlers of Near Oceania.

Lapita navigation and settlement of Fiji

While sailing through Island Melanesia, the Lapita constantly refined their navigational and voyaging skills. In this period developments in their sailing vessels: outrigger and double-hulled canoes replacing dugouts, refined sail technology, triangled two boomed moveable sail and a moveable rudder enabled them to make longer and longer upwind successful return voyages away from the sight of land. These innovations prepared for the great oceanic voyages into previously uninhabited Remote Oceania (Irwin 1994:44-63, Howe 1984:18-24, 2003:Chapter 5, Spriggs 1997:60, Lewis 1978:46-66).

Current accepted theory is that in the second millennium BC some Lapita people moved relatively rapidly from Near Oceania into Fiji and later Tonga and Samoa (Irwin 1994:31, Kirch 1999:116-7).³ There is still some debate about the exact timing of their progress, but from archaeological evidence and carbon dating of the pottery

³ Not all Lapita moved out of Near Oceania, the 'stay-at-homes' choosing to remain and develop their own communities within Melanesia.

sites, enough is known of these people to allow for the documentation of Lapita settlement in Fiji (Anderson, Clarke 1999, 2001). Lapita pottery is categorised by its distinctive patterning. Carbon dating gives a timeframe for each of its three styles, enabling the tracing of the Lapita diaspora by this earthenware. However one does not recreate the movement of people by pottery finds alone – independent ‘linguistic, genetic and ethnobotanic studies’ when correlated with archaeological evidence increase the information about settlement (Howe 2003:61).

Evidence of Early Lapita settlement in Fiji has been found throughout the Island Group. To date there are thirty-five archaeological Lapita sites in Fiji in which pottery, artefacts, bones, charcoal, burial sites and other evidence of early habitation have been found. Until 2002 it was thought that Naigani Island, part of the Lomaiviti Group in the Koro Sea, was the site of the earliest settlement. However, a joint team from the University of the South Pacific and the Fiji Museum, in the course of a field study on neighbouring Ovalau and Moturiki Island, discovered that Naitabale (Moturiki) not only had ‘a large number of intricately-decorated Lapita potshards’ but also the skeleton of a Lapita woman. This is only the second complete Lapita skeleton found to date, making the Fiji discovery ‘the most exciting Lapita skeleton ever discovered on the South Pacific’ (Kumar, Nunn et al, 2003:16-20). The Naitabale site appears to predate Naigani by about 100 years - 2,850.⁴

In Fiji, although most Lapita lived on the coast on sheltered land adjacent to streams and near a deepwater reef passage, some of the early communities moved inland along large river systems living on the rich floodplains. Subsequent habitation and changes in sea level however, have made the finding of earlier sites difficult (Clarke, Anderson 2001:79-81, see also Nunn *ibid*, Parke 2000:116-119). As settlers moved inland, the wholesale burning of forests to clear the land for habitation, planting, flushing out feral pigs and improving visibility for defence all had an important impact on the coastal dwellers (Dickinson et al. 1998:21).

There is considerable geographic variation in Fiji, as discussed earlier, and the east–west divide in the case of Lapita dispersal is an important consideration when looking

⁴ Archaeological excavations of other potential sites continue and a team from the University of the South Pacific is currently working on the southwest coast of Vitilevu.

at the pattern of colonisation. It is thought for instance that eastern Fiji might have been colonised some considerable time after western Fiji. This correlates with Paul Geraghty's linguistic boundaries to be discussed later in this Chapter. Best, in his study of long distance obsidian travel, notes the difference in the assemblages found on Naigani compared to other sites in the Lau, concluding that the 'initial settlement of Fiji occurred over a period of time and from more than one direction' (1987:31-32). The data give us some picture of the settlement of each site but does not tell us for instance how quickly Lapita people crossed the sea gaps isolating island groups, nor how they set about occupying the archipelago landscapes, the ultimate colonisation objective. Did the travelling groups exploring the terrain 'leapfrog' to a new area (as in the case of the Sigatoka sand dune site) leaving later groups to colonise the 'gaps', or were there 'gateway' communities through which migrating groups passed? The latter theory is favoured in respect to Fiji given its geographical spread and would seem to be supported by the interchange of assemblages found within and outside of Fiji.

Stylistic designs on the pottery decoration have provided a chronological guide to dating the sites. The pots brought by the Lapita were dentate stamped, dating from the Early Eastern Lapita period around 1000 BC, similar to pottery found in Near Oceania. As the people settled in Fiji, the decoration and diversity of the early pottery changed over time from the highly decorative to the less decorative and finally to simpler and more utilitarian vessels known as Plain and Paddle/leaf impressed ware. From archaeological excavations on Vitilevu, a chronological framework based on Fijian pottery sequence divides the prehistory into four phases, although there is debate about this grouping as being too simplistic and unrealistic given the spread of the islands (Marshall et.al 2000:Chapter 8). There is still a grey area that needs more archaeological and genetic information to be able to say conclusively who the later migrating groups were, whence and when they came, where they settled and also whether they were migrations of a size large enough to have any significant impact on the original settlers (Spriggs 1997:Chapter 8). In the earliest writings on Fiji, much was made without scientific rigour about Melanesian influence in Fiji, based only on superficial observations from the 'look' of different Fijian groups, as in the hill tribes of Vitilevu; most early observers are guilty of this to some degree. However, given the geographical size and spread of the islands, there is a case for the development of

Fijian society within the archipelago. While Fiji might have been settled more than once, the ‘intruders’ rather than impacting on instead added to the society of the first settlers (Pawley and Green 1973:47).

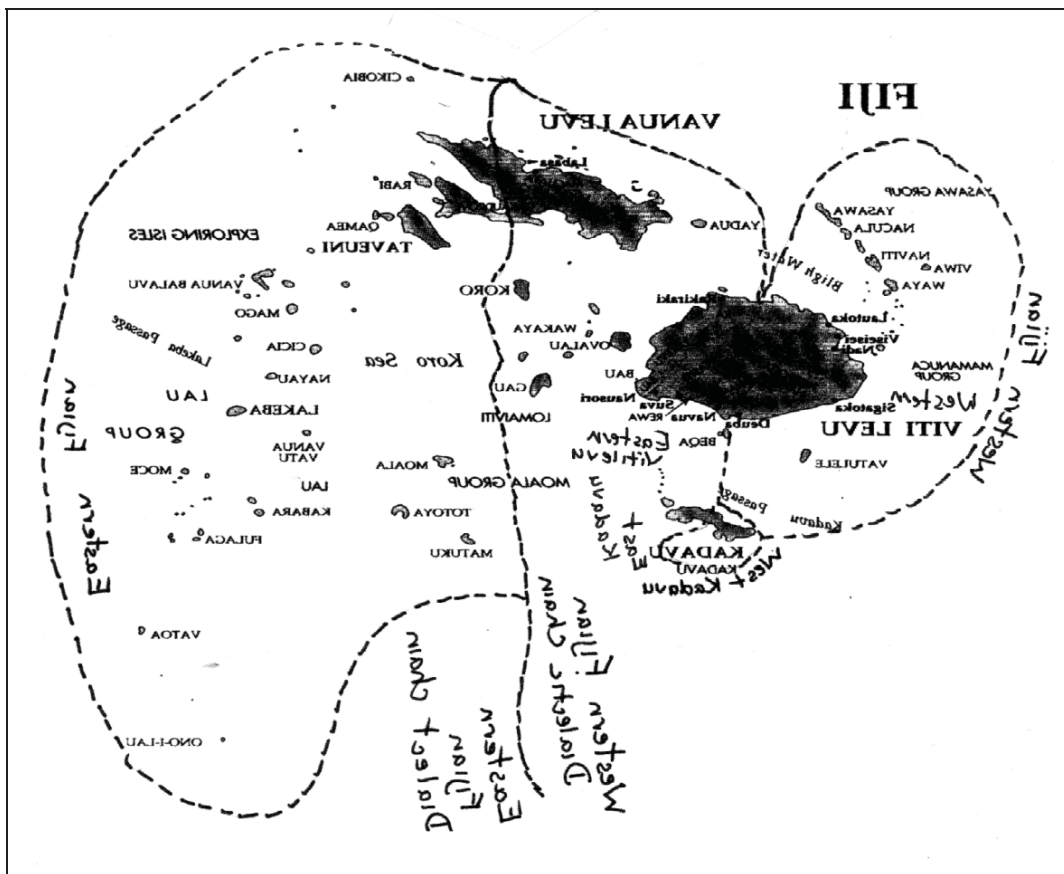
‘Long-distance voyaging contacts continued with the west, persisting for at least several centuries’ (Kirch 1999:72). As those great sea voyages gradually diminished, regional contact was maintained between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa (and continued until the arrival of the Europeans in the early 19th century). The shorter distances between the three island groups required smaller and faster canoes than those built for the great sea voyages and took less manpower and resources for making the shorter journey easier and safer.⁵ Williams (1985:85) speaks of Fijian women as well as men being ‘able to discharge the duties of ordinary seamen’. He was probably referring to the sailing of the *camakau*, a smaller double-hulled canoe, rather than the great ocean-going *drua*, which were bigger and heavier, and required considerable manpower to sail. Thomas (2004:332) writing on the voyages of Captain Cook says Cook greatly admired the double canoes sailed by the Tongans between Fiji and Samoa. Those seagoing canoes were built in Fiji whose rich natural resources included materials for boat building at which Fijians and Tongans were highly skilled. The huge natural resources of Fiji were certainly one of the reasons for constant contact between the three island groups.

Language

Pacific linguists today generally agree that all the Austronesian languages of Oceania are descended from a single proto language, known as Proto Oceanic and associate its early daughter languages with the Lapita cultural complex (Ross 1989:135). The evidence from linguistic analysis provides valuable information on the movement of peoples over distance, time and place. Languages change: the further the distance, the more a dialect separates from the original. It is believed that Proto-Central-Pacific, a chain of dialects evolving from Proto-Oceanic (of which there are some 450 languages) were the dialects spoken by the early Lapita settlers in Fiji who arrived

⁵ The importance of the relationship between northern and eastern Fiji and Tonga will be discussed later in the chapter.

with a common language. Routledge (1985:25) refers to the dialect chain as evolving ‘a series of discrete languages’, implying there was an original ancestral language or a group within related sub-groups. Given the vast area along which these dialects travelled but the short time (anthropologically) in which they arrived in the Pacific from the West, this dialectic chain developed only a few innovations rather than a new language before settlement in Fiji. Fiji then became ‘the centre of dispersion from which the speakers of the Proto-Central Pacific dialects spread out’ (Schmidt 1999:2).



Map 4: Fiji's broad dialectic divisions.

Sometime after first arrival in Fiji before the settlement of Polynesia, the first split in the Central-Pacific dialects broke into two chains of communalects between East and West, and although the boundary line was roughly drawn through the Koro Sea and eastern Vanualevu there were speakers of both communalects in each area (Map 4).

The two distinct but closely related ‘dialect chains’ of Proto-Tokalau Fijian the dialect of far eastern Fiji and Central-Pacific-West the dialect of western and central Fiji have important ramifications for tracing not only the relationship of Fijian languages within Fiji but also to Polynesian and other related communalects.

The colonisers thought to be from the Lau Group who left far eastern Fiji for Tonga and Samoa spoke a Proto-Tokalau Fijian dialect which Geraghty calls Proto-Tokalau-Polynesian, a dialect spoken in eastern Fiji, Tonga and Samoa at the time of colonisation (1983:348). He suggests that though there is ‘little evidence’ of a language common to both Fijian and Polynesian languages there is nevertheless ‘a good deal of evidence to suggest that languages ancestral to those of Eastern Fiji, especially Lau and Eastern Vanualevu, underwent a period of common development with the language ancestral to the Polynesian languages’. That dialect chain became Proto-Polynesian, the ancestral language of Polynesia, while speakers of Proto-Tokalau-Polynesian who remained in Fiji continued over time to develop, independent of Tonga and Samoa, a dialectic chain closer to Fijian communalects. This became the Proto-Fijian dialectic chain, thought by Pawley, Green and Geraghty to be the foundation of the Fijian language (Geraghty 1983:388).⁶

Proto-Fiji again split into two with a different dividing line now running through Vitilevu and Kadavu, bisecting into both East and West (see Map 4). The split has obviously been attributed to the movement of people from the coast to the inland areas, especially those of Vitilevu where it is believed the rivers rather than coastal regions created the communication links. In this hypothesis, the mountainous interior of Vitilevu formed a natural divide but did not cause the complex dispersion of dialects in Fiji between coastal regions, inter-island groups and the interiors of the larger islands in the East West divide. One would expect in such a division, given the distances between the extremes, that both societies would be culturally different, however this is not the case as although diverse, Fijian society has more similarities than differences.

⁶ The examination of early Fijian language has an important bearing on later missionary activity: firstly the need to establish a unified dialect for communication; secondly the combination of that dialect with indigenous music as a liturgical and evangelising tool for imparting Christian theology.

The study of dialectic spread reveals many exceptions: for instance in central Fiji the islands in the Koro Sea are divided between east and west including Ovalau (eastern) and Gau and Koro (western). Given their geographical positions one could not conclude from this fragmentation that the pattern of diversification was the result of the fragmenting of larger groups, rather it was a matter of geography, isolation and social interaction. Green and Pawley attribute differences not only to social interaction when early settlers colonised Fiji but also to scholars' identification of a dialect-network break within Fiji between 2,600 and 1,900 BP followed by regional regrouping (1973:15-17). This may strengthen the case for the development of Fijian society within the archipelago and the construction of Fijian languages, that is dialects spoken by the first settlers. While Geraghty agrees with this premise in principle he is of the opinion that the influence of other migrations had a more important impact on some Fijian dialects, especially those of western Fiji, than has been previously argued (Geraghty 1983:388-389). As yet there is no conclusive answer as to which of the migrations had the greatest influence on modern Fijian languages.⁷

Societal Structure: Chiefly System, Lineage, Customs, Religion

According to evidence collected by the Native Lands Commission, most Fijian people trace their descent through eight or ten generations from members of a migration which settled near the northernmost spur of the Nakauvadra mountains, on the north coast of Vitilevu. (Derrick 1963:7). The legend of *Lutunasobosoba*, said to have led a migration to Fiji in his canoe called *Kaunitoni*, recounts he landed on the west coast of Vitilevu at a place named Vuda. His descendents settled in the Nakauvada Mountains in the northwest interior of Vitilevu from where they moved through Fiji, eventually founding the present ruling families. However, there is no mention of this story in any of the early missionary writings; Williams for example when writing on Fijian origin was unable to find the definitive story of origin in Fijian myth:

[We] seek in vain for a single ray of tradition or historical record.... Native songs are silent in the matter and no hint of a former immigration is to be heard ... and the

⁷ Williams' analysis of Fijian dialects is accurate. His shrewd observations were detailed and given later linguistic research, valid (1985: Chapter 8).

popular belief is, that they never occupied any country but that on which they now dwell (1985:17, also Thompson 1940:32).

The archaeological discussion earlier in this chapter reconstructing original settlement to some 3,500 years BP means that eight to ten generations perpetrated by the myth is clearly inaccurate. The myth came to light in the late 1800s when some missionaries and Basil Thomson (amateur anthropologist and Chairman of the Native Lands Commission) collected Fijian legends in the hope of finding the definitive legend of origin. The story of the *Kaunitoni* migration was printed in Thomson's book (1908:6-10) but he cautioned on the fragmentary text, the timing of the recording (1891) and the fact that educated Fijians were aware of Europeans' interest in origin myth. The myth then found its way into the *tukutuku raraba*, narrations of tribal origin recorded by the Native Lands Commission when documenting land claims, and was perpetuated in print in Papers to 'learned Societies' and in schools, until its general acceptance by Fijians.⁸ Although the chronology is anthropologically incorrect, nevertheless acceptance of the origin myth has been embraced by Fijians in need of a national identity (Tuwere 2002:22, France 1966:107-113).⁹

One could assume then, given Fijian antiquity and the uncertainty of oral tradition, that there would be no single origin myth. Instead, Fijians have a collection of stories (some recorded in the *tukutuku raraba*) belonging to each social group of their own genealogy. These myths are important given the geography of the archipelago, the migration patterns, social organization, language and diversity of society. The stories are also preserved in the text of Fijian *meke*, particularly *meke ni vucu* – Fijian sung poetry.¹⁰ Whatever the shortcomings of oral tradition, these narratives from every part of Fiji spoken and sung in their own dialect embodied a record of the peopling of Fiji as far as memory allows. However, a note of caution should be sounded on some selectivity inherent in the recording in the first place, for they were to fit a colonial codification for Fijian land tenure (Kaplan 1995:Chapter 6). Even allowing for the purpose and timing in which these narratives were recorded, they are a valuable

⁸ The *tukutuku raraba* is the oral record of tribal origins and migrations preceding European settlement as told to the Native Land Commission between 1896 and 1950 when Fijians were obliged to establish claims to their ancestral land.

⁹ See also Tippet 1954:119.

¹⁰ *Meke* will be discussed at length in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

collection of stories of ancestor gods, wars, occupation and settlement of the land as well as the movement of people. The theme central to all the narratives involves the *vanua* in defeats and victories, distribution of land from wars and in 'seeking as well as giving shelter' (France 1969:11). Yet they are also the charters of societies, of politics and of family histories where the *vanua* is central. The *vanua* as a social concept is central to Fijian society for it means one's place or land, abode or position in society. The complexity of the *vanua* will be discussed later in this chapter.

As a political organization, the *vanua* under a paramount chief meant protection against 'predatory designs of ambitious neighbours' (Routledge 1985:28). A scientific examination of Fijian society will only be possible from about the 18th century or thereabouts when genealogies are remembered and when early journals and books record European observations, mostly concerning eastern Fiji and central Vitilevu.

Fijian hierarchical society

Fijian society at the time of Western contact was strongly hierarchical and complex with chiefs of various rank and social standing, over whom paramount chiefs had ultimate control, wielding political, social, temporal and spiritual power. Within a local and regional social system, complex rules and observances pervaded all levels of society from family to village to district. 'Clans' were arranged through descent groups, at the head of which was a *turaga* (chief). Within the overall system, *turagas* did not always wield identical power; the *turaga* of an extended *mataqali* (family group) for instance would owe allegiance to the head of a descent *yavusa* (larger family group) who in turn was subordinate to the political head of a *matanitu* (large political groups) known as a paramount chief. Brewster, observing the ancient traditions of the highland people of Vitilevu, comments on the spiritual and temporal aura surrounding the person of a chief, for they were considered the embodiment of gods or ancestors. In public, says Brewster, a chief of a clan would be greeted by a 'shout of divine acclamation, called the *tama*' (1922:69; also Williams 1985:37-38). *Tama* is a greeting of respect to a chief and herein lies an important social dichotomy: *tama* is owed not only between chief and commoner but also between chiefs of different social and political status, part of an elite language associated with a chief.

The social mores of complicated expectations, customs and ritual were strongly entrenched and firmly enforced. At every level of society certain expectations of custom and respect were the driving force of village life.

The *vanua* as social structure

Fijian hierarchy was complex and variable. As populations grew and resettled, kinships were formed into larger and larger descent groups bound by ties of place, ancestor and politics. At the *koro* (village) level was the extended family group known as *i tokatoka*. These groups together formed a *mataqali*, family groups of patrilineal or matrilineal kinship. A *koro* may comprise three or four *mataqali* of different descent. Forming and reforming as kin groups moved and resettled, the *mataqali* maintained their distinct identities before amalgamating to form a *yavusa*. *Yavusa* are the largest kinship and social division of Fijian society adhering to one *vu* (original ancestor) tracing back their ancestry to a *yavutu* (original site). They had the same *i cavuti* (totems) and *vakacaucau ni valu* (war-cry) (Capell and Lester 1941:59-60).¹¹ Thomas argues though that some *yavusa* were not necessarily bound by a founding ancestor but by the merging of descent groups resulting from ‘historical events’. He maintains that ‘*mataqali* and *yavusa* were products of power relations, population movements and interactions over time periods of several hundred years’ (1986:15).¹² The *yavusa* then were bound and strengthened by various social and political ties, acknowledging and paying tribute to a leading *turaga*. These units were fluid – some grew, some died out and some merged with others. Quarrels between *mataqali* responsible for ceremonial ritual and tribute payments were a constant cause of conflict and resulted in the breakdown of the *yavusa*, as did war and subsequent conquest. Changing alliances were an ever-present threat to the stability of Fijian society.

Over time various *yavusa* formed an association called the *vanua*, a socio-political organization ‘strengthened by social and political ties of one kind or another and paying homage to a leading *turaga*’ (Tuwere 2002:35). At the apex of these social

¹¹ *Cavuti* also means identification with the land of one’s ancestors.

¹² For an excellent description of the Bauan *yavusa* see Thomas 1986:13.

organizations was the *matanitu*, powerful political confederations of *yavusa* who combined by conquest and force to form great alliances. The strata of the *matanitu* consisted of chiefly *vanua*, *bati* (warriors) who might also have been a *vanua* in their own right) and *qali*, conquered subjects (Kaplan 1995:25). At the time of contact, the *matanitu* were large powerful confederations dominating most of Fijian society.¹³

Chiefs and commoners

There were distinctions of status within and between each *yavusa* and *mataqali* from chiefs to noblemen and women, *matanivanua* (heralds or spokesmen), *bati* (warriors), *bete* (priests), *mataisau* (carpenters), *gonedau* (fishermen), *dau veiqaravi* (servants) and in some places *bobula* (slaves). Their relations to a chief identified the function of each group and more broadly the services provided within the immediate group to a larger polity. The position of the *mataqali* within the wider rather than the local context was considered more important, for these relationships included approbation, ritual and status. The elaborate and diverse expectations of customary respect and reciprocity marked daily life as each performed the duties expected of their position within the group.

Chiefs as a group were detached from the commoners to a greater or lesser degree – the higher the social order the more they were protected by ‘an elaborate system of prohibitions and observances’ distancing them from commoners (Thomas 1986:9, Sand 2002:290). Although common people had no voice in the affairs of state, ‘great respect [was] paid to ancient divisions of landed property, of family rank and official rights’ which Erskine says extended not only to each other (kinship), but also to different districts and to the ‘degree of submission each dependent owed to his principal’ (Erskine 1987:214). Erskine was alluding to the variation in chiefs’ rights from village to district to state level. Reciprocity of obligations between chiefs and their people – dependent on their own and neighbouring *mataqali* for support – were arranged according to their sphere of influence. The power relations between chiefs and their kinship groups was of deep loyalty, based on shared genealogy, land tenure and ritual. Not so the rights of powerful confederations, those of the *matanitu* elite

¹³ Recognising, acknowledging and working with these powerful political groups was essential to the success of missionary work in the introduction of Christianity to Fiji.

and their royal court whose absolute authority was greatly feared by commoners. Tribute, power and association were means by which the *matanitu* maintained political dominance. Tributary payments from subgroups were exacted. Under the threat of retribution power was maintained in much the same way, and association meant political support which came at a price. Association also meant subjugation, tributary indebtedness, subordination and obligation to the *matanitu* elite. To this list must also be added tributary payments associated with *vasu* privileges.

Vasu – nephews' rights

The *vasu* system extended throughout the whole of Fijian society with wide ranging political and social implications. *Vasu* rights were those of a nephew over goods and property of his mother's people. The special privileges enjoyed with his uncle (his mother's brother) and those under his uncle's power entitled the *vasu* to appropriate whatever he chose, which in the case of high chiefs could involve anything within his domain. The degree of approbation depended on the social standing of the family, so *vasu* rights of commoners extended only within the household. Within the chiefly system, *vasu taukei*, was a child born to a chiefly woman in her village who was entitled to anything except the 'wives, home or land of a chief'. *Vasu levu* on the other hand was a child of chiefly parents who wielded considerable power because he was entitled to anything belonging to his chiefly family and by implication those who were under them (Williams 1985:34-35, Thompson 1940:63-64). In pre-contact times a chief had many wives whose pedigree decided the hierarchical line. The sons of high chiefs with the same father had different rank and status (the chiefly succession being bilinear decided from the mothers' line in some but not all parts of Fijian society) consequently within *vasu* relationships were different power bases and political affiliations. These caused confusion with reciprocal arrangements and 'the ability to exact advantage without having to concede it to the same extent became a test of political success' (Routledge 1985:36). *Vasu* relationships at the highest level were very real social and political power bases, and extended alliances within the powerful *matanitu*.

Chiefs (and their *vasu levu*) of the *matanitu* devoted themselves entirely to political affairs taking no part in the daily activity of the village or district, their every need being provided by commoners who owed them political allegiance. There were often two chiefs, a paramount or high chief *turaga bale kei Viti* whose person was sacred, and a second chief *sau* a secular chief.¹⁴ The *sau*, chiefs from the warrior class the *bati*, were the upholders of laws and customs of the land, concerned with warfare and the defence of the *turaga bale kei Viti*. In respect to custom, the *sau* was the bearer of the *yagona bilo* (cup) in the highest ceremony in Fijian society the *meke ni yagona* and so the principle performer acknowledged as second only to the *turaga bale kei Viti* in status. In his discussion on this duality, Hocart described the *sau* as an active chief: 'he is not content, like a high chief, to be, he does. He issues orders for the proper service of the first chief, and hence his title forms derivatives, *sautaka*, *saurara*, which suggest despotic commands' (1952:34-35, see also Toren 1994).¹⁵

The *bati* or warrior class were also known as the 'border' people. Living near and under the protection of communities they defended, *bati* were strong men who fought wars for their chiefs, in return for which they enjoyed not only an elevated position in society but also exemption from tributary obligation. Granted land, they were influential in the community. But this privileged position was conditional and could be lost for dereliction of duty. If driven off the land, *bati* were forced to seek the protection of another community, to whom they would attach themselves, on the presentation of several *tabua* (whales' teeth). If accepted, the new chief would offer them his protection and the same privileges attached to their rank.

Tributary obligation encompassed all of society, other than the chiefly elite to whom it was owed, and was exacted in different ways from different levels. All things connected to chiefly needs from the presentation of first fruits to the building of boats or houses, daily preparation of food or feasts, performance of ceremonies and presentation of gifts were the prerogative of the chiefs who had rights to anything owned by their *qali* (subjects). *Qali* as a community of conquered subjects were obliged to pay tribute to the conqueror. The demand involved a tribute called *lala*

¹⁴ The term *turaga bale kei Viti* - high chief also refers to the social- political system underpinning the structure of Fijian society over which those high chiefs wielded paramount power.

¹⁵ *Sautaka* means to give orders and *saurara* to oppress (Capell 1991:184-185).

from subordinate groups of villages through either direct or associated conquest. *Lala* rights extended to demands for labour and food from subordinate groups closest to the chiefly elite. Distance however played a part by exempting those *qali* who lived away from the immediate group. Their contributions were material specialities of their area, such as pots, mats, sails, hardwood (for boats) or tapa; it was the chief's prerogative to redistribute these goods and he was judged according to his generosity.

At the village level other rights and reciprocity involved distribution and cultivation of land. The rights for these included: land for *yavu* (housing), *qele* (cultivation) and *veikau* (forest), and were invested by the chief, in return for tributary payment. So long as *i sevuu* were paid according to custom and the specialised labours each *mataqali* performed, villagers enjoyed the protection of their community. Each *mataqali* had usufruct of their *qele ni teitei* (arable land) in which crops were cultivated for their immediate and extended family's use, as well as for the wider community (France 1969:15, Tuwere 2002:33-35). Surplus crops were used for *lala* tribute and distributed by the chief of the village or district, according to his concerns in maintaining prosperity.

Fijian Religion pre-missionary contact

Based on polytheistic mythology, definitions of pre-contact Fijian gods and spirits are full of contradictions, no one single description fits all. Given the geographical spread of the islands, variation in dialects and different customs of the communal societies, the spirituality and beliefs of each group varied according to their *vu* (ancestor god) and distance from the centre of power.¹⁶ However some generic names are recognised and used as terms of belief such as *kalou*, the overall name for god or goddess, spirit of worship or anything supernatural.¹⁷ Two most common classes of *kalou* are: *kalou vu*, generic names for deified ancestral or what Hocart calls 'founder-gods of the land' inhabiting a place of origin, and *kalou yalo*, reincarnated spirits of past ancestors, deified heroes, nature phenomena and war (1952:9).¹⁸ Hocart (1952:9), illustrating the

¹⁶ The complexity of Fijian spirituality is worthy here of close examination. Understanding the juxtaposition of introduced Christianity upon Fijian spirituality will highlight the importance of utilising Fijian artefacts, in particular their music in the transference, one to the other.

¹⁷ Fijians worshipped gods and goddesses; I refer to both as 'gods' throughout.

¹⁸ *Yalo* is the Fijian name for soul or spirit.

different perceptions of gods and spirits, gives a Westerners partial understanding of the complexity:

The “*true kalou*” is the soul of a definite man; the god is a spirit that is present with the chief ... but not the soul of the chief; it was with another child before, and with yet another before that; it is not anyone’s personal soul, but a spirit acquired at the consecration.... A spirit may have a temple and be an ancestor ... and yet not be a god of the *vu* class.

Acknowledging the complexity of Fijian gods, Waterhouse (1997:250) suggests a classification for the *kalou vu* for he felt that although gods of this ‘class’ were numerous, the ‘rank was fixed by the number of their worshippers, the extent of their government and the measure of the ability to save and to destroy’. His classifications are as follows:

1. Gods universally known throughout the group
2. Gods of nations
3. Gods of districts
4. Gods of families

To the first group belongs the supreme god of all Fiji *Degei*, the creator god of Rakiraki who took the form of a huge snake, about whom myths abound.¹⁹ Next in importance is *Daucina* the god of the seafaring people and of war about whom there are also many legends for he is also patron of adultery. *Ratumaibulu*, god of fertility originating from Tailevu, appears in December each year to increase the fertility of the land for the planting of the yams and the fruit trees and stays until the offering of the *i sevu*, the first fruits.²⁰ To these gods are added the many snake gods, worshipped under different names throughout Fiji, acknowledged for their antiquity.

To the second group belong those gods who were worshiped by some *yavusa*. These included: *Cagawalu* the great god of Bau known for his successful guidance in battles

¹⁹ The founding god *Degei* from the Nakauvadra Ranges, also featured in the Kaunitoni Migration myth, is the most widely known in Fiji from whom many snake cults originated (Derrick 1963:11, Tippet 1954:107-121). All the names of the gods I have used are the most widely known, although, except for *Degei*, some are also known by their regional name.

²⁰ See Erskine 1987:245, Tuwere 2002:143, Thompson 1940:114 and Wilkes 1985:84-86,90-91.

and his bloodthirstiness; *Dakawaqa* the shark god of Cakaudrove worshipped in many parts of Fiji where the shark was *tabu*; *Betaniqori* and *Vusatinitini* gods of the forest and origin gods of the island of Gau in Lomaiviti; *Natavasara* the great war-god of Somosomo; *Ruvuyalo* the soul-slayer and *Rokola* the god of the *mataisau* (carpenters). All these gods are part of the group of *vu* gods.

In the third group, gods of the district, were *Oira nai Sakalo*, gods of famine; *Saumaki* the river shark gods; *Radi ni bure rua*, a temple goddess known for her destruction of the enemy, *Rokomoko* a god in the shape of a lizard who was also involved in war; *Gigi*, tree origin of the people of Kabara, Lau and many others of particular importance to a given district or *mataqali*.

To the final group belonged anything connected to the household. These took the form of both animate and inanimate objects, including *kalou yalo*. The list was endless, for every *yavusa* and *mataqali* had their own *kalou vu* with an accompanying myth and totem (Williams 1985:216, Derrick 1963:11-12, Tuwere 2002:142, Thomson 1908:111-115, Thompson 1940:105, Waterhouse 1997:261-289).

The influence of each god was confined to the community acknowledging them: the larger the community, the greater the stature and the higher the *mana* of the god. *Mana* was the supernatural power or presence of the gods from whom came the life force for both place and people. The supernatural power of *mana* was also believed to have a physical presence, as in the person of a chief or a sacred place or sacred object, through which spirits or gods imparted their power. If successful in times of war, the social prestige of the group was advanced and the *mana* attributed to the gods. Therefore the place or person in possession of *mana* was considered *tabu* (sacred or forbidden). Each *yavusa* had a totem, gods incarnated into a material form such as a human, agriculture, animal or fish who were 'tutelary deities of whole tribes or individuals' (Seemann 1973:390, Williams 1985:219). These totems were *tabu* and those acknowledging them were forbidden to eat or harm them.²¹ The gods were placated with offerings from the worshippers in various forms: for an act of appeasement a *lovi*; for an act of covenant or a solemn vow, a *musukau*; for the

²¹ For a full description of *tabu* see Williams 1985:234 and Derrick 1963:13.

offering of the first fruits (before giving to a chief), *i sevu*; for an act of atonement, a *soro*, and an act of thanksgiving a *madrali*. Supplications to the gods involved everything connected with daily life and a *meke* was often performed to pacify them, although Waterhouse notes that the text of the *meke* did not necessarily relate to the occasion (1997:289).²² Although the interiors of the *bure kalou* (temples) were mostly empty except for a long sheet of white *masi* at one end through which the gods entered the body of the *bete* (priest), there were also spirit houses with carved idols inhabited by the spirits (Clunie 2003:109-113).²³ *Yaqona* (*kava* – *piper methysticum*) was drunk with the appropriate ceremony after prayers and the supplications to the gods.²⁴ Offerings varied according to the seriousness of the supplication. When important matters were involved, an offering of large quantities of food and several *tabua* (whales' teeth) was made in the temple through the high priest who conducted the offerings. In 1808 William Lockerby described a temple ceremony involving a 'callow' (*kalou*) being consulted by the chief of the village.²⁵

This man was put into the house of their Callow, and four of the King's old men with him.... The King remained outside and at times conversed with the Callow... he soon began to jump and skip, and beat the floor with his stick, to swing and twist his limbs and body to such a degree as to put himself into a great a perspiration.... When he had done, and had prognosticated something in favour of the King and his people, they were well pleased with his performance.... I asked the old King if this old man could tell him anything of future events. He said he did not know, but he was thought to be a very great Callow, and it was his duty to believe him (1808:31).

This is an insight into the shamanistic qualities of the priest. We see the reverence and the power he commanded over the village including the chief. There was the firm conviction of his direct link with the gods and spirits through his utterances while in a trance and a direct communication to them from him. The fact that he was referred to as a 'Callow' (*kalou*) shows he was considered not only a medium but also a living god. Wilkes in discussing the role of the priests concurred, pointing to the fact that as

²² *Meke*, indigenous sung poetry is explored at length in Chapter 5.

²³ *Masi* is the bark of the paper mulberry tree *equisetum debilis*.

²⁴ *Yagona* drinking is a religious rite performed throughout the Pacific. In Fijian society, there are confusing legends as to its origin. The ceremony will be discussed in Chapter 5. For an excellent discussion on *kava* (*yagona*) drinking in Vitilevu see Lester 1941:255.

²⁵ See also Williams 1985: 225.

a 'representative of the *kalou* or spirit', priests were consulted on every aspect of the society in which they lived (1985:87). Not always a hereditary office, the priest enjoyed equal status with the chiefs, and together were a powerful force. Every chief had a priest although Wilkes and Thomson were doubtful as to the actual importance chiefs placed on their inspiration. The answer of the chief to the question posed by Lockerby bears out that scepticism and although the man's prophesying ability may have been doubted his *mana* demanded respect. It was not in a chief's interest not to have priests given the importance accorded them; consequently they were fully used to control the people (Wilkes 1985:86-87, Thomson 1940:157-160). The priests were not involved in the daily life of the village and were dependent on the offerings to the gods for their food, which only they and the old men were permitted to consume. They also lived in the temple although not all consultations were made there: many were made in houses or in the open. Worship at the temple was not a regular occurrence, full use of it was only made in times of stress; in peacetime they were allowed to decay and were only rebuilt in times of emergencies. So it was in the interest of the priest to see that villages were constantly involved in some kind of conflict.

Most of the gods or spirits were considered to be powerful, numerous and vengeful, and were greatly feared. Fear of offending them with subsequent retribution was universal. Gods assumed many forms and disasters such as sickness, crop failure, storms and other natural phenomena were attributed to their wrath. Each social group had a different belief about the passage of the soul after death. Some attributed the final resting place to be with *Degei* (who resided in *Bulu*), others believed the soul returned to the sea before making its way to *Bulu* while others believed in transmigration when the soul returned as a spirit wandering about at will in visible or invisible form. The unpredictability of these spirits and their perceived propensity to wander about at night were cause of much fear in a village. Although not all gods and spirits were feared for there were also gods involved in ceremonies of the *vanua* in the yearly cycle of harvests. Besides the religious rituals of tribute to Fijian deity there were also cults involving gods. The most widely practised cults in Fiji were the *luve ni wai* (children of the waters), the *baki*, the *kalourere*, and the *vilavilairevo* (the

original firewalking).²⁶ And there were also many cults involving the snake deities whose form was much revered and often attached to a god including *Degei*.²⁷

Summary

Archaeologists have established that Fiji was first colonised by a people Lapita who arrived sometime about 3,500 BP. A maritime culture distinctive for its plain and decorative pottery, stone tools and ornaments, the Lapita sailed from the Near Oceania region. They were an Austronesian-speaking coastal people who lived in variously sized communities. Linguistic data has yet to provide clear evidence of societal movements though historical observations and oral tradition provide valuable insights into the political and social composition of Fijian society at the time of first European contact. Although these sources are subjective and must be treated accordingly there is sufficient cross-referencing to provide a reasonably clear picture of the social complexity.

Fijian society in the 18th and 19th centuries was dominated by the *turaga bale kei Viti* chiefly system exercising varying degrees of power within highly structured societal boundaries. Fijian hierarchy was complex and variable. Agnatic kinship groups were bound together by place, ancestor or politics with great distinctions of status. Domination was maintained between chiefs and commoners by institutional relations through the amalgamation of powerful *matanitu* and by religious sanctions.

The polytheistic structure of spiritual beliefs and practices at the time of missionary contact was as complex as the organisation of Fijian society. *Kalou vu* was the recognised name for deified ancestral gods of the land inhabiting place of origin, while *kalou yalo* were reincarnated spirits of ancestors, heroes and natural phenomena. Despite the complexity of his task, missionary Waterhouse classified *kalou yalo* into four broad divisions which helped guide the Western missionaries through the complexity of the religion they had come to challenge, a complexity compounded by an integrated tightly woven web of spiritual and temporal

²⁶ See Thompson 1940:117, Brewster 1922:222-225, Williams 1985:237-238 and Lester 1941:117-133.

²⁷ See Tippet 1954:107-121.

connections, deified chiefs and priests (*mana*), sacred object and places, *tabus* and totems: such was Fijian religion.

Chapter 3

Methodism and Fijian evangelism

Introduction

The singular combination in late 18th century of Protestant Evangelical revival and secular exploration kindled such intense European interest in the Pacific that from 1797 missionary societies were already active in Tahiti and looking westward. Foreign missions and missionary societies were formed with the express purpose of conversion. A general disenchantment with the Establishment Church and the formation of new religious groups in Britain and Europe coincided with the intellectual movements of rationalism and scientific enquiry in the Age of Reason. James Cook's voyages to the Pacific with their subsequent scientific and exotic publications excited the interest of the British people, and the Protestant Evangelical revivalists in the spirit of their faiths were inspired to take the Christian message beyond the comforts of their own societies (Garrett 1985:9).

Who were these Christian crusading evangelists bringing their brand of spirituality with so passionate a conviction? This chapter examines the theological and social tenets of the Western missionaries and the prognostication of change brought about by their determined evangelism and Christian ethos. The question asks: what would be the longstanding response of Fijians to these foreigners who would challenge their spirituality and consequently their society? Successfully addressing this fundamental question is to begin to understand the degree of change, its effect and the pivotal role of the Fijian acceptors in the indigenisation of the foreign religion utilisation their artefacts - particularly their music in evangelisation.

Wesleyan Methodists

Comprehending the driving force behind these men and women who ventured into the island countries of the South Pacific in the early 19th century, referring in particular to Tahiti, Tonga and Fiji, means to understand their rationale, spirituality, philosophy,

society, and social role.¹ This encompassing knowledge enhances an understanding of the ethos of the men and women who came to Fiji to 'save' Fijian souls for Christ. What attracted these people to devote their lives in the lengthy pursuit of a Christian ideal for little financial reward, social prestige or sympathy from fellow countrymen? They were putting their lives at risk in sometime hostile environments among people who they did not consider part of their civilised world and whose social, political and spiritual philosophies were beyond the parameters of their society. They were young, several with limited education, and coming from a society itself in the process of social upheaval were to succeed in introducing new values, spiritual philosophy and Western skills into well-established societies of whose culture they had such sketchy knowledge. Arriving out of profound religious conviction stemming from personal reasons for conversion, their mission was to save the unenlightened and thereby gain their own spiritual enlightenment and salvation. Such were the Evangelical societal missionaries to the Island Countries of the South Pacific.

The Protestant Evangelical Revival

The Protestant Evangelical Revival evolved in a period of social and economic change in the 18th century as England moved from an agrarian to an industrial society. Disillusioned with society, the disparity between rich and poor, lack of education, social equality and opportunity and so importantly indifference and in-existent spiritual guidance from established religious institutions, the Protestant Revivalists sought to bring back spiritual guidance to the disaffected with a moral code whereby the working class of a class-conscious society could gain respectability.² To achieve their objective they preached in the open-air, in family homes, on village greens, in meeting houses and country halls across the country, bringing their Christian doctrine to a mostly illiterate working class on whom England was beginning to build her Empire (having lost the first one in North America), the beginning of the Industrial Age and the burgeoning British Imperialism.

¹ These countries have been deliberately cited as they, and later Australia, were the countries most closely connected with the early Fijian mission.

² The same objective would be mirrored in Fiji where acceptance of Christianity held the prospect of improved equality, both secular and spiritual.

Protestant Revivalists, mindful of the need for their followers to be literate, established institutions for their education. With access to rudimentary education, people learnt to read and write, and the Bible became the household book. Education meant social awareness and a new sense of self-worth, industry and moral sobriety. The power of the revivalists lay in their rigorous logic and the value placed on the individual's actions in daily life. This was achieved by an adherence to a strict code of conduct, with strong moral purpose and behaviour. They believed in the acknowledgment of human frailty, the justice of God's displeasure for that frailty, and a conversion and salvation that lay in Christ alone. Revival says Gunson (1978:27) was not simply a quickening of an old faith, but 'true conversion', the 'rebirth of the new man' and:

... effecting this spiritual rebirth was the principal object of all Evangelicals. Their mission, vocation, was to bring the unbeliever, heathen or unenlightened to a state of sanctification that either they themselves had achieved or were attempting to achieve in the conversion of others, to convince all men (in whatever state, all equally condemned) of their innate depravity, their need for a saviour or mediation with God, and a belief in the atonement and consequent salvation of believers.

'The people called Methodist'

John Wesley, the leading evangelist in the Protestant Evangelical Revival movement, renowned preacher and ordained priest of the Church of England, like his brother Charles and other committed evangelical clergy and laymen within the Church of England challenged the religious establishments for their indifference to the working class, many of whom had no access to churches or were largely ignored by indifferent clergy dependent on wealthy patrons for their living. The apparent palpable neglect of this large group of the population became the focus for the Evangelicals, particularly the Wesleys and their followers.³ Following his own religious awakening in 1738, John Wesley devoted himself to evangelism, preaching the Christian message of salvation through a 'true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ' (Wesley 2003:41). His preaching attracted huge crowds and his popularity was due in part to

³ Royle (1987:285) states 'In 1743, about half the clergymen in the diocese of York held more than one living, the majority for the reasons of poverty'.

the principle tenet of his message that ‘all men and women needed to be ‘saved and ... before God all souls were of equal value’ (Briggs 1978:68). Speaking the language of his followers, John Wesley ‘wrote his theology to help plain men cope with the practical problems of Christian living’ (Hempton 1984:25), and, by moving among them, brought the Christian gospel to large numbers of people. Preaching was not only a highly valued and accessible means of instruction but also the direct communication lacking in the established churches. Black (1924:20-21) on the question of preaching also noted:

To us, preaching is the natural overflow of our religion. We have received good news, and we long to tell it to others.... Its idea is to spread the news [and] convince others. This dictates the two forms which preaching generally assumes – on the one hand, to convince the careless, awaken the indifferent, and enlighten the ignorant, in other words, to make converts, here or abroad, conversion through conviction: and on the other hand to educate, train and nourish and inspire those who are already convinced, to upbuild and strengthen the people of God.

Preachers who were in great demand, their sermons eagerly sought and widely read, imparted an easily understood Christian dogma based on a comprehensive theology, giving their followers and adherents a ‘new dignity and respectability’ a personal faith and a creed to live by (Gunson 1978:32).⁴

John Wesley was a great and charismatic preacher, working across the whole of England and attracting, like others before him, great crowds eager to hear his sermons. His organisational ability was his greatest success and to this skill must be credited the success and durability of the movement. The successful evolution of the Methodist movement centred largely on John Wesley’s personality, preaching, writings and authoritarian influence, backed by Charles Wesley’s massive talent in hymnody. John Wesley’s concern for stern discipline, functional approach to church structure, ‘lay participation’ and the importance of grace and salvation built the foundation for a denomination which would have an important long term social as well as theological influence on English society, and later on Fijian society.

⁴ Adherents were supporters rather than full members of the Revival Movement. See also Chapter 4:75.

To this end he urged his followers ‘to pursue (in whatever measure they have attained) holiness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to reveal the will of God’ and exhorted them to worship ‘justice, mercy and truth, or universal love filling the heart and governing ... life’ (Wesley 2003:47). To achieve such a state one first needed to experience a state of ‘prevenient grace’. Prevenient grace in Methodist doctrine is ‘the grace of God which precedes repentance and conversion, predisposing the heart to seek God, previously to any desire or motion on the part of the recipient’ (Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 1965:1579) and is summarised in the first two verses of Charles Wesley’s Hymn 323.

Come sinners, to the gospel feast,
Let every soul be Jesu’s guest;
Ye need not one be left behind,
For God hath bidden all mankind.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
The invitation is to all:
Come, all the world; come, sinner thou!
All things in Christ are ready now.

(The Methodist Hymn-Book, 1954:287)

The striving for and achievement of the state of prevenient grace was essential for all Methodists as a precursor to conversion. Conversion says Gunson (1978:47) was the ‘essential religious experience of revival and of Evangelical conversion’ and as he describes, is ‘the ‘new birth’, or being ‘born again in the spirit’. Following conversion, the Methodists’ ultimate goal of scriptural holiness or perfection was the ‘doctrine of entire sanctification’, a state Gunson describes as Wesleyans striving for ‘holiness of life above all things’ and being the most difficult to maintain (1978:47). Many Methodist hymns deal with sanctification especially in the section called ‘The Christian Life’ with most of the text written by Charles Wesley. Wesleyans used the hymn texts to promote reflection on sanctification.

Methodist Hymnody

‘Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord’ *Ephesians* 5:19

It was no accident that Charles Wesley, greatest hymnist of the Methodist movement, followed the words of St Paul to the Ephesians – for his hymns, some six thousand five hundred of which were a form of double worship: the outward performance of the song and the inward prayer of the poetic text. ‘Methodism was born in song’ (The Methodist Hymn-Book Preface 1954:iii), and although John also wrote hymns Charles the far more prolific is considered the poet of the Evangelical Movement. The texts of the hymns were not just for singing but also reflection on all tenets of Christian doctrine, especially the New Testament, giving followers a complete doxology.⁵ The hymns were arranged in poems reflecting everyday needs with a suitable verse for every occasion: The Holy Spirit, The Lord Jesus Christ, The Christian Life, The Church and many other topics. Wesleyan hymns were written for the Protestant Evangelical Revivalists who needed a variety of hymns to sing, for singing was a large part of Methodist worship. John Wesley, in the ‘Preface to A Collection of Hymns, for use of the people called Methodists’ commented: ‘In these hymns there is no doggerel; no botches; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme ... nothing turgid ... no *cant* expressions, no words without meaning ... we talk common sense both in prose and verse and use no word but a fixed and determinate sense ...’ (The Methodist Hymn-Book 1954:vi). In the strict, abstemious life of a Methodist, poetry was an approved art form and works on theological subjects were greatly prized for their beauty and theological content.⁶ Methodists composed many hymn tunes. Other sources for Methodist hymnody came from ‘German chorales, French Psalter-tunes, English psalm-tunes, adaptations, early eighteenth-century tunes and even some folk-songs or traditional melodies’ (Lightwood 1935:ix). While followers were exhorted to ‘abstain from singing innocent songs’ (it must be assumed here that Wesley was referring to popular secular songs of the day), hymn singing was greatly encouraged and became a hallmark of Methodist worship (Wesley, 2002:49). So

⁵ This was the essence of the Fijian indigenous liturgy, which will be examined at length in Chapter 6.

⁶ The Wesleys came from a religious family where poetry was greatly prized, their father, the Rector of Epworth and older brother Samuel both wrote hymns, which have remained in use as in Samuel Wesley’s 3rd setting of *Te Deum Laudamus* (Julian (ed.)1908:726).

strongly did John Wesley value their hymnody, he wrote directions for their use as follows:

I Learn all the *Tunes* before you learn any other; afterwards learn as many as you please.

II Sing them exactly as they are printed ... without altering or mending them at all; if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

III Sing *All*. See that you join with the congregation.... Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you.

IV Sing *lustily* and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep. Be no more afraid of your voice now, no more ashamed of its being heard, that when you sung the songs of Satan.

V Sing *modestly*. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony ...

VI Sing *in Time*. Whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it ... take care not to sing *too slow*. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us ...

VII Above all sing *spiritually*. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim to pleasing *Him* more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your *Heart* is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the *Lord* would approve of here, and reward you when He cometh in the clouds of heaven.

(Lightwood, 1935:xix-xx)

In the above instructions the immense detail in Wesley's directions for hymn singing reflected the importance placed in both the music and the poetic text of the Methodist Liturgy. These directions reflect a Methodist code of behaviour: diligence, fervour, modesty, attention to detail, striving to do the best at all times no matter the task and above all an outward and inward spirituality exemplified in the doctrine of entire sanctification.

To be 'born again in the spirit' would be a constant renewing for the faithful and work focus for others. Atonement, sanctification, love of Christ and God, guilt, fear of hell and predisposing unworthiness, all were part of the spiritual makeup of the Wesleyan Methodists. Ministers, lay preachers, class teachers, counsellors and leaders of their

local Christian communities guided the enduring faithful, giving England a moral code, sense of worthiness and respectability and for those living by this code, justification for all the wealth and power of 19th century Imperialism.

Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Pacific Connection

In the early 19th century there was ‘a formidable combination of millennialism and imperialism among English evangelicals’ (Hempton 1984:97). Wesleyan Methodists felt it was time to take greater control geographically and financially of their overseas missions. Mindful of the growing influence of the Calvinist and Anglicans (Church Missionary Society) on foreign missions, the Wesleyans formed their own independent society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Leeds in 1813, for domestic and overseas missionary work promoting Methodism. Connexion members supported the move and within a short time the evangelical missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society began their missionary work in the Pacific.⁷

Mindful of the danger of introducing conflicting religious theology and practice into societies yet to experience Christianity, the two Protestant missionary societies and the Church of England based in New South Wales under the guidance of the Rev. Samuel Marsden entered into a comity agreement to divide the Pacific Island countries between themselves while sharing such resources as mission ships. Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, New Zealand and Rotuma then were to be evangelised by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, while the LMS and the CMS missions were influential in the other island countries.⁸ The practice worked reasonably well until Marsden’s death in 1838 when conflict and misunderstanding between the three denominations as well as the ‘intrusion’ of other Christian faiths, in particular the French Catholics, broke the fragile agreement (Gunson 1973(8):191-195, 1978:15, 130), also Garrett 1985:84, 122-123).

⁷ Connexion in this sense refers to the Methodist church body.

⁸ The LMS is the London Missionary Society.

Methodists in Fiji

Three LMS Tahitian missionaries, Taharaa, Faaruea and Hatai had preceded the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries five years before their arrival in Fiji. The Tahitians were brought to Fiji at the behest of a Lauan chief Takai, from the island of Oneata, and promised a welcome by his paramount chief, Tui Nayau. However, the Tahitians were unprepared for the mission with no Fijian language skills (no attempt to learn a Lauan dialect) and were unmarried. Most importantly though, Tui Nayau was neither welcoming nor interested in accepting Christianity and ordered them out of Tubou, the chiefly village on the island of Lakeba. So the Tahitians were taken to live on Takai's island some distance southwest of Tubou and, although they never succeeded in their evangelisation, were loved and respected by the Lauans with whom they lived for the rest of their days.

Although not the first missionaries, the Wesleyans (who for future reference in this thesis will be known as Methodists) were the first to make contact of real significance in Fiji.⁹ In the ethos of Methodism they spent two years in Tonga preparing for Fiji. Josua Mateinaniu, a Fulagan chief from southern Lau in Tonga at the time, assisted the missionaries, teaching them his dialect and translating material for printing, including part of the Conference catechism. He also acted as their *mata ni vanua* (spokesman) ensuring their arrival in Lau was conducted *vaka viti* (in the Fijian way). Josua Mateinaniu was be a person of very special significance to the missionaries and to the establishment of the early missions (Baleiwaqa 1996:20-28).

On the 12th October, 1835 two young men, the Reverends William Cross and David Cargill arrived with their families at Tubou to begin their mission to Fiji. They came under the aegis of the powerful Tongan prince Taufa'ahau (later King George 1 of Tonga) cousin of Tui Nayau, whose country had only been introduced to Christianity thirteen years earlier. Granted permission to establish a mission station in Tubou, Cross and Cargill began the introduction of Christianity to a society ruled by strong and powerful chiefly *matanitu*.

⁹ For further discussion see Wood 1978:33-34, Garrett 1985:102-103, Calvert 1985:Chapter 1.

Some Fijians were already aware of a ‘new’ spiritual movement in the Pacific through their traditional contact with other indigenous communities particularly Tongan. Certainly any Europeans residing in Fiji at the time of missionary contact though – with the exception of sandalwood and bêche-de-mer traders – were not in the business of conversion, most of them living under the control and at the whim of a powerful chief. Most Europeans of consequence had avoided Fiji because of its fearsome reputation, choosing instead to conduct their trade with friendlier island countries.

Forces underpinning Fijian society at the time of missionary contact

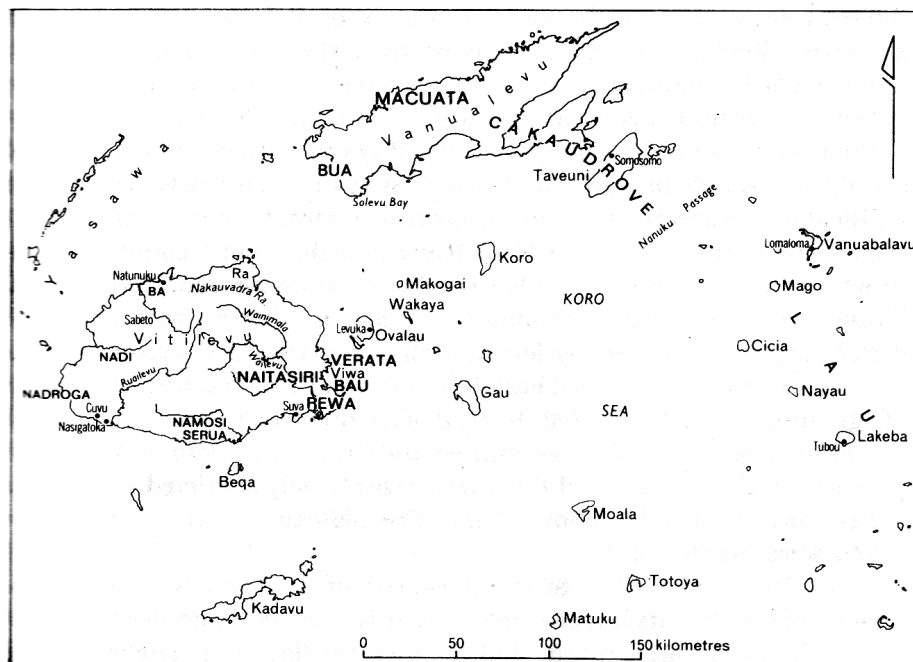
Fijian polity was complex and variable. Agnatic kinship groups - *mataqali*, *yavusa*, *vanua* and *matanitu* were interdependent, bound by ties of place, ancestor and politics. At the head of each group was a chief – within whose power were distinctions of status dependent on his or her position in the kinship group. Between chief and commoner, domination was maintained by institutional relations including, *vasu* rites, tributary appropriation and religious and entrenched sanctions. At the time of missionary contact Fiji was a disunited society, ruled by *matanitu*. Recognition, acceptance and accommodation of the chiefly organization underpinning Fijian society – the *turaga bale kei Viti* – was to be the key to missionary success in achieving an introduction of Christian ethos.

The *matanitu* in Thomas’s view were ‘constituted by a regionally extensive system of relations of subordination, allegiances and alliance [whose] chiefly place interacted continuously with groups within its domain in terms of these relationships, as well as with other *matanitu* and independent groups’ (1986:64). Thomas was referring to factional conflict, a consequence of complex societal structure of chiefly polygyny, succession and *vasu* rights embroiling all tributary subjects. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the *vasu* system was insidious: a complex web of rights, attribution and succession at all levels of society. Wider implications at the chiefly level however, especially between the *matanitu*, meant it was essential for paramount chiefs to develop strong ties by marriage or association between themselves to maintain stability and a tighter control over their subjects. Consequently there were

continual wars or skirmishes between rivals as each struggled to acquire and maintain power.¹⁰ Campbell (2003:106) attributes initial slow conversion to Christianity in Fiji to the constant warfare between the powerful *matanitu*:

Bau strove to extend and reinforce its influence over the islands in and around the Koro Sea; Rewa maintained its hegemony over eastern Viti Levu; and the northern states of Bua and Macuata tried to assert their independence.

This description forms only part of the whole picture as other powerful states were involved in warfare or protection of property, but in introducing Christianity the missionaries were initially concerned with the eastern states – Bau, Rewa, Cakaudrove, Verata, Lau, Bua and Macuata. These *matanitu* with their tributary *yavusa* covered a widely diverse geographical area of eastern Fiji bounded by Macuata and Bua in the north, Lau in the east and Bau and Rewa south of the triangle (see Map 5). Here was the centre of power on which the success of the mission depended as much for security as for evangelisation.



Map 5: *Matanitu* at the time of missionary contact 1835 (Routledge 1985:15)

¹⁰ For a detailed description of Fijian warfare see Derrick 1942:137-146, Deering 1968:113-119, Nadalo 1955:51-57.

Fiji was a society of complex social mores reflecting the migratory pattern of settlement, no one description being applicable to all Fijian society. At the time of missionary contact there were as many differences as similarities, including language, kinship, ritual, continual movements of agnatic groups through warfare and disputes between *mataqali*. Although village movement was fluid it occurred within a framework of traditional organization. The *matanitu* consolidated and extended their considerable influence becoming a force for social interchange. In pre-contact times the practice of a conquering group, removing some of the tributary *yavusa* and exchanging them for their own people, insured control and inadvertently promoted some cross-cultural exchange of dialects and social patterns.¹¹ Through conquest, the dialects of powerful *matanitu* became the most widely understood as in the case of the *matanitu* of Bau then on the ascendancy. As a result of this cultural exchange more Fijians understood the Bauan dialect than any other at the time of missionary contact. This benefited the missionaries in choosing the Bauan dialect for a future *lingua franca*. It was important then for the missionaries to recognise the centre of power for without the permission of these powerful chiefs the introduction of the new spirituality – which would have ramifications for all strata of society – would have failed.

Cross and Cargill arrived in Lau when the eastern *matanitu* of Bau, Cakaudrove, Rewa, Verata, Lau, Bua and Macuata were the powerful ruling groups in Fiji. Of these *matanitu* the Bauans were the most powerful, yet none was strong enough to unite Fiji. Strong resistance to Bauan domination came from other *yavusa* particularly in the highlands of Vitilevu where the *kai colo*, the mountain ‘land people’, vigorously and successfully defended their society from all attempts of the ‘sea people’ to conquer them. Later, this resistance to Bau was to have far-reaching consequences for the Methodist mission.¹² The power of the *matanitu* meant no decisions of consequence were made without the permission of the paramount chiefs for fear of retribution. Tui Nayau, who had accepted the Methodist missionaries and whose people were tributary to Bau, was reluctant to accept Christianity before the

¹¹ It must be noted that this practice was not the usual *modus operandi* of Fijian warfare, (see Clunie 1977) but in cases of a *yavusa* or *vanua* becoming subjected to a *matanitu* the practice was a form of insurance and control for the paramount chiefs.

¹² The resistance of the *kai colo* to the domination of Bau had disastrous consequences for the mission, which the villages equated with Bau, culminating in the death of the missionary Thomas Baker in 1868.

paramount chief of Bau, Ratu Cakobau. When he finally did become a Christian in 1849:

Cakobau was already angered by the conversion of some of his people, which had weakened his military strength. The conversion of Lau was too much: Cakobau let it be known that the islands would be brought into line by force (Campbell, 2003:106).

The large presence of the Tongans in Lau however prevented Cakobau from carrying out his threat and Lau was saved from destructive war. The missionaries realised that the success of their mission rested on the cooperation and collaboration with the paramount chiefs, a reciprocal process, as paramount chiefs utilised Christianity and the missionary presence for their own ends.

Fijian spirituality at the time of missionary contact

An examination of the religious system of the Fijians is attended with considerable difficulty. Their traditional mythology is dark, vague, and perplexing. Each island had its own gods, each locality its own superstitions, and almost each individual his own modification of both. Yet, amid all the confusion, there may be traced certain main tracks of belief, appearing again and again from among the undefined legends.... The idea of Deity is familiar to the Fijians; and the existence of an invisible superhuman power, controlling or influencing all earthly things, is fully recognised by him (Williams, 1985:215-216).¹³

It has been shown in the previous chapter how the migratory pattern of settlement and the geographical spread of the land influenced the structure of Fijian society. It should ensue then that religious beliefs and practices were also diverse as each social group or settlement brought their own system of beliefs and practice (Tippett (1967:4-5). The overriding problem was the difficulty in gathering material representative of that diversity, in particular the mix or superimpositions of religious practice and belief of the migrating groups with the indigenous population and the interpretation of the

¹³ There is a strong missionary stake in this quotation in their ability to understand and interpret indigenous spirituality.

orally transmitted material.¹⁴ This accounts for the confusion and contradictions mentioned by Williams and may also account for some similarities for, although names differed, Fijians were in no doubt as to their meaning and relationship within their group, as for example the names for a god or gods (*kalou*), temples, totems, shrines, *tabu* and *mana*.

Chiefly *mana* played an important part in the spiritual life of Fijians; priests (*bete*), important link to the gods, were also considered to have *mana* with invested powers to intercede on behalf of their clans through chanted antiphonal invocations and the performance of a *meke*.¹⁵ Reciprocity between gods or spirits and man was connected with every aspect of Fijians' life: how to appease these numerous, powerful, vengeful gods or spirits? A Diary entry of the missionary Thomas Jaggar, January 7th 1842 (five and a half years after first missionary contact) sheds some light with his description of the Rewan peoples' terror of one of their gods.

Was woken up last night by a great noise at Rewa; firing, shouting, beating old pots &c. It seems they were driving away the god Batidira, (one long tooth in lower jaw, little body, large head). On enquiry this morning I find that he is an evil god – he sleeps with men and women & they die; eats up the people as they term it &c. (1988:88).

It is not practicable to give each local god due attention, yet Jaggar's description highlights Fijian's constant fear of offending and swift retribution. All natural phenomena and disasters such as sickness, crop failure and storms were attributed to the power of gods or spirits and were further complicated, says Williams, by the limited power of the priest. Amplifying this observation, Williams notes a priest 'can only officiate in the temple of the god whom he serves; [therefore] ... a worshipper of a particular god can have no access to him where he has neither temple or priest' (1984:227). This of course refers to corporate rather than private worship which did not require the presence of a priest. It follows that corporate worship of the gods was dictated by circumstance rather than constant practice: times of war; social obligations; seasonal festivals; ceremonies and dedications; *tabu* observances;

¹⁴ Early interpreters of Fijian religious practice, Williams, Waterhouse and Thomson wrote of the areas in Fiji in which they were associated; so their accounts are valid for those areas, not for the whole group.

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.

occasions of stress or corporate need and the worshipping of shrines (Williams 1982:230, Brewster 1922:Chapter 8, Tippet 1987:52-55). Of the latter there was much fear of offending and appropriate offerings of appeasement expected every time before proceeding. Although each agnatic group had their own *vu* (ancestor deity) the constant social upheaval, results of wars or some natural phenomena, as noted by Waterhouse, Capel and Lester and Tippet, meant that religious symbols, totems and shrines were in a constant state of flux, as were the deistic or magico-religious cults, prevalent and widely practiced throughout Fiji. These cults have already been discussed in Chapter 2 but it is worth noting their existence to complete the discussion of the complexity of Fijian spirituality.

Methodist theocracy in a polytheistic society – Christ and the Ancestor gods

European observers ... look for points of contact with their own culture, and often failed to recognize what we might wish to term “religion” when it presented itself in unfamiliar guises. Even when Europeans ... or other “native” speakers spoke the same language ... this was no guarantee that the meanings attached to words corresponded (Bowie, 2006:19).

Bowie could have been referring in some respects to the early missionaries in their first encounter with Fijian society, which was in so many respects the antithesis of their own, none more than in their problems with the number of discrete dialects throughout the Group, given the influence of the *matanitu*. As preaching and the interpretation of the Bible were the Methodists principal means of conversion, the importance of communication rested on their knowledge of the vernacular. From the beginning the early missionaries, within their own limitations, made a serious attempt to learn the principal dialects of the eastern *matanitu*.¹⁶

Confronted with a polytheistic society where boundaries between the temporal and spiritual were blurred, the missionaries considered carefully how to approach the

¹⁶ Beginnings of the Methodist mission are well documented in missionary diaries, observations of visitors to Fiji, and many published works. For a first hand account of missionaries involved at time of contact see Calvert 1985:1-33, Schultz (ed). 1977.

chiefs knowing religious conversion implied social change. Hocart (1952:25-26) recognised that European division of church and state did not apply to Fijian society 'if reverence and devotion are required as well as a belief in the supernatural, to make up religion, then the true religion of the Fijians is in the service of the chief'. Chiefs were gods with divine rights according to ancient custom, with power known as *valavala vaka turaga* embodied in that heritage.¹⁷ They were the lawmakers and the law enforcers with unprecedented power over their subjects. With the Fijians says Fison 'everything is regulated by custom, and to him Custom is Law' and further explains that to the Fijian an offence against custom:

is worse than lawless. It is impious. Impious because those forefathers of his have grown into gods, and their precepts come down to him with all the force of Divine authority. To his mind it is not that the lawgivers are invested with authority by the gods. They are the gods themselves. Their precepts are embodied in custom, and therefore custom is Law (1903:2).

Accepting the religion of the missionaries meant challenging ancient traditions and change in the structure of society. Certainly there was room for another god but how could the Christian God be accommodated in Fijian society without fundamental change? There can be no definitive answer to this question because the process of change is multi-layered, societies change for many reasons. Those analysing the Christianisation of Fijian society will have as many opinions as answers, but for the purposes of this Chapter we are examining the bridges linking Western and Fijian spirituality, assisting the transition from a polytheistic to a monotheistic society.

Fijian spirituality in all its complexity was always accommodating room for dynamic change within spiritual practice and between deities: we have seen the need for constant accommodation of new gods or spirits as people travelled from place to place. However, could Christianity include Christ among the hierarchy of gods, for it was Christ the Methodist missionaries came to introduce into Fijian society? How could one god alone be multifarious and ubiquitous? Tippet, in his discussion on the growth of the indigenous church, acknowledged this dilemma reasoning that to Fijians: 'faith in a multiplicity of gods came from the multiplicity of needs they

¹⁷ *Valavala vaka turaga* – loosely translated as in the chiefly custom.

confronted in their work-a-day lives. Philosophically the Fijian was no fool in choosing to serve one God who could supply all his needs' (1967:7). God (Christ) the first missionaries presented was a loving, forgiving God in whom all souls were equal: by accepting such a God, Fijians, commoners in particular, would gain from a spirituality of equality.¹⁸ One God instead of many was an alien concept and although accommodating such a new God was not a difficult concept, the fact that this Christian God stood outside societal needs and beliefs, unlike Fijian gods, required a 'leap of faith' for the early Christians converts.

It is useful to briefly examine some of the processes of conversion and the societal problems to overcome with the acceptance of Christianity and consequences. These include abolishing all polygyny, cannibalism, widow strangling, infanticide, war and patricide. The earlier problems caused for individual conversion before one's *mataqali* or clan included: kinship and tribal disloyalties, expulsion from one's social group, danger of persecution, pacifism and the commonly practiced funeral rites. Of the latter we have seen in Fijian spiritual belief how in death the soul journeys to *bulu*, but it was also the practice on the death of a chief for the souls of his wives and servants to accompany with him so that on arrival he would be welcomed as a significant person.¹⁹ The dichotomy here between the Christian and Fijian belief in the afterlife involved not only spiritual difference but also the social consequence, the strangling of those women who were close to the deceased, his wives and sometime his mother. We have also seen that souls of the deceased in Fijian mythology return to this world as *kalou vu* or other spirits to become active parts of the landscape of spiritual beliefs and worship.

The abolition of polygyny mainly affected chiefs and was a major obstacle to conversion, as was the tribal warfare involving most of Fiji at the time of contact. Success in war brought succession of reciprocity and approbation, maintenance of status, extended the power of the *matanitu* and a higher *mana* to the paramount chiefs. Monogamy, a condition in acceptance of the Christian God, was perceived as an erosion of their power base, particularly as *vasu* connections diminished. Some chiefs

¹⁸ Missionaries who came later were to introduce 'hellfire' into theological teaching. For example see the same – *Taniela na Parofita*, Chapter 6:65-66.

¹⁹ See Waterhouse 1997:226-230, Williams 1982:242-249.

never accepted Christianity for that reason although they did not obstruct others of their *mataqali* from acceptance. For monogamy to succeed a mass conversion was needed. Widow strangling and burying alive of the elderly created ethical problems for the Western missionaries, because there were no provisions for widows or the sick perceived by the community as a burden.²⁰ Change came slowly with the acceptance of Christianity. The early Fijian Christians experienced social exile and persecution until significant members of their *mataqali* were converted. They were punished for their pacifism until the wars stopped, some demonstrating their loyalty as peacemakers. The story of Ilaija Varani, a Viwan chief is the earliest and best known.²¹ The structure of Fijian society, a tightly woven network of connected groups at the time of contact, was under serious threat from the wars between *matanitu*. To what extent then, with so many communities involved with such conflict, would the introduction of Christianity and its accompanying social mores further threaten Fijian society? The wars at first certainly hindered chiefly acceptance but it could be argued that at village level the attraction of a God of peace was much more persuasive. In order to bring about social change it was important for the missionaries to show their support for the chiefs, for without Fijians' perception of that support the acceptance of Christianity would have taken considerably longer. But it was indigenous Christians, bridges between the old and new religions, who instituted social change by presenting Christian theological principles in the accepted mores of their communities and particular the utilisation of their *meke* for Christian worship.²²

One of the public manifestations of the acceptance of Christianity was the destruction of the *tikotiko ni vu* (habitation of the deified spirit of the founder ancestor) not just involving the destruction of their temples, because the temples were not places of constant worship, but the destruction of the open-air places of worship. These included a sacred site, religious or personal symbols such as trees, stones, caves, whatever the *yavusa* or *mataqali* involved in their worship, held to be sacred places. So the chief or priest performed the serious ceremonial rite of passage in the presence

²⁰ When Fijian women married they moved to their husband's village and became their 'property'. On his death however there was no provision for the wife or wives who then became completely dependent on the family for support. If support was not forthcoming, being strangled was considered by some a better alternative to a life of desperate poverty.

²¹ The story of Verani is very well documented; see Calvert 1985:329-333. Verani was a chief of Viwa, the first chiefly Christian convert and a close friend of Ratu Cakobau.

²² The bridges to Christian spirituality are discussed in Chapter 4:86-88.

of all the members of the *mataqali* proclaiming the end of that spiritual power and the symbolic acceptance of Christianity (Waterhouse 1997:80).

Meke, the musical medium with Fijian poetic text, was central to spiritual worship in pre-missionary contact time.²³ *Meke* for worship in temples were sung with antiphonal responses to priestly litanies, and were the vehicle in which priest and people prayed together in song.²⁴ This musical form central to Fijian society with Christian indigenous text was appropriated by Fijian Christians for their liturgy. The utilisation of these indigenous customs by both Western and Fijian Methodists aided a smooth transition from a polytheistic theology to a Christian monotheistic society.

Summary

The strong hierarchical structure of Fiji society remained after the introduction of Christianity, accommodating Fijian custom and tradition, while some of the old religious practices were replaced by a Christian ethos. The sacred worship of the *vu* may have diminished, but not the secular acknowledgement of the ancestral deity, chiefly *mana* and totems of the *yavusa* central to Fijian identity. The acceptance of Christianity at village level was made easier as Fijians saw that the fundamental tenets of their society were to remain. From the beginning, the young Methodists worked within the Fijian social system to bring about theological change, while keeping those traditions that did not impinge on Christian tenets and in this were guided by the Fijians. One generation from the beginning of Methodism, these Western missionaries came to Fiji in the spirit of their own conversion. From the beginning of their mission they acquainted themselves with a Fijian dialect enabling them to preach and later translate the Bible, both central to Methodist practice. As Gunson notes: the ‘written word had a much more far-reaching effect than the spoken word’ (1978:266), although later discussion will show that in Fiji the appropriation of the musical form of *meke* with Christian text would be a far more effective tool for the lasting acceptance of Christianity.

²³ For a full discussion on *Meke* and all its manifestations see Chapter 5.

²⁴ Waterhouse 1997:289.

Chapter 4

Indigenous Ministers (*talatalas, vakatawas*) and Teachers (*vakavuvuli*)

Introduction

In the final chapter of his account of early Fijian mission history, missionary James Calvert (1985: 430) echoed the sentiments of all Christian missions in ‘foreign lands’ when he acknowledged the work of indigenous converts without whom the progress of evangelisation would have been, while not impossible, at least extremely slow. Given Fiji’s geography, unstable politics, complex socio-political groups, numbers of discrete dialects and difficulty of transportation at the time of first Christian contact, the limited progress and influence of the small number of Western missionaries across the whole of Fiji would have been mostly confined to eastern Fiji without the work of the *talatalas* (indigenous ministers), *vakatawas* (lay preachers and catechists) and *vakavuvuli* (teachers). To these early Fijian Christians must go the credit for the complete evangelisation of Fiji. Western missionaries guided the first converts through the complexity of a Christian doctrine which, once understood, was introduced into Fijian society by Fijians versed in their own tradition, through the selected vernacular Bauan and most importantly an indigenous liturgy based on the music and sung poetry of their *meke*.

By harnessing some existing spiritual practices, indigenous Christians were able to introduce the ‘new’ theology into their societies without fundamentally upsetting the *status quo*. Bridges between old and new included: beating the *lali* (Fijian slit drum) announcing church worship; an unadorned church; the indigenous pastor; worship in the vernacular; indigenous and indigenised liturgy; full community leadership and involvement at all levels of Church administration.

This Chapter examines the impact the new spirituality and some cultural changes as Fijians introduced Christianity into village communities, in particular methods used to ensure a smooth transition by pastors and all involved in the introduction of Christianity.

Early church ministries

Western missionaries

The many personal writings of the early Western missionaries detail Fijian practices which shocked and appalled them; cannibalism, widow strangling, infanticide and others, yet these diaries as firsthand accounts would ultimately become valuable academic records as private and intimate observations of daily missionary life extending beyond those mentioned horrors. Commensurately, official communications to their brethren in England painted different pictures, heavily stressing the shocking in the hope of obtaining more money and personnel to build the missions. There was however, a serious lack of information about the Fijians they worked with and even less interest in their wives or families, except for Joeli Bulu and Josua Mateinaniu. These two outstanding indigenous Christians worked with the missionaries at the inception of the Fijian mission.

Of course there were exceptional missionaries: John Hunt, Thomas Williams, Richard Lyth, Joseph Waterhouse, James Calvert and William Cross were some of those who, within the limits of their backgrounds, could see beyond those mentioned practices. But even they did not fully allow for the richness and cultural diversity of Fijian societies because of the confines of their work in the local missions. However observations like John Hunt's diary entry on Fijian recreation in 1840 give hope that some missionaries at least were secure enough in their faith to attempt to appreciate some of the finer qualities of the people they had come to convert:

There is one thing I must say of these people they never seem disposed to quarrel in their sports.... Their dances etc. are all attended to with a great deal of apparent good feeling, and they are very abundant in their applause of each other's performances. In many

respects their pastimes and amusements form a perfect contrast to those of civilised countries, both ancient and modern. I should think their feelings of friendship and enmity are very strong (MOM133 Vol 1:163).

Thomas Williams too is another notable exception though even his remarkable record of Fijian life was centred mainly on the *matanitu* of eastern Fiji and Bua province in southwest Vanualevu.¹ Joseph Waterhouse's account of Fijian life also provides an excellent insight, especially on Fijian spirituality, but his observations were mainly confined to Bau and Ratu Sere Cakobau. Here lies the problem: with the small number of missionaries, any accounts of Fijian life were restricted to those societies in which the missionaries lived and worked and while excellent within their particular observations were nevertheless a limited representation of the rich cultural diversity in Fijian society.

Perhaps their youthfulness (most early missionaries came to Fiji in their twenties) together with the debilitating struggle they experienced in establishing the mission stifled intellectual curiosity into this new society to which they came to devote their lives and in which so many died.² Understandably, official reports also contain few details of the missionaries' daily activities, apart from the general running of the mission and the horrors encountered. Lack of information and recognition of the work of Western women missionaries is also largely absent; yet these women deserved recognition for their work as much and in some cases more than their husbands. The Fijian evangelists with whom Western missionaries worked were of little or no interest to the brethren back home receiving their official reports and letters and certainly far less the 'titillating' material needed to inspire missionary zeal. Horrors the missionaries described at great length in both official and private accounts were of voyeuristic interest, aimed at eliciting sympathy and the desperately needed funds and personnel for the Fiji mission. Thornley notes there were never more than thirteen Western missionaries and their families and often the number was much less

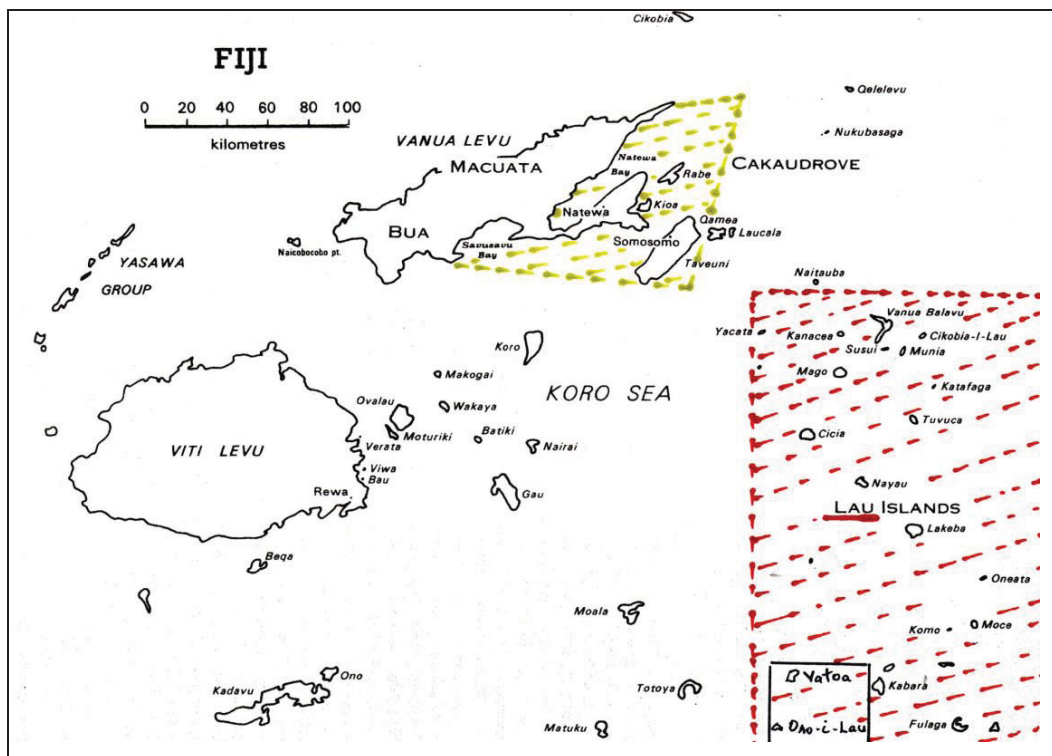
¹ There are present day accounts of some early Fijian pastors, but much of the information comes from contemporary accounts (see Lange 2005, Wood 1978:156-157, Thornley 1996:20-49).

² The missionary Thomas Baker was an example. His diary reveals a limited man with little grasp of the complexities of Fijian society. He was advised by his fellow missionaries against a trip into a particular area of the interior of Vitilevu because of the missionaries perceived association with Bau; with who those villages were at war. Baker ignored the advice and was murdered along with six of the seven accompanying indigenous lay preachers (Fiji Museum Archival Collection, Folder 33 D138).

(1996:34). Calvert was certainly aware of the effect that ‘shocking’ the brethren could have and the sympathy that could be elicited from such reports:

This appeal [in the ‘Notices’ and ‘Quarterly Paper’] was extensively circulated at home, and read at the Missionary prayer-meetings, and the deepest feeling of concern was aroused for the people on whose behalf it was made. Strong sympathy was felt with the two lonely labourers in Fiji, and earnest prayers were sent up for their safety and success. Contributions came fast flowing into the Mission House, and letters urging the Committee to meet the pressing demand (1985:28).

The subsequent action following this appeal was that four more missionaries and an expensive printing press with materials were sent in April 1838. By the end of that year, two missions had been established in Rewa and Viwa (Vitilevu), bringing the number to three with the inclusion of the original station in Lakeba, Lau.



Map 6: The Lakeba (Lau) and Natewa (Cakaudrove) Circuits in 1860.

Lack of personnel, size of circuits, difficult modes of transport, discrete dialects and isolation put great strain on the Western missionary families, especially on the wives who were left alone in remote areas, some for months while their husbands visited the

many villages in their circuits. Thomas Baker, missionary to southern Vanualevu in the 1860s whose circuit covered well over 100 nautical miles, recorded the population of 45 villages in the Natewa Bay area which was only part of his circuit and area of responsibility (Folder33 D138:52. See the green section of Map 5, page 74). In every way these Westerners depended on Fijian Christians for their security and wellbeing.

Missionary accounts are filled with stories similar to that of John Watsford, a missionary stationed on the island of Ono-i-Lau in the southern Lau Group, writing in 1846 of his sense of isolation on the birth of his daughter:

While we were in Ono, a little girl was added to our family. Her mother and I were, as regards human help, all alone at the birth, no white friend nearer than a hundred miles and we had a difficult case and a trying time ... [1900:70].

When touring, the missionaries' mode of transport was often an outrigger canoe manned by a Fijian crew and when visiting inland villages in dense mountainous areas the services of Fijian guides were essential for both the trek and their protection. They stayed in villages and were guests of the *talatala*, *vakatawa* or teachers and their families, sharing their accommodation and food. In the absence of missionaries, indigenous pastors and teachers had sole responsibility for the education and the spiritual wellbeing of the church members and adherents. Adherents were candidates who while accepting Christianity for various reasons, such as an exaggerated sense of their unworthiness, an inability to forgive or to give up certain practices, were unready or unable to accept full membership of the Church. They could attend services but not the sacraments including communion. It took a year to prepare for full membership once there was acceptance.

In the very early days of the mission if no Western teachers were available the job of education fell to the Fijian Christians who with their rudimentary education were sometimes poorly equipped for the task of teaching reading and writing, although they compensated with their enthusiasm and dedication. Most early education was conducted in selected missions where the student learnt rudimentary theology from the Bible or those parts of the New Testament that had been translated, as well as the Methodist Catechism, hymn texts and later Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (as

inspiration for their sermons).³ Christians were then sent into the villages with a catechism and some tracts of the New Testament and hymn texts for it was considered more beneficial to gain firsthand experience in the field (Lange 2005:133; Thornley 1996:38). Despite these setbacks: the small number of missionaries or trained Fijian Christians, distances between missions, language difficulties, isolation and political instability, statistics reveal that by the 1850s there were some seven thousand members or adherents, four *talatalas*, six European missionaries and an undocumented number of *vakatawas* and teachers (Thornley 1996:39).

Tongan Christians in Fiji

The Tongan Methodist Church dates its inception to some thirteen years before the Fijian Church. Anxious to repeat that success in Fiji, the Methodists under the auspices of the Christian Tongan chief Taufa'ahau came to the eastern Lau island of Lakeba where they were accepted by the Lauan chief Tui Nayau cousin of Taufa'ahau. A large Tongan population already lived in Lau and to this population are credited the first successes of the mission. Missionaries William Cross and David Cargill could speak Tongan, so to the Tongans they addressed their initial attention, producing the first 300 converts. Many Tongans living in Fiji had already heard of the *lotu* so their conversion was considered 'an outreach of the Tongan movement itself' (Tippett 1967:20).⁴ Also, Tongan converts in Fiji had more freedom of choice than Fijians, constrained by their ethnocentric cultural mores. With so much to consider: need for chiefly approval, lesser freedom of personal choice, extended family implications, wars, the wrath of priests and through them their gods and fear of the unknown, Fijians were initially slow to accept the new religion. They were interested in the message of the missionaries and listened with attention to the services, but significant conversion waited for chiefly approval of the new religion. Many of the Tongans living in Lau however spoke the Lauan dialect and exerted their influence over the Fijians they lived with, if not by word, then by a noted change in their

³ There is further detailed discussion on Christian education later in this chapter.

⁴ The word *lotu* meaning religion or worship in Western Polynesia is thought to have originated from Tonga, but with the arrival of the missionaries in the early 1800's *lotu* has come to mean Christianity or to become a Christian. Fijians originally referred to Christianity as *Lotu vaka Toga* but later referred to themselves as *Lotu Wesele* (Wesleyan Christians).

behaviour. They offered early Fijian Christians a certain fellowship as they began their life in the new religion before ‘any people-movement in Fiji’ (Tippett, 1967:21).

Much more influential on the early church were the six Tongan *vakatawas* and teachers sent by Taufā’ahau to help the two missionaries in 1838. These Tongans of chiefly rank were received as such among their own people and in the Fijian villages where they were stationed. Six Tongans: Joeli Bulu, Jamese Havea, Jeremiah Latu, Julius Naulivou (first cousin to Taufā’ahau), Silas Faone, and Wesley Langi who together with Josua Mateinaniu (Fijian chief) were the pioneering teachers of the early church (Wood 1978:38).

Fijian Church workers: *Talatalas* (ministers), *vakatawas* (lay preachers/catechists) and *vakavuvuli* (teachers) in Christian Fiji

As we have seen, initial conversion was slow, however once Fijians’ acceptance of Christianity was established, indigenous Christian men and women were sent into villages throughout the Islands for the work of evangelisation and teaching. The many indigenous Christians who worked in villages remote from the missionary centres in difficult circumstances, sometime without supervision or support for years on end, were the meritorious unsung heroes of the church. These men and women were often sent to work in villages where they had no agnatic connection and were dependent on chiefly protection. As Cumming noted: ‘The work of the native teacher is no sinecure. To begin with, he may be sent to a distant island, where the dialect is so different from his own that he has to begin by learning the language of the people.’ (1882:169). Given the volatile political state in Fiji as a whole at the time, and the very strong social and political structure of the communities, Fijian pastors’ dependency on these communities was great, tenancy in the villages tenuous, and the safety of the mission unstable. In some remote provinces villagers, strongly opposed to and deeply suspicious of the new religion, constantly undermined indigenous pastors and their families particularly within the inland provinces of Vitilevu.

In the early days of the Church the selection of Fijian Christians for ministry was made on the basis of a recommendation from their circuit missionary. These men known as Assistant Missionaries were ordained but not given the full status of the Western missionaries. The organisational structure of the Church in Fiji followed the Methodists' Connexion model: circuits overseen by a superintendent divided into sections (*tabacakacaka*) under the responsibility of a *talatala* or *talatalas* (depending on their geographical size) within which the *talatala*'s responsibility extended to a number of villages (*valenilotu*).⁵ The geographical spread of the Lakeba circuit in the Lau Group for instance gives an idea of the dimensions to be administered (see the red section of Map 5, p74). The circuit extended over two hundred miles and included 24 islands, many of which contained a number of villages with large populations. Until the conversion of Ono-i-Lau the administration of the circuit was conducted from Tubou, Lakeba. In Fiji, *vakatawas* and teachers carried out the daily work of the Church in the villages, overseen by *talatalas* in circuits roughly corresponding to the provinces based on the *matanitu* or the principle confederations. Map 5 shows the geographical size of two of these circuits within the boundaries of which were huge areas of land and sea making travel and supervision difficult and for the many villages within them spasmodic.

The comprehensive duties of a *talatala* included most duties of the Western missionaries in the day-to-day running of the missions: conducting church services, prayer groups, schooling, preparation of adherents, visiting the villages within their circuits, building and overseeing the maintenance of churches and schools, and acting as representative of the missionaries responsible for the circuits.⁶ The execution of these duties introduced a new dimension into the village routine of a Christian: a dedicated structure of worship, daily schools for adults and children if a teacher was available, prayer meetings, Bible study, singing of the catechism and prayers, and a specific day dedicated solely to worship.⁷ All this was an adjunct to the daily activity of the village. With the introduction of Christianity, Fijians were also introduced to a

⁵ For ease of reference Fijian ministers will be referred to by their Fijian title – *talatala* and *vakatawa* – to distinguish them from the Western missionaries, but reference to teachers will be kept in English.

⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of Fijian ministers see Thornley 2002:351-354, 1996:33-49, Lange 2005:127-148, and Tippet 70/21:1-11.

⁷ Most Fijian temples when not in use were abandoned and new ones built when required, however some of these temples could, and were commandeered for Christian worship if a Church was not available.

Christian calendar – a seasonal timeframe different from their own – revolving around significant Christian events. Another change witnessed in some of the villages was the establishment of missions on land given to the Western missionaries in the tradition of *usufruct* by the chiefs. Instead of living within the village parameters in Fijian custom however, the missions were built ‘close to but physically separate from the villages’ (France 1969:35). This arrangement gave Western missionaries some privacy but made them vulnerable to attack. Fijian pastors on the other hand were expected to live their own lifestyle within the village, and in many cases were more exposed and prone to attack as they strove to become self sufficient.⁸ Many early Christians came to live on or near mission compounds so they could attend school and live with other Christians until alienation from their own people ceased. Once Christianity was accepted, villagers provided for their own pastors and teachers with land for housing and planting as well as gifts of food, clothing and other goods (Cumming 1882:169). In time each village became self-supporting, assuming responsibility for their church which Lange says freed them from the mission’s responsibility (2005:135-136).

The education and work of indigenous ministers

From the outset of the Fijian mission there was an urgent need for personnel to teach, preach and husband the church through the transition period from the old religious beliefs to the new Western religion and culture. With gathering momentum, missionaries were conscious of the importance of education and the urgent need for trained personnel, because to Fijians fell the principle responsibility for evangelisation. It was important for indigenous pastors and teachers to have sound theological understanding and grasp of new concepts, which could easily and accurately be transposed into Fijian imagery. Most of the 19th century mission stations in the circuits were centres of learning both theological and secular. Teachers and pastors were educated says Thornley, ‘through years of residence in the mission compound. Their education was dependent on the abilities and industry of the circuit missionary’ (1996:38). Here they attended schools, learning theology, literacy, and practical skills. All the early Western missionaries had some skill to offer: carpentry, medicine, building, teaching or printing, while their wives taught domestic skills such

⁸ Working their plantations for instance.

as sewing, embroidery, hygiene, singing and teacher training. All these skills were taken back to the villages and taught along with theology. Young boys sent to the mission by their parents for special training who proved themselves could be promoted to the theological college for special training as teachers and pastors. Commenting on missionary education, Cumming noted: 'The organization is most perfect, and spreads like a web over every remote corner of the isles, always excepting the still heathen mountain districts' (1882:168-169).⁹ She also comments on the expectations and difficulties experienced by overworked teachers and all indigenous pastors:

Once appointed to a district, the teacher has to hold school three mornings a-week for children, three evenings for adults, one week-day service for address, two Sunday services with sermon, and early prayer meetings in church. He must conduct daily morning and evening prayers in several houses; must visit the sick; pray and read the Scriptures with them; look after the people generally; bury the dead, and travel once a-week to report himself to the native minister, who perhaps lives at a considerable distance (1882:169).

Brewster in 1922 corroborates with a similar description of the hierarchal structure of indigenous Methodist pastors in the upper reaches of the Rewa River in eastern Vitilevu:

Every little hamlet has its *Vakavuvuli* [teacher].... He merely holds services in the villages and teaches the children the elements of education. Immediately above him is the *Vakatawa*, literally the man in charge, but officially called the *vakatawa* ... [and] a certain number of parishes are administered by him. Then comes the *Talatala-i-taukei* or native minister... (p143-144).

Brewster then gives an excellent description of the work of the pastors and the Fijian method of rewarding their services. It is obvious that the Christian teachers and *vakatawas* had positions of responsibility, but it is a great shame that the contributions of their wives were elided. These Christian women had an important position in the community especially among the women and children and their influence can never be underestimated. Although non-chiefly Fijian women were subordinate in the

⁹ Cumming was referring to the mountainous provinces of Colo, Vitilevu, last provinces to accept Christianity.

community, many Christian women trained by the missionaries were literate, capable and effective and like their Western counterparts maintained the day-to-day work of the mission, particularly when their husbands were away.¹⁰ As Christians, Fijian women were accepted, not with the same deference as their husbands, but as *talatalas*' wives, known as *radi ni talatala* (wife of the minister).¹¹ It was probably from these Christian women that the Christian *meke* known as *same* evolved, forming with others their indigenous church liturgy.¹² Tippet reports 'the missionaries encouraged the practice and were astonished at the phenomenal memory of the Fijian people ... as they committed to memory long passages of Biblical narratives and psalms and used them for chanting after the manner of their ballads and myths' (70/7/16:205-206).

Fijian conversion - people movement

'People movement' in Christian terms meant a mass conversion to Christianity. Its manifestation in the early days of the Methodist mission often occurred in special gatherings called 'love feasts', which were outpourings of sentiment and religious fervour. There are many references to 'love feasts' in the early days of the Fijian mission. Calvert reports one such experience in Ono-i-Lau in 1848:

We held a love-feast at Ono Levu, at which most of the people from all the other towns were present. Between thirty and forty spoke their religious experience, briefly, but to the point, and with deep feeling. I will give an abstract of what some of them related; and am only sorry that I cannot give it the effect which it would have, if spoken in their own language and own manner.... Joel Ketetha, a very acceptable Local Preacher, said 'Julias Naulavou met me one Sunday, (I didn't know it was Sunday, being a Heathen,) and took hold of my hand and said "Young man, what are you seeking in the world? If you are seeking happiness in riches, or anything else this earth can afford, you will not find it" He began to attain the means of Grace [prevenient grace] and Julias's words ended in his sound conversion' (1985:84-85 see also Lange 2005:129).

¹⁰ It is a great pity that we have so little information about these Fijian women struggling to raise a family outside their own community who taught in schools, evangelised and participated in the activities expected of village women.

¹¹ The literal meaning of *radi* or *adi* or *ra* is queen (Capell 1991:169). In the case of the church, *radi* is used to honour the position of the wife of the minister.

¹² In fact they were not psalms but Christian poetic text fitted to the music of their *meke*. Indigenous liturgy will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 6.

It is obvious from Calvert's summary of the religious experiences of those present that although 'love feasts' were a Western concept, in Fiji such communal gatherings albeit secular were already practised and, as a continuation of a tradition in a Christian context, served as a valuable evangelising tool. Most of the declarations are punctuated by constant references to Christ or Him and the Holy Spirit, the central component of the Methodist tradition.¹³

In the opening paragraph of his discussion of people movements, McGavran states these were the 'outcome of the mysterious movement of the Spirit of God' (2005:68). There might have been some spiritual impetus for a mass religious conversion but in Fiji it is generally acknowledged that the secular trigger was the acceptance or at least tolerance of the new religion by the chiefs, in particular paramount chiefs, freeing Fijians or at least making it easier for them to make their own choice. The conversion to Christianity of Ratu Seru Cakobau, paramount chief of the powerful *matanitu* of Bau in the late 1850s, is held by most historians to be the turning point for the missionaries in advancement the new religion (Tippet 1954, Thornley 2002, Calvert 1985:334-336, Woods 1978, Chapter XVIII, Tuwere 2002:60-61, Waterhouse 1997: 177-181 and many others). However the influence of Bau did not apply to the whole of Fiji especially the distant mountainous regions of Vitilevu yet the acceptance of Christianity did continue in those provinces, albeit more slowly. Accustomed to corporate decision-making, it was difficult for individuals to break away from family tradition, thereby isolating themselves and their families without protection or land. If a chief converted to Christianity he was able to offer some protection to those of his extended family who might want to follow his example but a paramount chief's conversion or at least acceptance signalled to a much larger group of people that they were free from persecution if they wished to choose Christianity. Those most affected by the introduction of the new religion were the priests (*bete*) who stood to lose their considerable power over a community on whom they were completely dependent. Priestly power involved Fijian gods for, as discussed previously, the priests were believed to be the medium between people (including the chiefs) and the gods. If Christianity was to have credibility as a religion of a single one true God, it was

¹³ The centrality of Christ and grace in Methodist theology was discussed in the previous chapter.

important to discredit the priests, loosening their power without destroying the existing order. To this end, says France,

... missionary attack was most firmly concentrated [on the priests]. This hastened a transfer of authority from the priests to the chiefs, which was already in motion when the missionaries arrived (1967:30).

The advantages of people movement conversions were: a permanent indigenous Church rooted in the community eventually becoming independent of Western missions; a Church immersed in its own culture, served by its people, who were trained by their own pastors; pastors who in turn shaped their village churches to convey Christian theology in the language of their people. This language included an indigenous vernacular and liturgy for both worship and evangelising; in other words an indigenous church that is part of the fabric of society. (McGavran 2005:87-89).

The conversion of the chiefs is thought to have started the people movements towards Christianity, which began in Fiji with the conversion of the entire island of Ono-i-Lau in southern Lau, where in 1842 the last three non-Christians were baptised by the Rev. Thomas Williams (Calvert, 1985:73). Also on this island the ordination of the first *talatala* Joeli Bulu took place on 18 August 1850 when for the first time the following words were spoken by the Rev. David Hazlewood:

Me sobuti iko na Yalo Tabu, mo vakarautaki kina ki na cakacaka vakaitalatala ko sa qai lesi kina e na veitabaki ni liga i keitou. Mo dauvunautaka no vosa ni Kalou, ka dau vakayacora na Nona sakaramede savasava, e na yalodina kei na yalododonu: e na yaca ni Kalou ko Tamada kei na Luvena kei na Yalo Tabu. Emeni.

May the Holy Spirit descend on you, may it prepare you for the mission for which you have been ordained. Proclaim the Word of the God, and administer His sacraments worthily, in the faith and truth: in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen (Ai Vola ni Sere ni Lotu Wesele e Viti (Fijian Hymn Book):222).

Joeli Bulu, one of the six Tongan *vakatawas* sent to Fiji in 1838 to assist Cross and Cargill became the most celebrated *talatala* of the early mission in Fiji about whom

much has been written.¹⁴ His ordination was not followed by others for another four years for, as Lange notes, after ‘the enthusiasm of the visiting General Superintendent Lawry [in 1850]’ had diminished it was decided to give more training to others preparing for ordination, which did not take place until 1854 when two Tongans and the first Fijian, Joeli Keteca, were ordained (2005:132).

About this time Cakobau was receiving Christian instruction, and other influential chiefs had already ‘bowed the knee’.¹⁵ As a consequence, the mission was overwhelmed and struggled to meet the growing requests from villages for Christian pastors. There was a reluctance to ordain more *talatalas* even though the Western missionaries were so few, and were themselves overworked as they struggled to translate the Bible and other Christian tracts, teach, travel their circuits, evangelise and carry out the daily demands of their mission stations. Wood, commenting on this period, says:

Without unduly magnifying the spirit and effectiveness of the pioneers, it seemed true that “the heroic age of Missions in Fiji”... had passed after the mid-century. The men who followed Hunt and his colleagues were, generally speaking, inferior in quality, though they lacked little in zeal and dedication. Even with a loss in dynamic leadership, the Mission was carried forward by the sheer momentum of the numbers professing Christianity after the crucial year, 1855 (1978:143).

The statistics supplied by Rev Jesse Carey, missionary in Fiji between 1859 and 1875 and quoted by Wood give an indication of the true missionary work of the Methodist Church:

1859

Church members	Worshippers	<i>Talatalas</i>	<i>Vakatawa</i> s	Teachers	Schools	Scholars
15,000	54,000	9	267	1,126	464	25,991

1875

24,962	122,526	56	1,673	2,742	NS	47,838
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¹⁴ There are too many references to Joeli Bulu to be listed as he is mentioned in almost every missionary account for his outstanding work in Fiji. However his autobiography (Bulu, 1871) provides an insight into the spiritual power and strength of this extraordinary dedicated man.

¹⁵ A colloquialism for the acceptance of Christianity.

Other statistics in 1875 include 4,562 adherents, 2,866 class leaders, 2,940 Sunday School teachers, 50,275 Sunday School scholars, nine missionaries and one teacher. Wood says that Carey attributed ‘the conversion of nine-tenths of the Wesleyan church-members to the work of Fijian ministers and pastor-teachers’ which Wood argued ‘indicates how vitally important was the intellectual and spiritual quality of these men’ (1978:143). The 1875 statistics demonstrated the all-important ratio of missionaries to Fijian pastors. The ratio was 9 missionaries to 4,471 indigenous pastors, a staggering proportion which did not take into account the additional 3,000 Sunday School teachers. Clearly from these numbers, given the small number of *talatalas* and the size of the circuits, the *vakatawas* in the village churches conducted the principal pastoral work of the Church and shaped the Methodist Church in Fiji. The work of the *talatalas* (as has been previously noted) like their Western counterparts’ was mostly organisational. Thornley concurs adding that ‘Ministers were governing the church rather than nurturing and shepherding the flock’ (1996:48). The *vakatawas* and teachers enjoyed a distinguished position in the village as the authorities on the Christian faith, with some education and input from either the missionaries or *talatalas*.

In 1839 in his diary, Thomas Jaggar notably used the phrase *bete ni lotu* in reference to the name given to the missionaries by Fijians (Keesing-Styles 1988:40).¹⁶ Given the semiotic connotations associated with Fijian priests (*bete*) as both spiritual (mediators) and secular (powerbrokers), together with the date of the reference – four years after first contact, it seems a curious juxtaposition of title between Fijian priest and Christian pastor. In using the phrase there was an acknowledged transfer in the ‘role’ of religious mediator, significantly highlighting the position of indigenous pastors in village churches. By usurping the role of the priest, the Christians pastors became responsible,

for safeguarding the cohesion of society.... It all depends on knowing how, when and where to act, the appropriate language of respect, the correct and respectable formula of approach and departure, request, acceptance or rejection and thanks (Tippett 1980:56).

¹⁶ Literally translated as priest of the Christian Church.

In the introduction of Christianity to their communities: their knowledge of theology and of the Bible, their ability to read and write, their connection with the missionaries and Western culture, Fijian Christians ‘as God’s representatives ... were placed in the traditionally important role of skilled and knowledgeable mediators’ (Lange 2005:136). So Fijians introduced Christianity for Fijians according to their society’s custom. An extract from a letter of Hunt to the Wesleyan missionaries succinctly

We were able to reach the island of Beqa, about twelve miles from Deuba [southern Vitilevu]. I went ashore and had a long conversation with the Chief of Rukua [a village on the Western side of the island]. He did not seem much disposed to listen to the instruction, his whole mind being taken up with the attainment of riches.... Noah, one of my young men later went ashore to sleep [in the village] and conversed almost all night with the second chief, a fine old man, who was much pleased with what he heard; so there is a little seed sown there.

On Vatulele [another island near Beqa] I left Noah to spend the evening with them, as he has now got fully unto the way of declaring the good tidings when he has the opportunity (WMN No 65,1843:537).

Bridges to Christian spirituality

European observers ... look for points of contact with their own culture, and often failed to recognize what we might wish to term “religion” when it presented itself in unfamiliar guises. Even when Europeans ... or other “native” speakers spoke the same language ... this was no guarantee that the meanings attached to words corresponded (Bowie, 2006:19).

Bowie could have been referring to the early missionaries in Fiji in their first encounter with Fijians whose society was in so many respects the antithesis of their own, none more than in the number of discrete dialects throughout the Group, even allowing for the pervasive influence of the *matanitu*. The power of the Fijian pastors and teachers to influence the course of village life cannot be underestimated for they alone brought about lasting and fundamental changes, religious and secular. They had the language, the trust, the knowledge and culture to disseminate Western religion and insert it into a Fijian Christian form. Oratory comes easily to Fijians: all men are

involved in some form from the stylised ritual of high ceremony to the communal village *talanoa* (meetings). Designated speakers like the *mata ni vanua* (chief's herald and spokesman) and others are chosen for their particular skill. In reciprocation many are called on to speak for others. So preaching came easily to Fijian Christians and Sunday sermons were listened to as much for content as for style. Missionary accounts mention the preaching skill of the Fijian pastors in bringing to life some aspect of theological significance.¹⁷ Perhaps John Hunt's reference to a Fijian sermon epitomises the opinion of other missionaries:

After the great orator of Rewa arose, and truly an orator he was. He spoke with wonderful fluency and energy, his action being suitable to his words. Every word seemed life and spirit, he infused his own feelings into the breasts of the hundreds of people that were about him; sometimes drawing from them a response to what he said ... it was like the voice of many waters, and the newness of the thing, as well as the manner in which it was done make it quite interesting. The speech of the orator called *na mata ni vanua*, that is the 'eye of the land', was all about peace (MOM 133:53).

Whether theological change took place before or after social change, Christian practice would show that not all changes would fundamentally alter Fijian society, including worship:

- *So Kalou*, religious gatherings (including a *meke ni yaqona* ceremony) before a war, remained as the name for Methodist Sunday worship
- Beating of the *lali* (slit drums), with particular configured patterning, called all to temple worship or announced a *yaqona* ceremony, now with a change of beat called Christians to church
- A temple for spiritual assemblies, a plain and unadorned place of worship used in times of special needs, a building of occasional worship allowed to decay in peacetime was replaced by the Methodist church, a more permanent structure whose permanency would not have been lost on the Fijians

¹⁷ There are many references to such oratory, as all missionaries were impressed by the skills of Fijians and the attention they elicited from the congregation. Thomas Baker, no linguist, uses words like 'was somewhat astonished at his accomplishment' and 'preached a thrilling sermon' (Folder 33, D138:26-27).

- Various sacred places outside the temple for every-day worship including the family or a communal *bure* (house) continued in Christian times, as places of family worship or prayer-gatherings
- A consecrated priest, the perceived direct medium between god and man and responsible for all worship, prayers of supplication and thanksgiving both for the individual and the collective, was replaced by the *talatala*, *vakatawa* and teacher who as anointed members of the Christian community assumed the *mana* of the priest
- Participation in communal worship in the vernacular, antiphonal singing utilising Fijian indigenous music and text (*meke*) albeit with altered text, became the liturgy of the church
- Fijian group decision-making and consultation at all social levels and group gatherings for ceremonial and other purpose remained the established patterns appropriated by Fijians for Christian worship.

These pre-contact worship practices were utilised by Christians as bridges between the old and new spiritualities. In earlier times for instance the *lali* – Fijian slit drums – sent their information heralding important events over great distances. The distinctive rhythmic patterning of each *mataqali* or *yavusa* was recognised by those far away in different districts and included calls to meetings, warnings of danger, preparation for war, ceremonies or anything of great importance including worship. Different beats, some including: *lali ni tabua*, announcing the receiving of a *tabua* (whale's tooth); the *lali ni waqa*, announcing the arrival of the chief's canoe; and *lali ni mate*, the beating of the *lali* on the death of a chief or the arrival of the body at the village, now announce peaceful events, including the call to church.¹⁸

Inclusion – Tippet (1980:3) terms it 'contextualization' – in Fijian society meant preserving the fundamental tenets of that society incorporating Christian theology and practice. Introducing foreign theology and practice into an indigenous form remaining true to the Christian ideal, the Fijians – while not fundamentally altering the *status*

¹⁸ Deane, who transcribed 12 of these different *lali* beats in 1921, noted that better players were recognised 'for their gift of embellishing the phrases of the beat with grace-notes and accidentals' [known in Fijian as *tataqiriqiri*] (1921:199).

quo – initiated a transition of spiritual belief without a serious erosion of traditional values.

Summary

Much has written about the missionaries; but the unsung ‘heroes’ of the Methodist Church in Fiji were undoubtedly the Fijian Christians. These men and women introduced a new spirituality and Western culture to their people, contiguous with their customs, ensuring a smooth transition from old to new. They borrowed from their own culture practices that transposed well to Christian ones: the beating of the *lali* calling the faithful to worship; plain unadorned places of worship; indigenous pastors; instruction and worship in the vernacular; scope for oratory skills in imparting the Christian message; an indigenous sung liturgy with Fijian poetic text; community leadership at all levels of Christian practice from family and community prayer-meetings to administration of the sacraments. Their appropriation of the *meke* for the liturgy (to be addressed in the following chapter) went to the heart of Christian worship: Fijians retained the composition and musical structure of indigenous music and by Christianising it maintained continuity with ancient tradition.¹⁹

From the beginning of their conversion, and with so little education, these men and women worked with a zeal and conviction impressing both missionaries and non-believers who saw a chance for change without losing the fundamental tenets of their culture. The most far-reaching of those changes to affect Fiji was an end to the debilitating wars crippling society: for the first time in countless generation Fiji was both at peace and united. These factors gave Christians opportunities to introduce a written form of their language and a *lingua franca*, selected by the missionaries for translation of all Christian material. At village level, people appreciated a more equitable existence; although institutions such as *vasu* existed as now, monogamous marriages ensured calls on those rights became limited. All these factors contributed to the foundations of a wholly indigenous Church within a Christian context without fundamental change to traditional social mores.

¹⁹ This indigenous and indigenised music will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5

***Meke* and indigenised Christian Liturgy**

Introduction

In cultures without a written language, sung music is a central component in the preservation, transformation and transmission of oral traditions as well as expressions of all aspects of communal activity. Within this sung poetry known in Fiji as *meke* were the ancestral myths, legends and genealogies enshrined in the text; reinforcing generations' connection to their *vanua* (land) and sense of place. Within the *meke* text therefore are the archival records of Fijian history past and present.

At the time of missionary contact, oral traditions transmitted in song were sometimes accompanied by dance, but there were other *meke* without accompanying dance whose music and poetic text were appropriated by Fijian Christians for their liturgy particularly the *meke* known as *vucu* – sung narratives without accompaniment. The Fijian musical canon will be examined in this chapter with particular emphasis on the *meke* in relation to its place in the fabric of Fijian society, and as a precursor to the utilisation by Fijians, of certain *meke* for Church liturgy and evangelisation. The chapter will focus on those elements of *meke* composition that led to the Church's repertoire of religious music, the indigenous and indigenised liturgy of the Methodist Church.

Fijian *meke*

The most important signifier of transition from pre- to post-contact worship was the use for Christian liturgy of the *meke*, the generic name for Fijian sung poetry. This highly developed art of poetry and music involved all aspects of society and is still central to Fijian communication and identity. Within the *meke* text are records of past and present events: a collective memory of a diverse culture, identifying *yavusa* (agnatic groups) with their *yavu* (origins or ancestral roots). *Meke* was the unifier

across Fijian society, regardless of sociopolitical, dialectic or musical differences, and the most effective form of communication.

The performance of some *meke* is central to ceremonies and ritual, either for communication (*meke ni vu* or *vucu*), as part of ancient ritual (*meke ni yaqona vakaturaga*), as a lament for a significant person (*meke lēlē*), or celebration during important and social events (*vakamalolo, meke ni seasea, wau* or *wese*). The value of ceremony and ritual in Fijian eyes,

is a social as well as a cultural one.... Whatever the specific contents of the ritual, the songs associated with it [*meke*], the forms of speech, the context, values and ostensible purposes which provide the occasion for holding it, the common element is the ceremonial recognition of the status of one social group and its members, by individuals of another. This applies as much to a ceremony of the Church as to that of a Provincial Council (Belshaw 1964:14).

Tuwere (2002:56-58), Ravuvu (1987:5-9, 239-240) and Tippet (1980:22) concur, seeing the semiotic significance of the text and the music of the *meke* as a reinforcement and connection between Fijians and their *vanua*.¹ The best example of this is the performance of *meke ni yaqona*, a ceremony of strong religious and social significance which, through the symbolic acceptance of the first cup, reinforces chiefly connection to the spirit world and ‘involves the ancestral gods ... elevat[ing] the principal object from the earthly to the mystical or supernatural realm’ (Ravuvu 1987:239). The *meke* following this sacred ceremony are often accompanied dance *meke* and performed to ease the tension of the *yaqona* ceremony. They have a particular place in Fijian ritual even though they are principally performed to entertain. Some of the texts of these *meke* may comment on current or recent events of interest within the social context, while others may retell ancient myths or legends; whatever the subject, all are equally celebrated.²

¹ Here I use *vanua* in the sense of both land and relationships.

² Personal communication from Epeli Matata, *mai'avula* (chief's herald or spokesman) to Tui Cakau, paramount chief of Cakaudrove, 2006. The *meke ni yaqona* ceremony is discussed later in this chapter, see pp110-114

Meke are a continuing oral history of the past and the present with numerous themes recording all events of social significance as far as memory goes back. The meanings of some of the older texts are *e na gauna makawa* (archaic) yet they are significant for ancestral connections to the *yavusa* – the traditional owners, and are performed for that reason. Many texts of the oldest continuously known *meke*, *meke ni yaqona* for instance, contain ‘the oldest Fijian words still in use ... the tales they tell have been longer in circulation than any others’ (France 1969:10). France warns of the difficulty of dating such texts precisely because of their antiquity or the elevation for political gain by the *matanitu*, contending that some myths and origin theories were ‘tailored’ to historical fact in the early 20th century.³ This may be true in regard to oral narrative, but since *meke* text by custom remains unchanged from inception, ‘tailoring’ this text for political gain would seem unlikely, although precise dating of such text of antiquity and discrete dialects is, as in all ancient cultures, difficult to prove. Quain points to the trust placed in ancestral communication as absolute and says Fijians will consult with ancestral gods in matters arising from ‘forgotten genealogies’ so they ‘can be known again with certainty’ (1942:9). Ratuva clarifies Quain’s statement pointing to the triangular relationship of empirical knowledge *kila ni vuravura* (of the earth/world); *kila ni bula vakaveiwekani kei naitovo* (social order or mores); *kila ne bula vakayalo* (knowledge of the spiritual/ancestral world); all of which intertwined one with the other, defining Fijians’ relationship with their world, both secular and spiritual (2007:91).

A.B. Brewster, District Commissioner for forty years from the late 19th to the early 20th century in the mountainous district of Colo, a province in central Vitilevu, also recognised the value of *meke* text and noted that the hill tribes of his district had ‘carefully preserved their genealogies, being able to trace their ancestors back to the ninth and tenth generations. They also have a clear memory of many of their ancient traditions, and from these two sources a very fair amount of history is procurable’ (1922:71-72).

France concurs that Fijian genealogies are remembered for some ten to twelve generations observing though that the distinction in Fijian society between the ‘divine

³ Here France is referring to the *Kaunitoni* Migration myth, already discussed in Chapter 2:38-39.

and the human record' is sometimes blurred, unlike some Polynesian societies (1969:10). Yet the recording of tribal origins and migrations for the purpose of land claims in the late 19th century, retained in the *tukutuku raraba*, recalls tribal settlements, ancestors and agnatic connections.⁴ The oral transmission of *yavusa* history was particularly important for communities' connections to their *vanua*; their *yavu* (origins); *qeke* (land); *veiwekani* (kinship); and *yalo* (spirituality), given the unstable conditions of pre-contact society and the constant warring and required resettlement. Many of these records are enshrined in the text of the *meke ni vucu* and *meke ni yaqona*.

Dance

The precise definition of *meke* is confused; there is no English equivalent. Fijians apply the word *meke* to both song and dance but there are obvious difficulties in translation, for *meke*

... mean[s] 'a dance or dancers' giving the idea that *meke* is strictly a danced-performance [only].⁵ However, in the Fijian context *meke* is used as a general term including performed and non-performed poetry. It includes all performances and chants.... There are two main types of poetry in Fiji, those that are recited and those that are chanted or sung as full *mekes*. The second is by far the most common ... (Kubuabola, Seniloli and Vatucaawaqa 1978:7).

Meke, says Lee, have 'comprehensive heading[s] to encompass ... forms of musical expression', with 'genre classes and semantically dense isolated terms which shift meaning according to syntax and function' (1984:90). This could be explained by the complexity of Fijian cultural groups. *Meke*, an oral cultural form passed from one generation to another – one agnatic group to another – have different descriptive titles (within the cultural groups) for dance movements and singing parts. Within the *meke* are also regional dialectical differences and distinctive compositional styles of the poetry and music. There are two forms of *meke*: first, those accompanied by dance

⁴ The *tukutuku raraba*, is the record held in the Native Land Trust Board of all Fijian oral agnatic land claims. It is the 'most valuable source of information for the reconstruction of pre-contact conditions' (France 1969:10).

⁵ Here the authors are referring to the present day interpretation of *meke* as a dance without reference to the non-dance *meke*.

with descriptive names such as *meke wesi* (spear dance); *meke wau* (club dance); *meke iri* or *seasea* (fan dance); the popular *vakamalolo* (sitting dance); and many others of the dance genre with instrumental accompaniment; second, those *meke* that are performed without dance but which may or may not have some instrumental accompaniment. The instrumental accompaniment for *meke* comprises, *lali ni meke* (a small wooden slit drum), *derua* (hollow stamping tube) and *cobo* (cupped hand-clapping).

There are certainly cultural borrowings of popular dance *meke* within Fiji society, which are composed and performed in provinces other than the original. These *meke* have clearly recognisable styles of dance movements and musical composition regardless of their dialect. When a *meke* is requested, the style may be stipulated and the *dau ni vucu* (composer) is expected to understand the genre. The *vakamalolo* is one such example of a sitting *meke* thought to have originated from Malolo Island in the western Mamanuca Group whose dance style has been freely adopted because it can be performed outside and inside and in all weathers (Quain 1942:8).



Fig. 2: *Vakamalolo*, Labasa, Vanualevu, 2001

Photograph: H. Black

Fig. 2 records a *vakamalolo* from Labasa performed by a group of women with the *lua* (accompanying group in the photograph below) seated behind and beside them.⁶



Fig. 3: *Lua* (accompanying group), Labasa, Vanualevu, 2001 Photograph: H. Black

Note the *lali ni meke* in Fig. 3, played with two beaters by the man in the foreground. The player of this instrument is the controller of the *meke* tempo. The older man in the striped shirt is the *laga* or lead singer of the group.

The *vakamalolo* is a popular style which can be applied to dance and some non-dance *meke* as shown by the first two of thirtytwo verses plus chorus of a lament composed on the death of Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, the father of the late President of Fiji Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara. Note the use of assonance at the end of each line:⁷

<i>Sau Turaga ni sa na rogo</i>	Hear O Chief
<i>Sana mai dola na vakamalolo</i>	the <i>vakamalolo</i> is beginning
<i>E dolavi ena vakarokoroko</i>	beginning with respect
<i>Vakatabutabu ni bera na toso</i>	before going any further.
<i>Nai talanoa ni rogoca mada</i>	This is the story

⁶ It should be noted that although *vakamalolo* can be performed by both men and women, mostly separately, it is more favoured as a woman's dance.

⁷ There will be further discussion on p107 of Fijian prosody.

<i>Tovolea me vakacalataka</i>	about the sickness
<i>Ra tauvimate noda Turaga</i>	of our chief
<i>Sa uni vanua ni noda Yasana</i>	

Although the subject of this *meke* is a *lālē* (lament), the opening verse refers to the style of the *meke* as a *vakamalolo* yet, given the seriousness of the subject, this *meke* was not composed as a dance but rather as a lament sung in the style of a *vakamalolo* composition.⁸ Both the *mekes* are performed sitting down, *vakamalolo* with hand movements and *lālē* without.⁹

There are also *meke* of the leading *matanitu* whose style of composition is particularly popular throughout Fiji. For example *Meke wesi* (Spear dance) from Cakaudrove, Vanualevu:



Fig. 4: *Meke wesi* Bau, 1952

Photograph: Rob Wright

⁸ Roth describes *vakamalolo* as ‘gesture songs, performed in a sitting position’ (1953:131). The accompanying *lali ni meke* and *cobo* are reminiscent of *vucu meke*.

⁹ It is also possible that the term *lālē* was not in current use in Lau at the time of the *meke* composition and that *vakamalolo* was a more recognised description for the *meke*. However Burton and Deane, describing a visit of the Queen of Tonga, Queen Salote, to Tubou, Lau for the 100 year celebration of Methodism in Fiji (1935), said that she was stopped while walking to the place of reception by the singing of a ‘particularly sad lament [*lālē*], beautiful in its simplicity, [which] was being chanted for the dead chief [her relative, the late Tui Nayau]’ (1936:127). Their use of the term lament, not *meke* or *vakamalolo*, would indicate that at that time at least the composition was recognised as *lālē*.

The photograph in Fig. 4 taken on the chiefly island of Bau shows the *rara* (village green) on which the dancers and singers are in readiness for a *meke wesi* – a men’s spear dance: note the position of the singers. The *lua* (instrumentalists) are in a circle behind the dancers. Behind the *vakatulanoa* (shelter for the guests of honour) is the *bure kalou* (ancient pre-Christian temple) a relic of Bauan pre-history.

The second men’s dance is a *meke wau* (Club dance) from Bau:



Fig. 5: *Meke Wau*, Bau, 1948

Photograph: Rob Wright

Fig. 5 is an example of a *meke wau* performed on the *rara* of the chiefly island of Bau, from which the dance originated. Note the formation of the dances, for *meke wau* like *meke wesi*, and all men’s *meke*, is danced with military-like precision. The *lua* in this case is top left of the dancers.¹⁰

There are many other descriptive *meke* such as the *bekas* (flying-foxes) from Rewa (Derrick 1963:17, Cumming 1882:93). Derrick’s description of *meke* records only dance *meke* and is perhaps symptomatic of Westerners’ lack of understanding and failure to recognise the full importance of all *meke* within Fijian culture, beyond the highly visible and popular dance. Also Derrick records only the *meke* of eastern Fiji,

¹⁰ The tip of the island just visible in the top left of the photograph is Viwa, the site of mission headquarters established by Cross after Lau and Rewa.

neglecting those of the north, Macuata, Bua and Ra; the west, the Yasawas; and the south, Kadavu and Beqa. These provinces are also known for their speciality *meke*, which are called for whenever events of national importance require their performance. In addition to those mentioned above are *meke seasea*, a particular fan dance performed by the women of Bua, Vanualevu and *meke ni veli* (named after a gnome or fairy known for its quick darting movements), which is a sitting dance from the province of Ra in northern western Vitilevu.

Josua Rabukawaqa also comments on what he calls the speciality *meke* of particular *matanitu* as well as spectacular *meke*. These *meke* include: *maravulevu*, a very large *meke* which is performed by men from six or seven villages from the province of Tailevu, Vitilevu; *ua lokaloka*, meaning the breaking of the waves, an old *meke* from Rewa (see also Cooper 1888:118 and Cumming 1882:93); and a *meke* from Lau called *mōmōtilau*, a stick dance thought to have originated from Uvea which over time have been synthesised into a *meke* genre (Rabukawaqa 1999, McLean 1999:456).

There are also cultural borrowings from other Pacific countries, Tonga and Samoa in particular, whose traditional links with Fiji date back to the first migrations (see Chapter 2). Discussing the borrowing relationships between the countries of western Polynesia, McLean lists some of the musical characteristics, including instruments common to these countries (including Fiji) which include:

... nose flutes [*bitu ni vakatagi*], rolled mats, stamping tubes [*derua*], panpipes, isometre, increasing tempo and drone polyphony ... [as well as] shell trumpets [*davui*] and handclapping [*cobo*] (1999:455).¹¹

Group dance and *lali* can also be added to McLean's list. Moyle also comments on the amount of 'inter-island sharing of musical material' as proportionate to the amount of contact between the countries. He further notes: 'the trade network operating among Fiji, Samoa and Tonga resulted in not only sharing of song and dance but also, on occasion, individual travellers taking residence in the visited country, and participating conspicuously in performances there' (1991:15).

¹¹ See also Chapter 6:134. The Fijian names for the instruments are bracketed.

Of the dance genre, Tongan *lakalaka* and *tafi* are known and performed in Lau, particularly on the islands of Lakeba and Vanuabalavu, and a *maululu*, thought to be Samoan in origin (*ma'ulu'ulu*) is also known and performed in Fiji.¹² Tongans and Niuens are both known to dance Fijian *meke*.¹³ Kaepler (1993:88-91) states that Tongans were attracted to some *meke* styles, offering one Tongan description of *meke* 'as a *lakalaka faka-Fisi*, a *lakalaka*' (Tongan dance in the Fijian style). This is a curious description as there are no indigenous *meke* where Fijian men and women dance together, as in the Tongan *lakalaka*. Very occasionally men may join the women in a *vakamalolo* where they stand behind the seated women, but this is an exception as most *vakamalolo* are performed separately. The only dance where Fijian men and women dance together is a recent Western form called *taralalala* where couples dance side by side (see Figure 6). This form of dance was 'introduced by the missionaries as a kindergarten entertainment, [and] is now ... a social dance with vocal and instrumental accompaniment' (Saumaiwai 1980:82).



Fig. 6: *Taralala*, Suva, 1945

Photograph: Rob Wright

¹² Capell (1991:144) describes *maululu* as 'a kind of *meke* - a Samoan word', yet McLean does not include Fiji as a country where the Samoan *ma'ulu'ulu* is known (1999:457).

¹³ McLean 1999:457.

The present Tongan generic name for any kind of dance is *faiva*, replacing the old generic word *me'e*, and although it is not possible to authoritatively predicate an ancient Fiji-Tonga connection with the original name, we know from a previous discussion (Chapter 2) of the migratory relationship between ancient Tongans and eastern Fiji.¹⁴ Some of the dialects of eastern Fiji, Cakaudrove and Macuata in particular do not have a 'k', hence *meke* becomes *me'e* as in the Tongan word and, as in Tonga, both include dance in their meanings.

All *meke* are performed in the original language of the composition and, as with many of their *meke*, Fijians 'express surprise if anyone should expect them to understand them' (Williams 1985:113). Interestingly, the chief Mateinaniu from the island of Fulaga in southern Lau, whose role was pivotal to Cross and Cargill in establishing the Fijian Methodist mission in the 1830s, was converted to Christianity while in Tonga at the invitation of a Tongan chief from the island of Va'vau to teach the Tongans a *meke wesi*.¹⁵

Non-dance or narrative *meke*

Within the second category are many divisions of *meke*, which were not composed for dance.¹⁶ Although the term 'non-danced' might seem to imply *meke* of lesser importance than the more visible and entertaining danced *meke*, some of the most important and ancient *meke* in the Fijian musical repertoire fall into the second category and are of particular importance to this discussion. Many of these *meke* were largely neglected by early recorders of Fijian culture – with the exception of *meke ni yaqona* and *meke* sung as work songs – because they were mostly performed in the privacy of the home for the *i tokatoka* or *mataqali*. These *meke* include the very large corpus of narratives, oral records of genealogies, family histories, past and present events of significance, and social records of community importance. Everything then of social and spiritual significance affecting all aspects of Fijian society is recorded in poetry and song including 'seasonal and socio-cultural cycles ... defin[ing] the

¹⁴ Kaeppler, describes *faiva* as 'any kind of task, feat, craft, or performance requiring skill or ability, or anything at which an individual or group is clever; dance' (1993:141).

¹⁵ See Chapter 4:72.

¹⁶ Williams' description of Fijian *meke* 'poems' [texts] including 'dirges, serenades, wake-songs, war-songs, and hymns for the dance' (1982:114), are a very small selection of the second genre of *meke*.

relationship between the past, present and the future ... which simultaneously [co]exist ... in a relationship that shapes Fijian philosophy ... to land ... and plants and animals (Ratuva 2007:95-96).

These narrative *meke* come under the genre of *vucu*, umbrella term for unaccompanied *meke* of the narrative kind.¹⁷ Some have descriptive names such as *vakalutuivoce* (literally, dropping the oars), a two part Fijian polyphony sung to while away a long sea or river trip; *sere vasi* (an improvised two part polyphonic narrative); *vakatusa* (an old polyphonic narrative *meke*) sung in the home or at gatherings retelling past deeds or exploits; *vakavunigasau* (a *meke* genre loosely covering those *meke* sung either as work songs or narrative *meke* similar to *vakatusa*); *meke ni veime* and *vakawelegone* (genres covering the many lullabies and children's *meke*); and the many work song *meke* sung during the building of houses or any group activity including *meke ni yarakau*, a particular *meke* sung during the hauling of logs (Kaisau 1978:29-30, Waqavonovono 1978:37).¹⁸ Designated persons, entrusted either by birth or selection with the preservation of their group's knowledge, protocol and ceremony, are the foundation of every Fijian community. Among this group is the *dau ni vucu*, the composer of *meke*.

Of special interest to this discussion are narratives known as *meke ni vucu*, *sere dina* and *vakatulewa* (genealogies, epics or history); *lālē* (laments); and the highest and most sacred *meke ni yaqona vaka turaga* (*yaqona* ceremony) which were the genres appropriated by Fijian Christians for their liturgy.¹⁹ Narratives and sung genealogies are known by different names within the communal groups, including *vakatulewa*, *vakatusa*, *meke ni vu*, *meke ni vucu*, but whatever the name the importance attached to these *meke* is the same, for they are regarded by the particular agnatic groups as their oral histories and records of their origin and connections to their ancestral *vu* (origin

¹⁷ This information comes from personal communication Epeli Matata (ibid:91). The term *vucu* in Cappel 1991:268-269, 'a poem, a *meke*, indicates a general term to which adjectives can be added to indicate further connections to the meaning of the word, for example *dau ni vucu* is the composer of the *vucu* or *meke*'.

¹⁸ It is clearly impossible to name and describe all known *meke* in Fiji, the complexity of the task and context lies well outside the parameters of the thesis. However those mentioned are known and performed throughout Fiji. The names used here are Bauan.

¹⁹ *Sere dina* refers (to both music and text) as 'true' songs or *meke* songs of some lineage. There is no accurate English equivalent because this music is intrinsic to Fijian culture, in musical composition and poetic textual style. Note also that full title, *meke ni yaqona vaka turaga* will now be referred to in the shortened version as *meke ni yaqona*.

deity). These *meke* were a reinforcement of their communities' values and identity. Within the text are numerous themes covering all events of social significance, from daily activities such as hunting, fishing, building, agriculture and cyclical rituals to larger events of importance: origin myths, wars, significant births or deaths, exploits of gods and chiefs and any event deemed worthy of celebration. Whatever the theme;

The oral tradition of pre-Christian Fiji was transmitted or shared by means of a number of oral artefacts, among them epic chants, stories and tales, riddles, fables proverbs, legal sayings, dirges and responsive rituals. The contexts in which they were used were institutionalised, and the liturgy or ritual was followed with precision. Frequently a specific practitioner was set aside to attend to this, that no evil *mana* might befall them through erroneous performance (Tippett 1980:21).

The following *meke* is an example of a political narrative *vucu* from Cuvu village in the Nadroga province of southwest Vitilevu. (CD Track 1).²⁰

1st stanza of a *Meke ni Vucu* from Cuvu village, Nadroga.

<i>O nai ka u ni vucu a lagataka</i>	Oh I am singing a <i>meke</i>
<i>Dou sa bula na tiko e noda</i>	Greetings to you all at home
<i>Na sogo ni draki wasawasa</i>	About which way the weather blows on the sea or ocean
<i>aie..ie..aie..ie, aie....</i>	<i>Ie...</i>
<i>Na mata ni cagi ni wasawasa</i>	The direction of the wind on the sea
<i>soko tu mai nai sa (lanawa?)</i>	to keep the canoe in the right position [when tacking]
<i>Au sa rogoca..oie..ie..aie..aie..ie</i>	I have heard... <i>ie</i>
<i>Au sa rogoca, baleta</i>	I have heard about things
<i>na ka ni gauna qoka</i>	
<i>Nodra cakacaka na tubu na wasa...ie</i>	that are happening today ²¹

²⁰ *Meke* recorded 25/3/49 by G.B. Milner in Voua, Cuvu, Nadroga District. Recording Milner F86 M (b) courtesy of Archive of Maori and Pacific Music, Auckland University.

²¹ For full text see Appendix 1.

The text – in three stanzas – indicates some unease over a Government direction or directive (or law), and the subsequent involvement of the Methodist Church, which has caused unease among the people. The last stanza exhorts people not to indulge in uninformed gossip and uses the metaphor of fuel (for gossip) needed to light a lamp (to fan the flames of misunderstandings). In the text are metaphorical allusions known to the people of the province. Cuvu village is on the coast so the sea, sailing and weather are maritime metaphors used here to indicate social equilibrium. The use of a bronze lamp metaphor highlights the period in which the *meke* was composed. The textual line is filled with vowels and repeated phrases to fit the musical line. This *meke*, like most of this style, is unaccompanied. The *meke* begins with the *laga* (leader), who commences the singing; she is joined by the *tagica* (meaning to join in) a second part, and together they form a duet in a musical motif before the entry of the *druku* (chorus). There then follows a musical *veisau* (dialogue in antiphonal form) between the two soloists before the rest of the chorus join them over repeated exclamatory vowels ‘*aie..ie..aie..ie*’ Most of the text is sung in a repeated ostinato pattern until the end of the line. This musical patterning with some variation is the template for *meke* on which all compositions are based. So too is the prosody, the textual style of composition for all *meke*.

Dau ni vucu (composer)

The composition of *meke* is highly ritualised and the *dau ni vucu*, an inherited position not necessarily of chiefly descent, is a male or female of standing among the *mataqali*, considered to have connection with the spirit world from which comes the inspiration for the *meke* (Kaisau 1978:27, Saumaiwai 1980:83, Williams 1982:113, Saumaiwai 1980:84). So strong is the belief in the source of *meke* inspiration – the spirit world of ancestors both chiefly and personal, *veli* (elves) and stillborn children (also part of *luve ni wai*, a secret cult) – that unless the text of any *meke* is known *in toto* it will not be performed for fear of retribution.²²

²² The cult of *luve ni wai* has been discussed in Chapter 2:50. As an illustration of the power of Fijian spiritual belief, I have been told in personal communication with Epeli Matata (ibid:91), of a *dau ni vucu* who, during communication with the spirit world, was told of his demise on completion the *meke*. When the *meke* was presented to the owners, he passed away the same week and the story is commemorated in a *lālē*. This story dates back some seventy years and yet is clearly remembered by Christian Fijians whose faith in their spirit world is unquestioning and sits happily with their Christian faith.

Quain, in his discussion on the spiritual power of the *dau ni vucu*, noted:

The composer of epic songs has special power to speak with ancestors ... no one doubts the validity of his talent for literary rapport with the supernatural. His ancestral communications are the only bonds with the distant past. No one questions this history. Though the poet's ecstasy thus determines the events of history, his ecstasy is shaped to a strict literary tradition: his father, uncle or grand-father, have filled his head with themes suitable for epic songs ... with rhythms in archaic language, with metaphors once fresh, now trite through many generations, yet unquestionable marks of the composer's art. Epic songs are composed upon occasions: the visit of a chief, a hurricane, the death of a friend.... Through such communication forgotten genealogies of the last generation can be known again with certainty (1942:8-9).²³

Ceremonial process of new *meke* follows strict protocol: initially there is the *meke-taka* (approach to create a *meke*), then ceremonial *i sevusevu* (presentation of gifts) – gifts such as *tabua*, *yaqona*, food or any other staple such as kerosene or oil – followed by the request and acceptance. There is no set time for a *meke* to be composed: timing depends on spiritual inspiration and communication between the medium and the spirit world.

After the initial request the second stage is *taucavutaki* which Kaisau calls the 'formal transference of the seat of the composer (and more importantly the spirit) from his [the composer's] house to wherever the initiation is to be done' (1978:28).²⁴ At this stage the *dau ni vucu* assumes a persona similar to a *bete* (priest) and is treated accordingly by the village and those who have requested the *meke*. Family needs are taken care of and *dau ni vucu* are allowed to take certain liberties not ordinarily theirs to perform, such as settling old disputes either within families or in the village. Authority at this time is assumed to come through the spiritual world the composer is in contact with during the *meke* compositional process.

When the *dau ni vucu* is ready, word is sent and all assemble. The *dau ni vucu* then goes into a trance and begins to recite the *meke* text. Various members of the group have been pre-assigned the task of remembering the verses as they are recited, because

²³ This is Quain's spelling of 'ecstasy'.

²⁴ For a comprehensive description of the *meke* compositional process see Kaisau 1978:27-29.

once out of the trance the *dau ni vucu* does not remember what has been recited. If all the lines are not been remembered by those assigned Saumaiwai says, ‘they are omitted and not replaced. As a result these *meke* frequently have an unequal number of lines in each verse and the narrative is disjointed’ (1980:84).

Once the *meke* text is memorised by assigned persons, the *meke* is ‘given back’ to the composer and every aspect of it is *gē-vaka* (taught) and performed under his or her tutelage, including the *i balebale* (music), the *qaqa ni meke* (text), the *matana or mata* (movements of the dance) and the costumes.²⁵ *Dau ni vucu* are responsible for all aspects of teaching the *meke* and their prestige is judged as much by their skill in storytelling as on the quality and complexity of the poetry: use of metaphor, riddle, and uniformity of metre. Following the performance and reception of the *meke*, *vei-meke-ti* (final ownership) is given to those who made the request.

Meke composition

Within the *meke* genre, subtle differences in compositional style reflect both regional patterning and the particular compositional form. However, some general characteristics in all *meke* can be quantified: harmonic structure, melodic range, scale, texture, vocal parts and instruments.

The harmonic structure in *meke* varies but the notes usually form a diatonic scale of five notes or less, including a raised fourth and a major or minor second. The melodic line centres in the middle of the cluster or chord with the lowest note in the bass part. There is limited melodic movement, generally no more than a third or fourth, all resolving in unison at the end of the stanza. Every new phrase in the stanza is introduced by the *laga* who is joined by the *tagica* singing a second or third higher. After a polyphonic duet, the *druku* join in and all sing to the end of the verse, resolving in unison. To these vocal parts may be added the *vaqiqivatu*, a male part

²⁵ Part of *meke* costume is the *vesa* (mentioned in the 3rd stanza of the Cuvu *meke*) an armlet or anklet made of ginger or hibiscus leaves. The wearing of the *vesa* has a symbolic connection for some. It was said by a *dau ni vucu* that “As soon as I put on the *vesa*, I know all the verses and movements of the *meke* even though I had never seen it or performed it before” (personal communication, Petero Tavaya 2007). When asked for an explanation, my informant, a Christian, was at a loss and assumed that a higher power was involved.

entering after the verse has commenced, creating a minor chord. If the *vaqiqivatu* is present the *tagica* will sing a descant style, known as the *vakasalavoavoa*. The *vaqiqivatu* stops singing before the verse is finished (Saumaiwai 1980:84, Rabukawaqa 1999). The *vaqiqivatu* and *vakasalavoavoa* – speciality vocal parts are not always present, although it has been known for a *meke* not be performed if the singer of the *vakasalavoavoa* is absent, especially some women's *meke*. In the performance of the *meke* the *lua* (accompanying group) sit in a circle around the two leading singers (as previously noted, pp 95-97). If the *meke* is accompanied, the instrumentalists sit around and behind the player or players of the *lali ni meke* who keep the rhythm and signal the end of the stanza or verse by a few extra short sharp beats. Other instruments include *derua* (bamboo stamping tubes), and *cobo* (clapping with cupped hands). These instruments were previously noted (p98) by McLean, in relation to cross-cultural borrowing in western Polynesia. There is no limit to the number of singers either male or female, and children may also sing with the group.

Meke prosody

The words in their singing, or rather chanting, are divided according to the tune, without reference to the sense, - a pause not unfrequently occurring in the middle of a word. But the greatest difficulty in Fijian verse-making lies in the production of assonance, which required in the composer a great command of words and skill in disposing them. The vowels contained in the last two syllables of the first line of a stanza must be repeated in the same order at the end of every succeeding line; the greater the number of assonant lines, the better is the poetry esteemed. Evidently this sort of metrical arrangement can be successfully cultivated only in languages in which the vocalic element predominates (Hale (in Fison and Gatschet 1885):197).

Words fit the music, so rhythm and rhyme are paramount. The use of assonance at the end of lines, with extended or added vowels, enables the text to fit the musical phrase although a line occasionally finishes in the middle of a phrase without reference to the sense. If the text falls short of the musical phrase, vowels and tags are added.

So, in the introductory two verses of the following example of a *vakamalolo* from the village of Wailevu, Vanualevu, the word *vodo* is lengthened to *vo(o)do(o)*, while the

le of *lutu le* becomes *lee(a)*, two drawn out vowels at the end of the lines 3 and 4 to eke out the text to the end of the phrase. In line 5, *lutu le* is sung twice in quick succession, ending abruptly with *lutu*. The same pattern is followed in the second introductory verse, where *uca* becomes a long *u uca* and *le* the same pattern as in the first verse. (CD Track 2).²⁶

Vakamalolo mai Wailevu

A vakamalolo from Wailevu,

Introduction

‘aci mai vale o Di Bu’adromo

Adi Bukadromo called from the house

Ra goneyalewa tou mai vodo

Girls let us board

Lutu a cagi ni va’avodo, lutu le

the wind has dropped,

Lutu a cagi ni va’avodo, lutu le

Lutu a cagi ni va’avodo, lutu le, lutu le, lutu hurry and board the boat.

(pause)

‘ato ni vucu ma sa tasogo

The bag for the *meke* is shut

Qai lai dola ga i noqu ‘oro

Only to be opened in my village

Miri a lagilagi nu uca, miri le,

It rained gently...it rained.

Miri a lagilagi nu uca, miri le,

Miri a lagilagi nu uca, miri le, miri lei, miri.

Following the second introductory verse the *meke* proper commences with instrumental accompaniment from the *lali ni meke*, *cobo* and *derua*. The text is divided into two stanzas of twelve and thirteen lines each, with pauses indicated by the interjection of *lei* at the end of lines four and eight in the first stanza, and lines fifteen and eighteen in the second stanza. The pauses also indicate a change in ideas, tense and theme. *Lei* within the sense of the text in this *meke* is really inserted as a break in the dialogue, and a chance for a breath, as the actual meaning of *lei* is equivalent to a sigh or an exclamation as in *isa lei*.

The break between the stanzas occurs at the end of line twelve which repeats the words *na liva* three times to get to the end of the line, followed by a decisive stop in

²⁶ This is a recording of a *vakamalolo meke* from Tuvamila, Wailevu, Macuata. Recording Chris Saumaiwai (77/053) courtesy Archive of Maori and Pacific Music.

the *meke*. The break between the stanzas occurs in the middle of a sentence: *Na liva na butuka na delai Tunuloa* – instead of which is sung the repetitive *Na liva, na liva, na liva, na livaliva, na* (stop). The new stanza begins with *Butuka na delai Tununoa*

All the lines of this *meke* are assonant ending in ‘a’. The text of this *meke* would be much admired. The composer’s clever use of assonance at the end of each line broken only at the pauses or stops, the similarity in style of the two introductory verses, metaphoric references, complicated metric arrangements which necessitate textual stresses not used in speech, all combine to make this *meke* a particularly fine example of Fijian prosody. As Quain says, rhythm in the language of the songs is closely dependent on the music (1942:14).

Here the body of the *meke* follows two introductory verses. It has been arranged in this manner for ease of reading (particularly because of the assonance) and written in this way for ease of poetic analysis, but does not actually reflect the *meke* musical phrases (nor the exact English translation) which are long and really only end at the pauses.

(1st stanza)

<i>Ca ni Turaga sa na ri’a</i>	The voice of the chief is heard
<i>Ma tu’uni mai o na Ma’ita</i>	<i>Na Makita</i> [chief’s title] said
<i>Na va’amalolo rau sa na vulica</i>	A <i>vakamalolo</i> is to be produced
<i>Me baleti ira na ‘ai Tuvumila,(lei)</i>	about the residents of Tuvumila

(pause)

<i>O noqu to’a qo au a vakaraica</i>	I am here to look around
<i>O na daunivucu sa n a vuqa dina</i>	<i>Meke</i> composers are numerous
<i>O na va’amalolo reau san a vulica</i>	they will teach the <i>meke</i>
<i>Me baleti ira na ‘ai Tuvumila,(lei)</i>	about the residents of Tuvumila

(pause)

<i>A tu’uni ni yaco na dausiga</i>	It is said that a drought occurred
<i>O ma sogoti au ma dua na liva</i>	but a lightning strike trapped me
<i>A tibi ti’o i ulu oi na Qilaqila</i>	it struck the top of Qilaqila (Mountain)
<i>Na liva, na liva, na liva, na livaliva na..</i>	the lightning... (stop)

(2nd stanza)

<i>Butuka na delai Tunuloa</i>	Standing on the top of Tunuloa
<i>O na ulu ni vanua me'u siri kosova</i>	The peak that must be crossed
<i>Meu'u la'i dolava o na caginitoba, lei</i>	For me to open the breeze in the bay
(pause)	
<i>O Senitiale ni va'taroga</i>	Senitiale wanted to know
<i>O na tobu ni ura (ura) sa na dola</i>	the prawn pool will be opened
<i>O na qa tivoli ri'a sana to'a, lei</i>	The peel of the wild yam will be left
(pause)	
<i>O meda mai la'i va'lasa sola</i>	Let us go and entertain the visitor
<i>O na lewa nei tui tunuloa</i>	Tui Tunuloa has given the order
<i>O ma coiri o na caucau ni toba</i>	that went around the bay
<i>O na delai Tuvumila me'u toloma</i>	The peak of Tuvumila I crossed
<i>Ma na sogoti au ma dua na liva</i>	I was caught in lightning
<i>O tibi ti'o i ulu o i Qilaqila</i>	that struck the peak of Qilaqila
<i>O na liva, na liva, na livaliva, na...</i>	the lightning.

This particular *meke* is antiphonal like many *meke*, involving a group response at the end of lines or an antiphonal dialogue (Tippett 1980:17; Williams 1985:116). Some *meke*, particularly *vucu* or *lēlē* have what Williams calls *dulena* and Tippet *na kenai kau*, inserted metaphorical choruses unrelated to the narrative, their purpose to separate the 'episodes' of an epic or as temporary relief in a long narrative (Williams 1985:116, Tippett 1980:26).²⁷ *Lēlē* also has the distinguishing feature of frequent meditative pauses between stanzas allowing contemplation of the sentiments expressed in the text, 'reflect[ing] the sorrow of the bereaved' (Tippett 1980:48).

Meke ni yaqona

Of all the *meke*, the *yaqona* ceremony is the most celebrated throughout Fiji. *Meke ni yaqona* is the full celebration of the *yaqona* ceremony belonging to all Fijians. The oldest known of these ceremonies *meke ni yaqona* fulfills the role of continuity of life, history and culture. This ancient sacred ceremony with spiritual connections

²⁷ *Dulu* means difficulty in continuing (Capell 1984:36).

acknowledges a chiefly presence and achieves *mana* by its correct performance. In pre-contact times the *yaqona* ceremony was part of temple worship, and the *meke ni yaqona* (the sung part of the ceremony) as Waterhouse noted '[was] practised as a mode of pacifying the gods. It [was] performed in periods of war and on the occasion of adverse winds. The language of the chants recited [did] not, however relate to the particular necessity' (1997:289).

The antiquity of the *meke* is borne out by the music and the archaic lexis of the indigenous texts, for the meanings of many *meke* words are out of memory yet their spiritual connections are acknowledged and sung as an integral part of the ceremony. The *yaqona* ceremony connects the temporal with the spiritual world, reinforcing relationships between communities, defining social and political structures, religious beliefs, values and practices inherent in the Fijian ethos (Ravuvu 1987:vii, Turner 1995:113). In the uttering of the final words '*mana – e dina*' (literally, it is true), Fijians are reconnected to their past, a semiotic connection through the uttering of the word *mana* which in fact transcends translation because of the attached power and underlying meaning of the word to the Fijians.²⁸

The text of the *meke* is owned by the *mataqali* or the *yavusa* many containing historic records of that agnatic connection. One *meke ni yaqona* ceremonial text is of particular interest, not only because copies of the text have been written and translated, but more importantly because it is performed by the three most powerful eastern *matanitu*.²⁹ This is the *meke ni yaqona* of *Tui Cakau* (Cakaudrove), *Vunivalu* (Bau) and *Roko Tui Dreketi* (Rewa) and only these three paramount chiefs may call for it.³⁰ The text is arranged in four stanzas (of which the first is offered here) and includes dialectic words from Cakaudrove, Bau, Bua and Lau. Strangely, two women are mentioned in the text although tradition forbids women to take any part in a *meke ni yaqona*. The two women are named and called 'foreigners' or 'strangers': not of the composer's clan. Although not Fijian tradition for women to take part in a *meke ni*

²⁸ The same meaning is implicit in *vaka-malūa-taka*, a clapping of the hands in thanksgiving and exclaiming *ā! mana! ā!i!e! muduo* (Capell 1991:134).

²⁹ There is a similar text for this *meke* in Thomson 1940:71, which may explain some of the Lauan words.

³⁰ Personal communication from Epeli Matata (ibid:91).

yaqona ceremony, it was not unknown for Tongan women to be cup bearers (Abrahamson 2005:334).

The designated singers of the *meke* from the province of Cakaudrove gave the following text example to me: the Bauan text was received by Lester (1941:228-230) from the designated singers of Bau.³¹ The texts are fundamentally the same but include dialect words belonging to other provinces, including Bua and Lau.³² Differences in dialectal lexis are highlighted by colour: Lauan, Bua, Cakaudrove (CD Track 3).

Meke ni Yaqona - Bau

Mocemoce ni bogi ma siga cake;
We slept through the night, and the
Siga a sa taqa no ki lagi
The sun is high in the heavens
Laki cau na yaqona me colati
Go, uproot the yaqona and bring it
Biu koto ki takari ni vale,
And place it on the threshold
of the house
Sola ka sa moce no ki cake.
The guest at the upper end
is sleeping [the chief's end]
Soraki no yaqona me na kari:
Present the root, and let it be scraped:

Ra tauya no ki bani laga kali
It rests against a branch of
lagakali [a flowering tree]

Meke ni Yaqona - Cakaudrove

Mocemoce ni bogi ma siga ocake
Sleeping at night the day now dawns
A siga ka so taga no 'i lagi
The sun is on the warpath in the sky
La'i cavu na yaqona me colati
They go uproot the yaqona and bring it
Biu koto i takari ni vale
It is set down at the door of the house

A sola ka so moce no 'i cake
The strangers are sleeping at the other
end
Soraki yaqona me na kari
Offer up the yaqona for scraping

Tau ya no 'i ba ni lagakali.
It rests against the branch of the *lagakali*

³¹ Designated singers are those who know the *meke* text, cupbearers are chosen for their rank.

³² Lester translated the *meke* from Bau and Miriama Dituvaiva translated the *meke* from Cakaudrove.

Tanoa o cavuta i cake:

Lift down the *tanoa* from the wall

Tanoa au cavuta i lagi

I raise the bowl towards heaven

Vakarau na yaqona me seviraki!

Prepare the root and proclaim it!

Seviraki ma kere tubu i Lagi

The acclamation rose skywards,

Laki odroodrovanua

Reaching distant lands.

Vakarau na yaqona ma seviraki

The *yaqona* is prepared and prayed over

Seviraki ma kere tubu i lagi

Prayed over and bubbles up heavenwards

La ki yana no vunilagi

Goes and reaches the horizon

Meke ni yaqona music and performance

The main feature of this music is a narrow melodic range no more than a fourth or fifth. The *vū ni meke* pitches the tune or begins the *meke* and is also the *laga* for the whole *meke*. There are two solo parts, *laga* and *tagica*, and a *druku*. The *laga* commences the singing and is joined by the *tagica*. After a short polyphonic duet the two are joined by the *druku* who sing with the *laga* in an ostinato pattern to the end of the stanza, while the *tagica* sings higher in a descant known as *vakasalavoavoa*. The singers then rest while words or instructions related to the proceedings are spoken. The next stanza commences in the same patterning and continues until the cup (*bilo*) bearer or bearers are ready to deliver the mixed *yaqona* and water if appropriate. The singers take their place in a semicircle behind the *yaqona* bowl known nowadays in some provinces as a *tanoa* or *i dave*, while those in charge of the mixing arrange themselves in a semicircle around the bowl. Many of the *meke* texts are difficult to translate with their archaic words and metaphorical images. These texts belong to particular *yavusa* (families) and are known and performed by the designated group singers. However some texts are performed by several *yavusa* and may have belonged to particular agnatic groups who moved from their place of origin, as in the above example.

The solemn *meke ni yaqona* ceremony is performed solely by particular male members of the *yavusa* completely responsible for everything: preparation of the *yaqona* root; correct order of ceremony; the ceremonial mixing; singing the *meke* and

presentation of the *yaqona* to the honoured guest. The ceremony is performed in complete silence.³³ The length of the ceremony depends on the text and number of honoured guests to be served. Although the fundamental structure of the *meke* is the same, within the actual performance variations typify the particular style of *meke* of the performing *yavusa*: style of clapping; spoken words; music; dialect; number of performers and cup bearers – some offering only the *yaqona* (one cup bearer) while others, in Cakaudrove and Lau for instance, also present a second cup of water (two cup bearers). Every Fijian identifies with his or her own *meke ni yaqona* ceremony and recognises its significance within their *yavusa*.

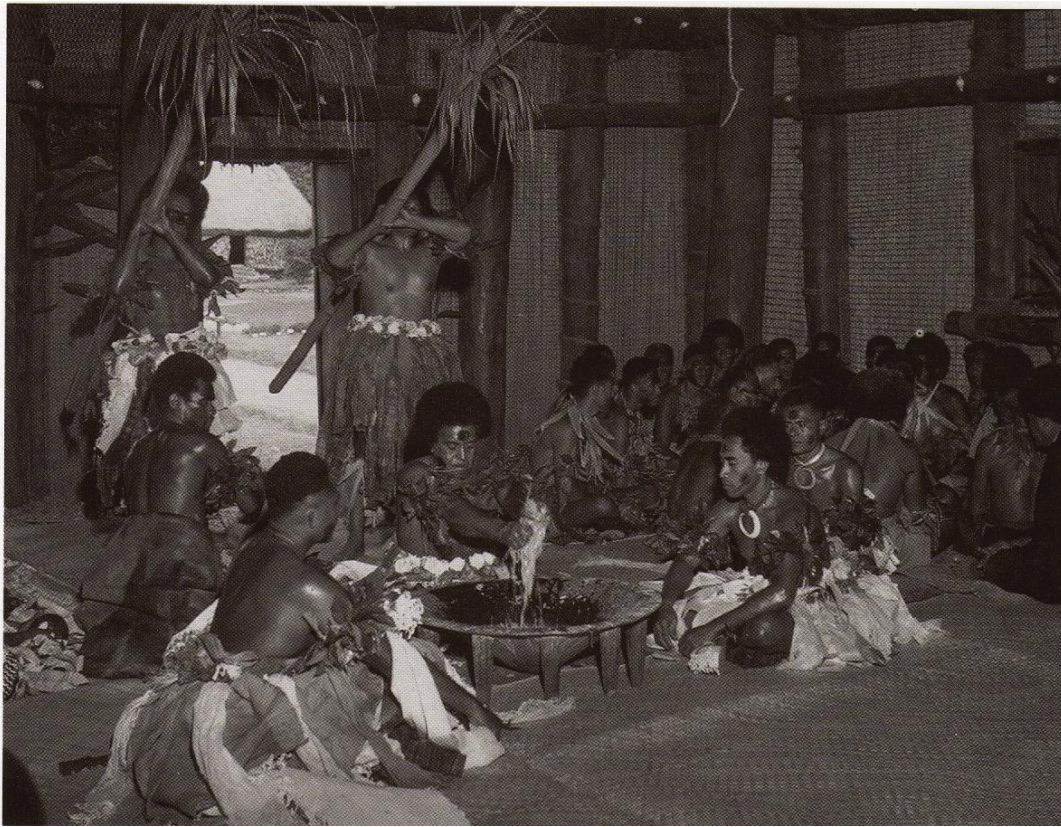


Fig. 7: *Meke ni yaqona* ceremony, Taveuni, 1952 Photograph: Rob Wright

In Fig. 7 the preparation of the *yaqona* is in progress and the two men standing at the entrance carry the water for mixing in bamboo containers. The *lua* are to the right of the *tanoa* (*yaqona* bowl) and the *bilo* bearers seated on either side of the *tanoa*.

³³ It is Fijian custom on important occasions, including all ceremonies, for everyone to observe complete silence. This custom is part of Fijian pre-history and is observed to the present day.



Fig. 8: *Meke ni yaqona* – the presentation of the *yaqona* Photograph: Rob Wright

The presence of the two cupbearers in the Fig. 8 photo taken in Lomolomo, Vanuabalavu, indicates this *meke ni yaqona* is from either Lau or Cakaudrove; the two provinces using the extra water cup.³⁴ The tradition of the water is believed to have come from the *bure kalou yaqona* ceremony from pre-Christian times. In the *meke ni yaqona* ceremony of Cakaudrove the *yaqona bilo* is presented first and on finishing water is poured from the second *bilo* into the first and drunk ceremoniously. This custom is offered solely to the chief as a gesture symbolic of time past.³⁵

Williams, discussing the variation of customs amongst the provinces, noted:

Here also the gods had a share of water apportioned to them, taken in a leaf by the

³⁴ Vanuabalavu, although in the Lau Group, was at one time considered part of Cakaudrove under *Tui Cakau*, paramount chief.

³⁵ Authority for this information comes from personal communication with Epeli Matata (ibid:91).

priest, and transferred to the bowl with some ceremonious rubbings. At Vuna, directly the Chief takes the cup to his lips, the company begins a measured clapping, which they continue all the while he is drinking the *yaqona* and the water, which follows (1982:145).

The *meke* genre of pre-Christian Fiji became the early liturgy of the Methodist Church. Fijian Christians appropriated their own music central to their communities and adding Christian text in their poetic style continued a music practice predating the introduction of Christianity.

Christian liturgy of the missionaries and Tongan lay preachers

Most Fijians had had little exposure to European music and learning English hymns presented them with many problems, not least the language, rigid structure of music and text, harmonic and polyphonic differences, restrictive musical phrasing and constriction of the whole composition, in comparison with the freer flowing musical and poetic structure of the *meke*. The bigger question remained whether the missionaries would ‘permit’ Fijian Christians to appropriate their music with different text as an adjunct to Methodist hymnody for inclusion in the worship. The history of missionary hymnody in the Pacific in the 19th century shows Western hymns were always the first consideration on contact and to that end every effort was made to teach them, not always with initial success even with the local language as hymn text (McLean 1999:Chapter 26). Cross and Cargill had come to Fiji via Tonga, where indigenous music was not adapted for Christian liturgy, although there was no particular objection to it ‘except that lewd and lascivious ideas might be associated with some of their tunes’ (McLean 1999:143).³⁶ Tonga was a favoured port for visiting mariners, and Tongans as far back as 1616 were exposed to European music, though much of it seemed to be instrumental (Moyle 1987:24). Despite this contact, Tongans, like other Pacific communities had initial difficulty with Western harmony, although there were favourable reports of their hymn singing and their own composed hymns (*hiva usu*) some thirteen years after initial contact (Moyle 1987:25). However,

³⁶ This situation remains today. An attempt was made by Dr Adrian Burdon while Principal of Sia’atoutai College 1996 - 2000 to introduce Tongan indigenous music to the liturgy, but without success (personal communication, August, 2003).

the hymnody Cross and Cargill heard in the infant Tongan Church in the early 1830s was as William Woon described: ‘excellent tunes, spoilt ... by the natives from singing them in a minor key ... some so completely metamorphosed that we scarcely know sometimes what they sing’ (Moyle 1967:23). There were also original hymns composed soon after the missionaries arrived which McLean, says Shumway, described as music of ‘two to four part harmony’ with ‘some doubling at the octave ... full of parallel movement ... with a similar harmonic structure to *lakalaka* [dance], and it would seem that these hymns were the precursor to the *hiva usu*’ (McLean 1999:144).³⁷ Talia suggestion that early Tongan church music ‘included many traditional Tongan elements’ such as ‘chant like harmonies based on a minimal number of notes, with the lower note serving as drone’ and containing ‘frequent use of minor intervals’(1996:2). She also notes that ‘the *Te Deum* was sung as early as 1839 at the marriage of Salote, the daughter of Taufa’ahau to Tu’i Pelehake.³⁸

Unfortunately the missionary Cargill, a brilliant linguist, was not a musician and his description of the singing in a Tongan service in 1830 sheds little light on the musical style: ‘In the singing the people seemed to unite with one voice. And although there was a roughness in the sound, yet I fancied every tone was an echo of vibration in their heart’ (Schütz 1977:26). Cargill must have been more impressed with Tongan singing than Fijian, because his dairies are strangely quiet on the subject.

By the time the six Tongan teachers and lay preachers arrived in Fiji in 1838 to help the missionaries, their own liturgy consisted of *hiva usu* hymns, chanting the *Te Deum* and other prayers of the Church, and some English hymns of the missionaries (with the addition of a minor third). It is not clear from the literature whether they taught Fijians any of these hymns and what, if any, relationship the music of their prayers bore to the music of Fijian prayers – the *Te Deum*, Apostles’ Creed, Lord’s Prayer and the Confession. Although writing from a remote mission station in 1845, Joeli Bulu makes it clear that Fijian chanting was already a large part of Christian worship: ‘We had a regular service here, consisting of singing, prayer, chanting, chanting the

³⁷ I find this a curious analogy because the music of the *lakalaka* is described as in ‘four to five part harmony, divided often into antiphonal groups’ (McLean 1999:145).

³⁸ Cross and Cargill came to Fiji through Taufa’ahu’s influence with his cousin Tui Nayau of Lau.

confession and Lord's Prayer, a lesson and chanting the catechism' (in Tippet 1980:12).

All descriptions of Fijian prayers point to the appropriation of Fijian music for the liturgy, as the work of the Rev. John Hunt would suggest for he:

Translated the Te Deum, the Apostles' Creed and the litany from John Wesley's Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer, and all of these were sung to sonorous Fijian chants. Hunt, on the 12 September 1845, declared that "no music is equal to the sound of so many Fijian voices, chanting with evident sincerity the Apostles' Creed ... Hunt and Lyth adopted the policy of using Fijian chants, with their natural rhythmic flow, for Wesleyan hymns (Wood 1978:84).

Tippet concurs with Wood's assessment of the influence of missionaries Hunt and Lyth on the music of the early Fijian Church. Hunt was a musician and his interest in Fijian *meke* reflects the fact that he and Dr Lyth stationed in Somosomo attempted to set their first collection of hymns to *meke* music (Tippet 1947:110).³⁹ It is not clear how these hymns were arranged: what music was used, how the text was composed and fitted to the music, or the number and arrangement of vocal parts.

Vitally important was the apparent willingness of the missionaries to accept indigenous music into church liturgy. Missionary wives too played their part in encouraging Fijian women to 'chant' Biblical passages, narratives and psalms' (Tippet 1947-67:205-6).

Missionary accounts did not often discuss compositional style but an entry in Hazlewood's diary (1848) mentions the antiphonal chanting by the whole community of a shortened Conference Catechism – the *Taro Lekaleka* – prepared by Hunt (in Calvert 1985:83).⁴⁰ And again in a description of a church service Calvert comments on the singing:

³⁹ There is no musical description of these 'hymns' and only one hymn text of Lyth's in the vernacular – Hymn 146 - can be found in the current Fijian Hymn Book. None of Hunt's survived.

⁴⁰ *Lekaleka* means small and *taro* means to ask the question. It is interesting to note how little mention is made of the music sung in the services, especially by Hazlewood who with Hunt later wrote hymn text in Bauan.

One very interesting feature in the public worship was the singing. The people learned to sing some of the hymns, which had been prepared for them, to simple English tunes. But the most striking effect was produced by their chanting of the Confession and the *Te Deum* to one of their own wild strains. One person would chant the first sentence in a subdued tone, followed by another, who took the next octave higher, and then the whole congregation joined in with the third clause in unison; and so in regular order through the entire composition (1985:257).

For the very first time in missionary records here is a sufficiently clear description of the musical arrangement of Fijian liturgical ‘chanting’. The general pattern follows certain *meke* styles, with the opening statement by the *laga* followed by the *tagica* and the *druku* completing the phrase, patterning similar to the *vucu meke* discussed earlier.

Erskine described an English service. These services took place in the early days of the mission for the missionaries and other Europeans and Christians living in or near the mission compound. All worship in villages was conducted in the vernacular. He also noted that chanting parts of the church service in their own tradition made the ‘repetition of prayers easy and agreeable to Christians’ as well as attracting others curious about the music (ibid:200). However, not all indigenous singing was so agreeable to the European ears, as Mary Wallis in 1850 complained: ‘I cannot become habituated to listen with pleasure to the singing where the tune is snapped off at the end of every two lines. It destroys all the harmony of the music ...’ (1983:372). The abrupt endings at the end of the musical phrase are a perfect description of some *meke* and indigenous liturgical compositional style.

Indigenous and indigenised Christian liturgy - ‘*their own wild strains*’⁴¹

They came in their usual way [to give to a collection] by chanting portions of the scripture (Baker 1862:59).

Thomas Baker’s brief diary entry in 1862 makes it clear from the context that he was referring to a congregational participation of *polotu*, the singing of an indigenised Christian *meke* from Lau. It is also clear from the literature that the music of the *meke*

⁴¹ Calvert 1985:257.

was appropriated for worship by the early pastors to sing Methodist prayers, the Te Deum, Confession, Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, from the inception of the mission. As a natural progression then, Fijian Christians followed with their own *meke* compositions including indigenous prosody of Bible passages from the New and later Old Testament; lessons in the form of sermons; the catechism and Church events of historical interest. All these, apart from the catechism which was already part of liturgy, were gradually introduced into the worship. Within the text was sound Methodist theology and within the music was an oral tradition pre-dating Western Methodist hymnody.

These indigenous liturgical compositions – *same*, *polotu* and *taro* (the twelve chapters of the Methodist catechism) – were either an outgrowth of indigenous *meke* or an indigenisation of another form. The actual method of composition while not following strict village tradition was in every other respect completely indigenous or indigenised in form and style. Christians appropriated the music of the *meke ni yagona*, *meke lēlē* and *meke ni vucu* adding their own Christian prosody. Distinct in their pairings, *same* and *polotu* have Fijian poetic text but different musical structure while *taro* and *same* have similar musical structures but different textural composition and subject. All are sung in Bauan with some dialect words and form the indigenous liturgy of the Methodist church.⁴²

Other musical genre

This examination of the Fijian musical canon has focused on the poetry and music of the *meke* but there are other musical genres of Fijian compositions, most of which are influenced by Western music, including Methodist hymns. There are also popular songs of the twentieth century known as *sere ni cumu*, which are composed to an original tune or 'borrowed' from a Western tune and indigenised. This style of composition dates from around the 1920s and can probably be attributed to the Fijians returning from serving overseas in World War 1. Certainly following World War 11 there was a proliferation of compositions in this style.

⁴² A full discussion and examination of this indigenous liturgy follows in Chapter 6.

Summary

Meke in all forms was central to Fijian identity for here, encapsulated within the music and poetry of the text, were the elements of *kilaka vaka-Viti* – understanding or knowledge of oneself in relation to past and present relationships. *Meke* is at the heart of Fijian culture. Pre-dating Christian contact, this oral tradition of sung poetry reinforced the social order defining Fijian society: through ceremony, the archaic lexis of ancient texts, musical style, method of composition and textual communication. In all its complexity *meke* was a strong cultural presence at the time of missionary contact. The style of music and rich poetic lexis of textual compositional were ideal vehicles for Christian liturgy and evangelisation.

From the beginnings of the Methodist mission in Fiji some of this music was used to sing the prayers of Methodist worship and form the first church liturgy. Fijian Christians in a natural progression for liturgy and evangelisation composed their own texts, based on Methodist theological principles, fitted to the music of their *meke*. This indigenous form in a Christian setting communicated directly with Fijians within their own unique cultural context.

Chapter 6

Examination and history of indigenous and indigenised church liturgy

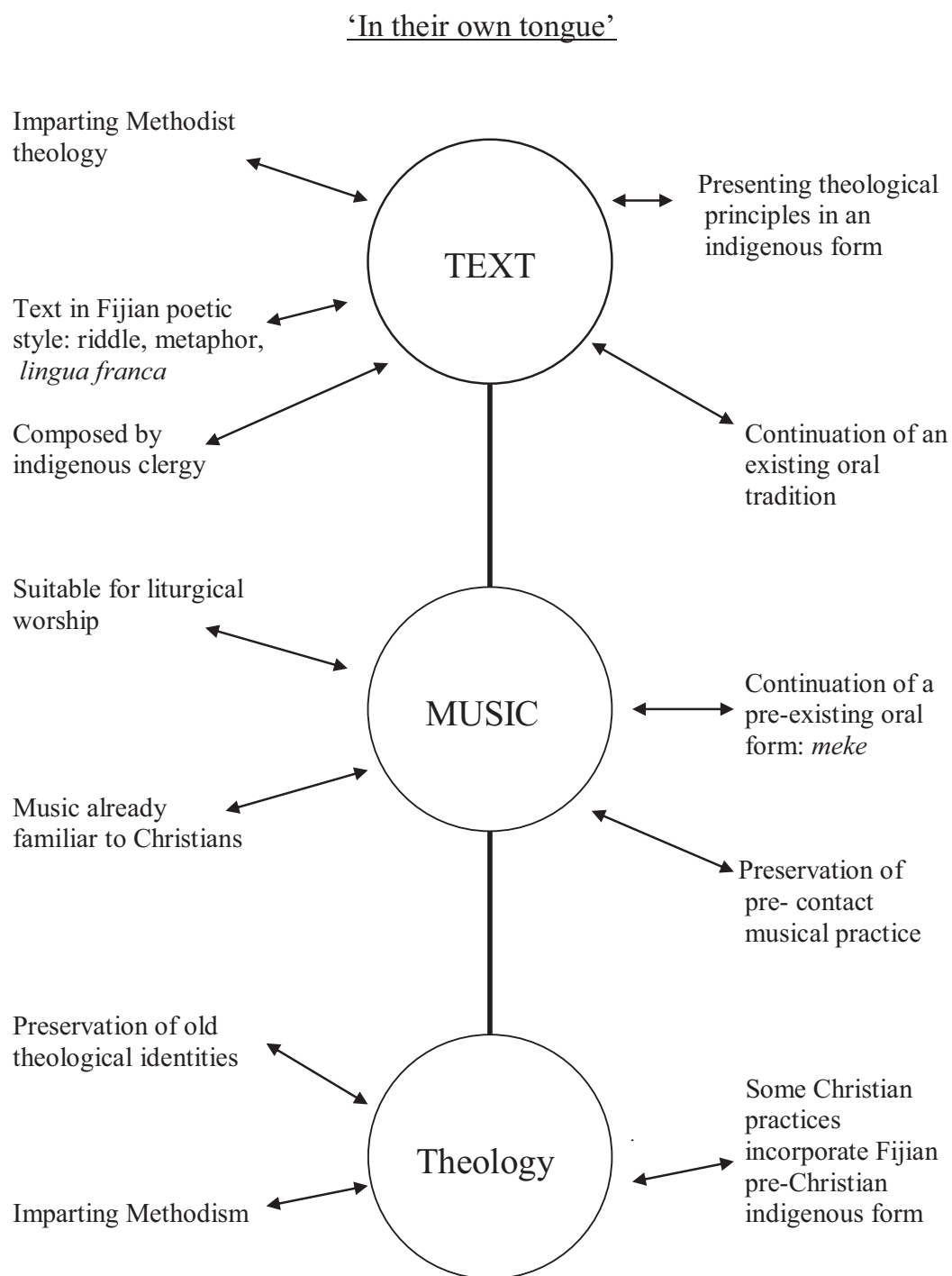
Introduction

Fiji at the time of contact was a federation of discrete hierarchical societies ruled by hereditary chiefs revered both as man and god. The introduction of Christianity to Fiji meant in part an acceptance of 19th century Western culture which included a new spirituality based on a single God, a different moral code, a written language, literacy, and a *lingua franca*. This society lay outside the experience of the 19th century evangelists whose missionary success depended on their ability to recognise and work within the *turaga bale*, the complex social system underpinning Fijian society, thus creating an indigenous Christian organization culturally acceptable that could co-exist with Fijian spirituality.

From the beginning of Christian contact, Fijian Christians had texts of religious tracts, mainly Methodist prayers and the catechism, in the principal dialects of eastern Fiji, the centre of political power at the time of contact. Singing the prayers, some arranged in antiphonal style, to the music of their *meke*, gave Fijian Christians the beginnings of an indigenous liturgy relating directly to their own cultural practice. Following this early liturgy Fijian Christians began to compose their own liturgical forms with indigenous poetic text on Christian theological principles, fitted to their indigenous music. These compositions are known as *taro*, *same* and *polotu*. It is notable that only Methodist Christians used indigenous music and text for their liturgy: all other Christian denominations in Fiji sang Western hymns.

This chapter will examine the indigenous and indigenised liturgy that followed the initial prayers, so as to comprehensively illustrate the effectiveness of utilising indigenous forms for the successful transmission of complex theological principles.

Fig. 9: Relevance of an indigenous liturgy to the congregation



Beginning of indigenous and indigenised liturgy

From the outset of missionary activity, Fijian Christians were closely involved with the missionaries in biblical translations, school teaching, evangelisation and the administration of the mission stations. Calvert (1985:181-182) recounts an incident in Rewa in the early 1850s highlighting the depth of Fijian influence in the Christianisation of Fiji:

The King was evidently glad to see him [Native Teacher], and had now learned to value the presence and teaching of the Missionary.... He said he had been to the Romish Service [Roman Catholic], and had learned nothing, as they did not worship in a language he understood; but from the Teacher, though only a native of Fiji, he received instruction, and he understood the language in which the service was conducted.

There are several points of importance here. The King mentioned was Ratu Ngara, a powerful Rewan Chief and nominal Christian, who at the time (seventeen years after first Christian contact) was being courted by Roman Catholic priests.¹ His obvious preference for the Methodist missionaries however indicates the strength of their influence and underlines the importance of the Fijian Teacher from whom he was receiving instruction. The mention of the teacher as ‘only a native of Fiji’ would indicate that he was not of chiefly birth, yet in his capacity of Teacher he was able to instruct the chief *vaka viti* (in the Fijian manner), which in any other context would have been impossible given the relationship between chief and commoner. Finally, the fact that instruction and worship were conducted in the vernacular meant the chief was able to have difficult religious concepts explained through the semiotics of his own language, something that could only be imparted by a native speaker. Herein lies the essence of the successful Methodist conversion of Fiji.

¹ The Protestant churches had a comity arrangement in the southern Pacific to ‘share’ the island countries to avoid confusion, which did not extend to other Christian faiths, notably the Roman Catholics. Two French speaking Roman Catholic priests of the Marist order were the first to come to Fiji in 1844, nine years after the Methodist church was established, but did not, like the Methodists, follow Fijian custom in the introduction of Catholicism or utilise the vernacular either for instruction or worship, including the Mass. Moreover, the priests were unmarried, unlike Protestant missionaries who came with their families. For a fuller discussion see Garrett 1985:286-288.

The introduction of a *lingua franca* was in the first instance insufficient for complete communication as there were many communities who either did not understand Bauan or did not understand it sufficiently for the intimate communication needed to convey complicated theological concepts. Choosing one dialect for Biblical translation speeded up the availability of Biblical text for dissemination but was not the real communicator until the dialect was universally understood. In the meantime indigenous Christians conveyed their message in the local dialect for evangelisation until Bauan was understood well enough for preaching and singing, and in this way the *lingua franca* was established.

A very personal part of communication was the music, the indigenous liturgy of the early church in which Christians were directly connected to their music and poetic text, the *meke*. The presentation of the ‘new’ theology in familiar format meant a smooth transition from pre-contact to Christian worship. Although the names changed, the music and composition of the Christian text fitted according to cultural practice and continued the Fijian oral culture present at the time of missionary contact. Singing this music, with its Christian theological message in the style of their *meke*, was to Fijians a natural extension of their musical practice, for within their secular *meke*: narratives, ceremonies and lamentations in particular, was an established style accommodating the addition of theological text. Missionary John Hunt composed ‘lyrical text’ to be fitted to *meke* music because he and David Hazlewood (a missionary linguist) saw the tangible proof in Fijian society of the power and connection of this narrative style to both the temporal and the spiritual world.² From the time of the introduction of Christianity, Fijians had an inclusive worship in the vernacular involving the whole congregation in singing, praying and preaching:

The liturgy and rituals for morning and evening worship, the formal statements – Ten Commandments, the Psalms, the Creed, the Prayers, the Catechism [all were] memorised and used for corporate worship in antiphonal response as the people had used their pagan chant.... Thus from the chanted catechism before the worship service to the benediction the congregation was involved ... (Tippett 1980:11)

² Tippett notes that Hazlewood although a gifted linguist had difficulty in putting ‘an English iambic hymn into the trochaic Fijian rhythm’ (1980:28).

Although not specifically documented, it must be remembered that missionary wives were also influential in Church singing. Many of them were musical including Mrs Hannah Hunt who is recorded as having a ‘sweet voice’ (Wallis 1983:29-30). Many of these wives were also fluent in Fijian dialects and helped in the Biblical translations.

The natural extension of sung liturgy and the written text of the Methodist prayers complemented and adding to established parts of the *So Kalou* (worship) including the gospel. The compositions of the early Christians, known as *same* and *polotu*, are texts composed in Fijian poetic form fitted to indigenous or indigenised music for singing before the gospel in worship, often complementing and reinforcing the subject of the reading.³ However, the subjects were not confined solely to Biblical passages, for like their *vucu meke* they covered a wide range of topics. Here was a natural opportunity to include sermons and lessons with subjects such as: Biblical interpretations (not just passages of Biblical text); a reinforcing of theological principles; reminders of the moral code (for backsliders); and important records of historical events concerning the Church. The Lauans also included their own hymnal compositions for singing in all forms of their worship.⁴ Singing these religious *meke* was an excellent tool for both evangelising and education. The music and text were a natural extension of an existing oral communication and adopting it for the church put the complexities of Christian theology into context utilising metaphor, simile and riddle, already established forms.

The liturgy

The origins of *same* and *polotu* are found in the music and textual style of Fijian secular music, but it is not possible to precisely date the inception of these liturgical compositions without detailed analysis of music and text, in this respect there is not

³ The *polotu* in this discussion refers to original compositions of both text and music, not other Lauan Christian compositions also known by the generic name *polotu*. The liturgical music of the Lauan congregations will be discussed at length in this chapter.

⁴ Although Bauan was the *lingua franca*, Calvert (1895:224) noted that the Lauans decided to keep their hymns in their own language – the language of the original translations. However those hymns are now sung in Bauan to the text of the Fijian Hymn Book and fitted to original tunes of Lauan Christians.

enough information from early missionaries (with the exception of Williams 1982:117 and Waterhouse 1997:303-314) or other accounts of this music. The descriptions are general rather than analytical and do not specify the dialect in which this indigenous or indigenised liturgical music is sung. The missionary reference to the liturgy of prayers, chanted Biblical text and hymns, is unclear as in this letter from missionary John Malvern to the General Secretary of the Wesleyan Missions in 1856 describing *vakamisioneri* (an annual contribution to the church) in Bua, Vanualevu:

In the afternoon we made the collection. About one thousand Christians were present. They were highly pleased, and very cheerfully contributed as they could to the cause of God ... each town, arrayed in their best, marched slowly and stately towards it [the collecting plate], chanting a Psalm, or portion of God's word, or a hymn of their Teachers composing (Calvert 1985:394).

The establishment of Bauan as the *lingua franca* might be used as a benchmark for dating these compositions. However, there is more convincing evidence for placing the evolution of this music earlier. Fijians were used to singing *meke* in their own vernacular and time was needed for Bauan to be understood sufficiently to be a useful tool for imparting Christian principles. Lauans already had their own liturgy, introduced by Western and Tongan missionaries. More importantly, the establishment of missionary activity in the centre of political power in Rewa and Bau required the church to introduce a different liturgical style, from the introduced Western and Tongan style of Lau. The infant church had the text of prayers, a portion of the catechism and hymns, in the Methodist tradition from the beginning, but the harmonic structure of the missionary and Tongan hymns with perhaps the exception of psalms was musically different from Fijian two to five part polyphony with its close intervallic relationships. There was a need then for *meke* polyphony to replace Western harmony. Fijians at the time of missionary contact had limited communication with Westerners and their music, and found these harmonies difficult to sing (see Cumming 1882:86 and Erskine 1987:223). The Christian converts needing an indigenous liturgy, used the polyphonic music of their *meke* for the existing texts which lead in time to their own compositions – an assimilation of their pre-contact temple worship (Waterhouse 1997:289).

The school curriculum included singing lessons, although there is no written record of what was precisely taught. Hazelwood for instance simply mentions meeting with the ‘Teachers’ and ‘Local Preachers’ on Monday and Thursday evenings to ‘teach singing’ (in Calvert 1985:413). There is evidence of lessons being conducted by indigenous teachers, using *meke* – probably their *vucu* in style, as a teaching tool.⁵ Mission schools were encouraged, said Cumming, to select new subjects replacing less desirable texts of some older *meke* (1882:88). Both she and Cooper witnessed a school *meke* and were impressed with their form and style. Cooper records that:

Then came a dance called the *meke*. They [the children] retired a little, divided into bands, and then came forward in a sort of dance, turning first to one side and then the other, moving in the most perfect time, and chanting as they came. All their movements were graceful, and the way in which the tune, if one can so call it, was first of all sung by those in the front, then taken up, a third lower, by those behind, was very effective. When they had come close enough, on a signal they all sat down and began a geography lesson. The teacher called out the name of the country... and one of the children in a lower minor key began to chant.... Then a third higher some other words ... and then, with a swaying motion of their bodies and a rhythmical clapping of hands, sometimes beating the ground, sometimes pointing on one side, sometimes the other, and sometimes joining hands overhead, they all joined in a chant descriptive of the extant, government, etc. (1888:115).

The text of these *mekes* included secular subjects as well as religious themes, mostly long Biblical passages memorised and sung. It would seem a natural progression for Christian composers to extend the textual themes to include Methodist theology and, in the tradition of their narratives, significant church history.

Calvert, quoting Williams’s description of the building of the chapel at Tiliva, Vanualevu, in 1849, sheds some light on the natural crossover between the secular and sacred:

... I heard the builders [of the new Chapel] cheer each other by chanting such passages as the following: ‘I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.’

⁵ The missionary Heighway collected the texts of some of these school *meke* on such subjects as physiology, mathematics and communication, as well as religious themes in the style of *same* compositions. Some of these texts are in the Tippett Collection in St Mark’s Library, Canberra.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built!’ To this another party would respond, ‘The Lord, hath chosen Zion; he hath it for His habitation.’ Another favourite chant was, 1 Kings viii:28-30. And, with suitable feeling, a number would join in the petitions ... (1985:373-374).

Unfortunately Williams does not include the Fijian translation. It would seem though from his description that singing religious text to the music of their *meke* was to Fijians a natural progression. The compositional form of the *meke* described above is typical of a *vakavunigasau* (secular antiphonal work *meke*) commandeered here by accompanying Biblical text. Note the antiphonal dialogue and the use of different Biblical text. The singers drew the passages from several sources including:

Psalms 122:1 ‘I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord’

1 Kings 8:27 ‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built!’

Psalms 132:13 ‘The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation’

Calvert also noted another favourite passage from the Book of Kings recording King Solomon praying at the dedication of the Temple he had built:

1 Kings 8:28 Yet have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before Thee this day;

1 Kings 8:29 That Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place whereof Thou hast said: My name shall be there; to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place.

1 Kings 8:30 And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place; yea, hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place; and when Thou hearest, forgive.

The singers took different sources for the passages for their text, both in the opening statement and in the reply, but there was no compromise to the continuity of the theme. Fijians used this antiphonal style in their secular *meke* as well as spiritual supplications to their gods, and it was also already in use in the singing of the *taro* (catechism). Interestingly, while Calvert was impressed enough to write about this music in some detail, he does not seem to have found the appropriation of religious text for a working party at odds with his religious sensitivities, perhaps because he felt there was Biblical precedent here for what the Fijians were doing.

It would seem then that as Christianity was introduced to Fiji, the need for an indigenous liturgy in their own musical and textual tradition, like instruction in the vernacular, inspired Christians to write their own liturgy utilising tools already part of a pre-Christian practice. Biblical references also show how closely the missionaries in their Biblical translations kept musical references to Fijian musical canon as following examples will show.

Biblical translations of *meke* - song, singing and dance.

All references in the Fijian Bible to song, singing, lament and dance are termed *meke*, or derivations of *meke* such as *meketaka*, *veislausau*, *vakavinavinaka*, *dau ni vucu*, *lālālē* or occasionally *sere*. *Meketaka* means to make a *meke*; *veislausau* is an antiphonal responsive *meke*, *dau ni vucu* although strictly a composer of *meke*, in this instance is the name used for musicians; *lālālē* is a lament and *sere* means a song or a hymn. It is obvious then that Fijians clearly understood that *meke* meant reference to music with text, and it also must be remembered that while the translations were the responsibility of the missionaries, they were carried out under the guidance of Fijian interpreters. As the missionary Watsford testified:

I cannot conclude the record of my life and work in Viwa without referring more fully to two with whom I was closely associated in Mission work there. One was the Fijian whom I have spoken of as my teacher, and as taking part in the great revival. Noah was in many respects one of the most remarkable men of my time. He knew his own language better than any other native, and was invaluable in the work of translation. He assisted Mr Hunt

and others in translating the New Testament, and for that precious work the Mission owes as much to him as to anyone except Mr Hunt (1900:59).

The following ten examples are selected passages to illustrate different uses of *meke*. In the examples the Fijian text is given first and English translation follows. The Fijian Bible was a direct translation from the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament rather than the King James Version of the Church of England Bible. The selected passages are as follows: ⁶

Passage 1

Exodus 15:21

<i>A sa veislausau meke kei ira na tagane ki Miriama;</i>	And Miriam sang unto them:
<i>Dou meke vei Jiova,</i>	Sing ye to the Lord
<i>ni sa talei na nona gumatua;</i>	for he is highly exalted;
<i>Na ose kei koya sa vodoka</i>	the horse and his rider
<i>sa biuta ko koya ki na wasawasa</i>	hath he thrown into the sea.

The two mentions of *meke* need literal translating. *Veislausau* is an antiphonal responsive *meke*: here Miriam was responding to the successful parting of the Red Sea, by dancing and singing with the Israelite women. She then called for a *meke* to thank God for saving her people.

Passage 2.

1 Samuel 29:5

<i>Sa segai buka Tevita oqo,</i>	Is not this David
<i>o koya era sa veislausau</i>	of whom they sang one
<i>kina ni sa ia na meke ka kaya:</i>	to another in dances saying:

The antiphonal *meke veislausau* is mentioned in connection with the song texts of dances performed and sung about David.

⁶ It must be noted that due to Fijian sentence construction, the text and English translations do not exactly correspond. The highlighted text draws attention to the *meke* references.

Passage 3.

2 Samuel 22

*A meke ni vakavinavinaka,
vua na Kalou
ni sa vakabulai Tevita ko koya
mai na nona meca kecega;*

And David spoke unto the LORD
the words of this song in the day
that the LORD delivered him
out of the hand of all his enemies;

Meke ni vakavinavinaka is a thanksgiving *meke*, in this case David giving thanks to God for saving him from his enemies. *Na Vakavinavinaka* is also the Fijian name given to the Te Deum, the ancient Christian hymn of thanksgiving.

Passage 4.

2 Samuel 1:17

A sa lēlēvaka Saula,

And David lamented with this
lamentation

kei Jonacani na luvena ko Tevita ena lēlē ogo: over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

Lēlēvaka means to compose or sing a lamentation about someone. In this example the lamentation is for Saul, and Jonathan.

Passage 5.

Psalms 95:1

*Tou mai sere vei Jiova;
Tou mai ia na meke,
vua na uluvatu ni noda bula.*

Oh come, let us sing unto the LORD:
let us make a joyful noise
to the Rock of our salvation. ⁷

It is interesting that the word *sere* is used as well as *meke*. *Sere* in this context means a song or a hymn about Jehovah and when used in conjunction with *meke* means to perform a *meke* as a joyful celebration to the *uluvatu* (rock) of *ni noda bula* (our salvation).

⁷ This psalm is sung as Venite Exultemus Domino as part of the Methodist *Ancient Hymns and Canticles*, from the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662.

Passage 6.

Jeremiah 7:29

<i>Kotiva na drau ni ulumu,</i>	Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and
<i>ko iko Jerusalemi, ka biuta tani,</i>	cast it away, take up a lamentation on
<i>ka ia na tagi ena veiyasana cecere;</i>	high places; for the LORD hath rejected
<i>ni sa biuta ko Jiova ka vakalaiva na...</i>	and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

This is a *lēlē*. *Tagi* means to weep or lament and *biuta* means abandon so *ka biuta tani* means weep over rejection or abandonment.

Passage 7.

Ephesians 5:19

<i>Ka dou veivosaki vakai kemudou</i>	Speaking to yourselves in psalms
<i>e na same kei na sere kei na meke vakayalo,</i>	and hymns and spiritual songs
<i>ka dou seretaka na sere e laga vinaka</i>	singing and making melody
<i>e na yalomudou vua na Turaga.</i>	in your heart to the Lord.

Same in this context means the psalms; *na sere* is hymns or songs of praise; *na meke vakayalo* is a *vucu* of the spirit or soul and *dou seretaka na sere e laga vinaka e yalomudou* is to begin well (*laga vinaka*) to compose a song as an expression of thanks to the Lord.

Passage 8.

Revelation 14:3

<i>A ra sa meketaka na meke</i>	And they sang as it were a new song
<i>vou e na mata ni tikotiko-vakaturaga,</i>	before the throne and before
<i>kei na matadratou na ka bula e ca,</i>	the four beasts, and the elders:
<i>kei na matadra na qase:</i>	and no man could learn that song
<i>a sa sega e dua sa kila rawa na meke,</i>	but the hundred and forty and
<i>ko ya o ira ga na le dua na drau</i>	four thousand,
<i>ka vasagavula ka va na udolu,</i>	which were redeemed from the earth.
<i>era sa vakabulai tu mai vuravura.</i>	

Meketaka na meke in this example is a new *meke* composed to be sung exclusively by the faithful, the chosen few. Fijians were familiar with ‘ownership’ of a *meke*, and Christians in this metaphorical context understood their ‘exclusive’ right to redemption, by virtue of their conversion.

Passage 9.

Revelations 15:3

<i>A ra sa meketaka na meke i Moses</i>	And they sang the song of Moses
<i>e nai talatala ni Kalou, kei na meke</i>	the servant of God, and the
<i>ni Lami, ka kaya</i>	song of the Lamb,
<i>A ka levu ka veivakurabuitaki na nomuni,</i>	saying great and marvellous are
<i>cakacaka na Turagana Kalou Kaukauwa;</i>	thy works, Lord God Almighty;

As mentioned in the text above, the *meke* referred too is an acclamation, sung in the style of *vucu*. Note also the mention of *talatala* (as the servant of God) the indigenous minister of the Fijian Methodist Church.

Passage 10.

Revelations 18:22

<i>Ia ena sega sara ni rogoci tale</i>	And the voice of
<i>e tikimu na domona sa dauqiri api,</i>	harpers, and musicians
<i>kei na dau-ni-vucu,</i>	and of pipers and trumpeters,
<i>kei na dauuvu bitu-ni-vakatagi kei na davui;</i>	shall be heard no more at all in thee:

The translation of harpers is a straight indigenisation of the word because there is no Fijian equivalent instrument for harp, but the translation of musicians, pipers and trumpeters is interesting. Musicians are interpreted as *dau-ni-vucu*, pipers are translated as *dauuvu* (specialist performers or players) of the *bitu-ni-vakatagi* (Fijian nose flute) and trumpeters as players or performers of the Fijian *davui* (conch or triton shell). These instruments as previously mentioned, together with the *lali* (slit drum of varying sizes) and *derua* (bamboo stamping tubes of varying sizes), are the canon of Fijian musical instrumentation (Figs. 10-13).



Fig.10: *Bitu ni vakatagi* Fijian nose flute. Photograph H.Black



Fig. 11: *Davui* Photograph H. Black



Fig. 12: *Lali* (Fijian slit-drum)
Photo H. Black



Fig. 13: *Derua* (bamboo stamping tubes) and *Cobo* (hand-clapping)
Photo G. Craig

Clearly where possible a Fijian parallel for musical terms and descriptions was used in the Biblical translations, in particular the extensive use of *meke* and *meke* derivations. These include: to make a *meke* (*meketaka*); to sing a *meke* or *sere*, to dance a *meke* (*meke*); to make a celebration (*meke vakavinavinaka*); to sing a particular kind of *meke* – *meke vakayalo* about the spirit or the soul; and *lālē* – a lament. There are examples of the fine distinction between songs: for example, songs associated with *meke* compositional style and songs composed on a serious subject are called *sere* which Westerners would identify as hymns in spirit, with Fijian musical

accompaniment.⁸ In her thesis centred on the village of Naloto in Vitilevu, Lee correctly observed the complexity with which the musical terms for *meke* were known in that particular village (1984:90). However, while Westerners struggled with Fijian terms it is obvious from the Biblical examples that every nuance relating to musical expression (even allowing for the Bauan dialect) was familiar and all analogies to their musical language gave Fijian Christians a personal connection to Biblical dialogue. They understood the subtle references better than the missionaries, bringing the stories into a context with which they could empathise.

History, musical and textural structure of *taro*, *same* and *polotu*

Taro

The word *taro* means to ask a question and, in the liturgy, refers to singing the Methodist catechism. The catechism now printed in the *Ai Vola ni Sere ni Lotu Wesele e Viti* (Fijian Hymn Book) consists of *wase ni e vola* (fourteen chapters) on the theological principles of *Na Kalou* (God), *Na Tamata* (People), *Ko Jisu Karisito* (Jesus Christ), *Na Veivakabulai* (Healing), *Na Yalo Tabu* (Sin), *A Nona Tiko Vakalewetolu na Kalou* (Trinity), *Na Mate kei na Bula sa Bera Mai* (Death and Resurrection), *Na Matanitu ni Kalou* (God's Government), *Na i Vavakoso* (The Universe), *Na Sakaramede* (Sacraments), *Na i Vola Tabu* (the Bible), *Na Lawa* (Love), *Na Siga Tabu* (Sunday) and *Na Vakawati* (Marriage). Each chapter is arranged in *veisau* question and answer format varying in length from seven to fifty-five verses. This format derives from the Book of Common Prayer of 1662.

The sung catechism text is a rich source of Biblical reference and interpretation of complex theological concepts. The catechism was used in the Protestant Methodist Revivalist as an evangelising and educational tool. From the outset of the mission, Fijians had a catechism in dialect. The first translation, a short catechism brought to Fiji by Cargill, was in the Lauan dialect and this printed catechism was used throughout Lau, for Calvert records that a 'supply of copies of the First Catechism'

⁸ The word 'hymn' here is only used as a transliterable example, and should not be confused with later Fijian hymn compositions based on indigenised Western harmony.

was taken to Ono-i-Lau in August 1839 (1985:57). Cross, writing to the secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society on 20 August 1838, reports that he had ‘finished the translations of the psalms into the dialect of Rewa and No 1 and No 2 of the Conference Catechism ... also a small Hymn book’ (MOM 134 (CY Reel 765) No 20:16). As other missions were established in other provinces of Fiji, different translations were required, until the obvious impracticality of such a system made the choosing of a *lingua franca* necessary. It is not clear when the catechism was first sung rather than spoken but clearly every effort was made by indigenous clergy and teachers to provide translations of the catechism for Christian instruction. Within the catechism text are the fundamental tenets of Methodism and singing provided continual reinforcement of those principles. There is no record of musical notation in the early mission to identify conclusively the music accompanying the written text. However, given the difficulty Fijians had with singing Western harmony, it could be reasonably deduced that the missionaries hearing secular Fijian polyphony accepted the use of that musical style for fitting liturgical text. Williams, although not a recognised musician (unlike John Hunt), gives a fair account of Fijian ‘chanting’, describing it as a sort of ‘plaintive chant limited to a few notes’, which ‘resembles the singing in a Jewish synagogue’ (1985:117). This is an interesting observation because, apart from the assigned voicing of the music, the *meke* notation chosen for the *taro* and *same* has similarities with the music of the Methodist psalms sung by the missionaries in the mid-19th century. These similarities included limited melodic range, small number of notes, antiphonal solo and chorus or congregational parts, as well as free form and rhythm all fitting text to music. In the tradition of Methodist psalmody, Fijian converts were well within accepted Methodist musical practice in appropriating their indigenous music for liturgy. They were continuing their own compositions with tacit missionary approval based on suitability for religious practice. So, in every way the music of the catechism was suitable for inclusion in the liturgy, as my examination will show.

Taro liturgical practice

Early records show that like other Methodist prayers the *taro* was originally sung by

the whole congregation at all Church gatherings.⁹ However in most current congregations, although there is no historical precedent for the practice, the singing of the *taro* has mostly become the province of the women of the congregation, in particular the older women who sing it before the Sunday *So Kalou*. The text was originally memorised until printed copies of the catechism were included in the Fijian Methodist Hymn Book, when the congregation was able to both read and understand the Bauan dialect. Even so, only the text was in print. The music was and is still taught orally and, although the *meke* compositional tradition of each congregation is reflected in the *taro*, there are stylistic patterns common to each genre reminiscent of their local *vucu* and *yaqona meke*. The printed text is fitted to the music with added vowels to complete each musical phrase.

Half an hour before the beginning of the Sunday service, the first beating of the *lali* (Fig 12) announces the singing of the *taro* and the women make their way to church.¹⁰ At the completion of *taro* the *lali* is beaten again gathering the whole congregation for the service. Each week the singing of the catechism commences from where the text of the previous week finished. When all fourteen chapters have been completed, the first chapter is begun again. Unlike *same* and *polotu*, the catechism text does not necessarily correspond with the gospel of the day. The vocal parts are the same as for *meke*: the *laga* (leader), *tagica* (second part) singing above and *druku* (chorus) which in the case of *taro* is mostly an extension of the leader's part, with an occasional added bass line doubling the *laga*'s line at the octave, sung by either women or men.¹¹

Leading the singing of the *taro* is a position of prestige among the women of the congregation and one taken seriously. The woman who takes the *laga* part is usually the best exponent of the music – both secular and liturgical – in the village and as such is greatly respected. Needless to say the position is highly regarded and much prized.

⁹ For ease of reference, the word *taro* will be used from here on in reference to the singing of catechism. 'Catechism' will now on refer to the fourteen chapters of the Methodist catechism in the Fijian Hymn Book (*Ai Vola ni Sere ni Lotu Wesele e Viti*).

¹⁰ The *lali* beat has already been discussed on Chapter 4:87-88

¹¹ For ease of reference all the vocal parts will be referred to by their Fijian names.



Fig.14: Singing the *taro* before Sunday worship. Matacawalevu, Yawasa 2001
Photograph: H. Black

Sitting in a circle, reminiscent of their secular *meke*, the *laga* begins each verse of the *taro* with spoken question. If the answer is longer than a single sentence then a *tiki ni sere* – nowadays shortened to *tikina* (answer), is sung in reply. All number references in the chapters are sung in full, although not printed as such in the hymnbook. An example of this practice is the answer in *Taro* 7:1 in which the printed ‘*Iperiu* 9:27 is sung by the women of Nakokovou as ‘*Iperiu sa ciwa tikina e ruasagavulu ka vitu*’ (9:27).¹² The inclusion of Western numbers rather than the appropriate indigenous word must date the text to at least 1843 when the first hymnbook was printed and one assumes that Western numbering (like the Bauan text) was already known from school lessons. In a few congregations all punctuation is also sung. This is a curious practice because the words for Western punctuation have been indigenised. These include: *koma* (coma), *koloni* (colon), yet all of these are sung as they appear in the text as well as any inclusion of numbers. *Taro* 2:8 sung in Delaitokatoka is an example of this practise. ‘*Segai sara. Eda sa cala ka lako sese, koi keda kecega:*’ is written, but sung as: ‘*Segai sara cegu e na cegu* (stop at the full stop) *Ena sa cala ka lako sese cegu e na koma* (stop at the comma) *koi keda kecega cegu e na koloni* (stop

¹² As previously mentioned the highlighted text draws attention to the indigenous text under discussion.

at the colon)'.¹³ The singing of the punctuation is a practice from the past, but few congregations still include it in the singing of their *taro*. Although it is not possible to say where or why it came about, it is probable that missionary wives responsible for teaching the women included punctuation in their singing, taking advantage of the opportunity for a punctuation lesson from the printed text. This practice would also have been particularly useful to evangelising Christians in the early days of the mission as schools become established.

In the examination of the following *Taro* 7:1 of Nakorovou and *Taro* 2:8 of Delaitokatoka, it will be noted that both *taro* share musical characteristics with *same*. Each compositional style is reminiscent of particular secular *meke*, as has been discussed, including: *meke ni yaqona* and *meke ni vucu* from which they are thought to have originated. Certainly the musical patterning of the liturgical music is reminiscent of early Fijian *meke* including: a limited range, diatonic in scale, mostly stepwise in movement, contrapuntal in musical style and sung by two leaders, *laga*, *tagica* with a chorus *druku* (Rabukawaqa 1971:28-39, Thompson 1967:14-21, Lee 1984:99, Williams 1982:117, Raven-Hart 1956:136-137, Goldsworthy 1995:23).¹⁴

These over-arching musical patterns conform to a general template in *taro* and *same* compositions, although the Christian text is composed differently. *Same* text is composed in Fijian poetic form universally understood and without regional affiliation. If the composer of the text is not the composer of the music the text is given to the person considered the best exponent of *meke* composition in the village who then fits it to his/her musical template and teaches it to the singers. The same method also applies to teaching the printed text of the *taro*.

Binding the two *taro* and four *same* to be examined are the following Fijian shared polyphony elements common to all:

- small stepwise movements, ascending and descending of notes in all parts
- small intervallic movement

¹³ Both the *taro* of Nakaorvou and Delaitokatoka are examined in this chapter.

¹⁴ I have included only two examples of *taro* for space, but have in fact transcribed many more and in each, similar patterns appear.

- the limited number of notes on a diatonic scale
- added vowels
- long phrases sung on an ostinato in all parts
- steady tempo
- strophic structure
- trailing ending in unison on the last notes
- an overall seamless progression of tempo and rhythm through the whole phrase in spite of the inner phrases and solo motifs, known as *meke tausara*, a continual performance
- position of the tonal centre and the melody in the middle line of the chordal cluster

What distinguishes *taro* and *same* is the general *meke* musical template as follows:

- introduction either by the *laga* and *tagica* or full *druku*
- solo motif sung by *laga* and *tagica* at the end of a phrase
- discernable but not strictly binding musical framework, that is both different from but similar to each particular piece. This involves placement of the intervals; thirds, seconds and unisons in musical patterning established after the introduction and loosely followed throughout the piece
- repetitive patterning of note sequences throughout each phrase or series of phrases
- double note values on the long vowels *sa*, *ca* and *ka* regardless of position in the text

Musical structure of *Taro* 7:1 Nakorovou village, Vitilevu (CD Track 4)

The question is asked:

1. *Cavuta e dua na
tiki ni i Vola Tabu sa tukuni
vata kina na mate kei na siga
ni lewa mai muri*

Mention a Biblical text that tells about death and the day of judgement.

the following answer is sung:

*Iperiu 9:27: Sa lesi me
ra mate vakadua ko ira na tamata
ka me qai muri na veilewai.*

Hebrews 9:27: Everyone must die
once and after that be judged by God.

The harmonic template in this *taro* is distinguished by a repetitive pattern of seconds and unisons and while not evenly divided the occurrences are regular enough to be recognised as two distinct patterns and phrases. These patterns are A, B, A₁, A, B, A₁, B, A (Example 1).¹⁵

Example 1

TARO 7:1

Tonal center C
♩ = 144

Nakorovou

Question
1. Cavuta e dua na
tiki ni i Vola Tabu sa tukuni
vata kina na mate kei na siga
ni lewa mai muri?

The first pattern (A) occurs after the entrance of the chorus (Example 2).

Example 2

A

A₁

The pattern comprises five consecutive chords, D and E resolving to unison D or a variation of it (Example 2) in a pattern formed in the *tagica* line (the *laga* for the most

¹⁵ The arrangement of note stems in the following transcriptions is as follows: *laga* – down, *tagica* – up and *druku* – up. All of the transcriptions are kept in the opening pitch, because loss of pitch (marked with a P ↓) during the singing is impractical to notate.

part staying on D). This is the predominant pattern of the *taro*. While the movement to the unison is not text related, as the notes fall on vowels without regard to the position of the syllables in the word, the minims on *sa* and *ka* are text related. There is no tonic stress relationship between vocal text and music, rather the words are fitted into an existing musical framework. In this *taro*, with the exception of the long vowels *sa* and *ka* which are sung on notes of longer value, all other vowels have notes of equal value regardless of the number of vowels in a word, as in the example of the singing of the number twenty (*ruasagavulu*) which has six vowels and six assigned notes. The placing of minims or long notes on the word *sa* in particular are found in all compositions as are *ka* and *ca* and are a common Fijian *meke* compositional practice. However the practice does not usually apply if the syllables *sa*, *ka* or *ca* occur within a word, as in *ruasagavulu* (A and B) *vakadua* (B). Although there is no clear explanation for the use of double note value on these three words, there may be a case for notes of double value on *sa* and *ka* when they are used in the text at the beginning or in part of the sentence to add emphasis to what follows, in which case the vowels are lengthened. Capell (1991:178) for instance notes that *sa* ‘a verbal particle, independent of tense’ serves to emphasise other particles and may be lengthened to add ‘weight’ to a word, as is the case in the *taro* (Example 3).

Example 3

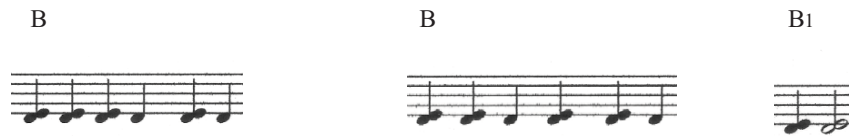
I - pe - ri - u - a sa ci - wa ti - ki - na e ru - a - sa - ga - vu - lu ka vi - tu Sa

va - ka - du - a ko i - ra na ta - ma - ta ka

The first *sa* emphasises the numerical answer to the Biblical reference question “Hebrews - 9:27 ” and the second *sa* begins the sentence that contains the answer to the question “Everyone must die once”. *Ka* in this context emphasises the words that follow regarding God’s final judgement “and after that be judged by God”. If any of these syllables occur within a word though they are not accorded notes of double value.

The second pattern B is a variation of A with shorter resolutions to unison or a minim (B₁). The patterns include second chords in groups of three, two or one, resolving to unison (Example 4).

Example 4



This is the musical template of Nakorovou village to which the fourteen chapters of the catechism text are fitted for the singing of their *taro*. While they do not include a solo motif (an optional style) in every other way the *taro* conforms to the common elements mentioned above and to a known musical template to which the text is fitted.

Musical structure of *Taro* 2:8 Delaitokatoka, Vitilevu (CD Track 5)

The question is asked:

*Sa qai yaco vaka kina
segai?*

Did it happen as planned?

and the following answer is sung:

*Sega sara. Eda sa cala ka lako sese,
koi keda kecega: sa levu sara na noda
i valavala sa vakasisila ka tawa dodonu
ka ca e na mata ni Kalou. Aisea 53.6:
Koi keda kece, eda sa sese ga me vaka
na sipi; eda sa dui lesu tani ki na noda
sala, lo i keda yadua. Roma 3 23: Era
sa i valavala ca, ko ira kecega na
tamata, ka ra sega ni yacova na ka vakarokorokotaki kina na Kalou.*

Indeed not. We sinned and went astray:
we all sinned in God's eyes. Isaiah 53.6:
We are like sheep; and have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way.
Romans 3.23: All have sinned and fall
short of the glory of God.

The musical template for this *taro* sung by the Delaitokatoka community in Suva has a similar but more complex template than that of Nakorovou.¹⁶ There are preliminary and solo motifs, sung punctuation, a drone bass on the fundamental note E ♭ and more movement in the *laga* part, yet the note patterns and their divisions are similar to Nakorovou and an overall template discernable regardless of the differences in length between the two compositions.¹⁷ In this *taro* the musical phrasing is positioned around the singing of the punctuation, which is sung as a motif, identified in the following transcription with the letters PM (pre-motif) and M (motif) (Example 5).

Example 5

Taro 2:8

Delaitokatoka

Tonal center E♭
♩ = 170 approx

Question (spoken)
Sa qui yaco me va ka kina,
se segai?

PM M A A1 PM M

Laga
Tagica

Se-ga-(i) sa-ra-ce-gu e na ce (e)-gu (u) E-na sa ca-la ka la-ko se-se ce-gu e na ko (o)-ma (a)
Druku

The pattern for the first pre-motif and motif on the words *cegu e na cegu* (stop at the full stop) with the added vocables *e* and *u*, sets a template for all of the following sung punctuation. Fijian poetic licence of added vocables is also exercised in the *taro* even though the text is taken from the printed catechism. The notes for the motifs are always the same but the pattern for the pre-motif is more flexible to accommodate the extra words or vowels (Example 6).

Example 6

PM M

ce - gu e na ko (o) - lo (o) - ni (i)

¹⁶ The tight-knit community of Delaitokatoka (Suva) originate from the island of Kabara in southern Lau and proudly proclaim their origin, which is manifest in their musical style. Lauan liturgy will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁷ For convenience of space (this is a long *taro*) the full transcription and text can be found in the appendices.

The second pattern (A) and a variation of it follow each motif (Example 7).

Example 7

A A1 PM M

Ro-ma wa-se to-lu ti-ki-na e ru-a-sa-ga-vu-lu ka to-lu ce-gu e na ko (o) -lo (o)-ni-(i)

In both examples 5 and 7 the use of minims on the word *sa* indicate, as in the preceding *taro*, Fijian musical practice. The inclusion of *se* certainly suggests it is part of a musical patterning, as its appearance elsewhere in the text is not accorded double note value. The musical style of A for the most part includes three or four crotchets and a minim chord of thirds in varying combinations, descending to crotchet seconds leading into pattern A1 (Example 7).

A1 patterning occurs in varying combinations as part of the musical phrase between motifs and consists of repeated crotchet second chords resolving to unison. As in the previous *taro* this pattern of repeated notes has clear divisions. Where there are long ostinatos, as in Example 7, the recurring pattern is divisible by five. This pattern is clear from the above example because the resolution does not occur until the pattern is completed; in this case the last note extending into the pre-motif pattern. There are also a few combinations of two, three or four second chords resolving to unison (Example 5 and 8).

Example 8

Sa le-vu sa-ra na no-da i va-la-va-la Sa va-ka-si-si-la

ka-ta-wa do-do-nu ka ca e na ma-ta ni Ka-lo-u ce-gu e na ce (e)-gu (lu) A-i-se-a

In this example the position of the two *sa* is at the start of each phrase. While the duration of phrasing varies according to the frequency of the punctuation, the

patterning is consistent and part of an overall existing musical framework present in varying degrees in both *taro*, to which Delaitokatoka fit their catechism text.

In summary: both *taro*

- have clearly defined phrasing of varying length
- repeated ostinato patterns of second chords resolving to unison
- extended second chord ostinato in groupings of five or more
- shorter second chord groupings of 4, 3 or 2 resolving to unison
- have notes of double duration on the words *sa*, *ka* and *ca*

Although both *taro* are compositions from disparate communities they conform to the same musical characteristics and those listed above (p140). It must therefore be assumed that the music to which the catechism text was fitted was already known – there are so many similarities between them and *meke* composition in general. Utilising a known musical framework is a logical method of singing the fourteen chapters of the printed catechism and follows Fijian compositional practice.

Text

The Biblical references in *taro* 2:8 – Isaiah 53:6 ‘*And we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of all of us*’ and Romans 3:23 ‘*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*’ refers to the tenet summarised in the first sentence ‘We sinned and went astray: we all sinned in God’s eyes’. The text references taken directly from the Bible, as indicated in the passages above, are reinforcements of theological principles that mankind are sinners in the eyes of God and Christ has taken over the iniquity of humanity. This primary Methodist principle: looking forward to the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, is the heart of catechetical understanding. This verse is not only quoted in full but Biblical reference is given for future study and reflection. The value in the singing of the catechism cannot be underestimated for this a theology lesson, sung by the laity, utilising a known indigenous musical form to which the text was fitted in the style of Fijian *meke*. The singing of this Christian text within an

indigenous framework allowed Fijians a seamless transition from an older spiritual practice without losing their cultural identity.

History of *Same*

All the following four *same* share musical elements with each other and with *taro*, and are the compositional styles closest in musical form to what Thompson (1966:15) describes as a ‘direct outgrowth’ of an older form of Fijian music: pre-Christian indigenous *meke* present at the time of missionary contact and continuing ever since.

It is not possible to precisely date the origin of the *same* because this music is not directly named in early missionary or other diaries; it is possible however to say with certainty that both *taro* and *same* were part of the early Christian liturgy of the Fijian Methodist church. It is also not possible to say definitively whether *same* have always been sung in the Bauan dialect. What is certain is that this music is the composition of early Christian converts from the Vitilevu rather than Lauan missions. The Lauan equivalent of *same* is *polotu* although both compositions are sung in Lauan congregations. The choice of dialect for *same* could have followed the original translations of prayers, catechism, scripture lessons and Biblical passages which were printed in the dialects of Bau, Cakaudrove, Rewa and Lau (Calvert 1985:223) before Bauan became the *lingua franca*, but this is debatable. However, *same* musical style suggests a Vitilevu rather than a Lauan origin as will be discussed in the following examination of *same* compositions. Lauans kept their liturgy, the original liturgy of the first Western and Tongan missionaries, though their hymns (*sere vaka Lotu*), prayers and *polotu* are now sung in Bauan. Their musical compositions however, are uniquely their own. It is thought that the original *same* were sung in unison by the whole congregation and later put into a *meke* musical form.¹⁸ The Lauans say *same* are not from Lau but from Vitilevu and were brought back to Lau by the missionaries during their evangelism years.¹⁹ The reference therefore to *same* compositions being ‘brought back’ to Lau suggests that *same* compositions were first composed in the

¹⁸ Radini Talatala Soro Sotiana Sorovakatini of Tubou, Lakeba in 2002.

¹⁹ Radini Talatala Soro Sotiana Sorovakatini and the ladies of the Tubou congregation *same* group in 2002.

Vitilevu mission and later introduced into Lau by Fijian Christians referred to as ‘missionaries’, distinct from Western missionaries.

In keeping with Fijian oral tradition, *same* compositions are learnt and passed from generation to generation, Christian community to Christian community, according to pre-contact *meke* practice.²⁰ There are three ways of transference: first, through the movement of the *talatalas*, *vakatawas* and teachers; second, the movement (away from their village of birth) of women through marriage; and third through the wives of the Fijian ministry. The wives of ministers in their evangelising work with the village women and children would have had the greatest influence in teaching the liturgy, in particular *same* and *taro*. Both compositions, as has been discussed, have texts composed independent of the music. The set text of the catechism and the indigenous poetic text of the *same* are then fitted to an existing musical form. Men and women compose *same* texts and it is possible for the text to be learnt separately and later put to the music of the community into which it is introduced, although *same* may also be taught in their entirety.²¹ Like non-liturgical *meke*, these compositions have a discernable musical style which distinguishes and marks them as Church music.

Most early references to Fijian church music termed it ‘chanting’ without specifically naming the text of the chant, though it is reasonable to assume that if the singing was the *taro* or any of the prayers – the Te Deum, the Lord’s Prayer or others – rather than *same*, specified reference would have been made to them. Calvert mentions that the adults and children on the island Ono-i-Lau assembled to ‘chant the Conference catechism or the *taro lekaleka* the shorter catechism prepared by Hunt’ (1985:83). Also, although both *taro* and *same* are closely related musically, the two compositions are sung at different times – *taro* before the service and *same* during the worship.

Some missionary wives, like their husbands, were impressed by the prodigious memory of the Fijians. This point was highlighted in 1840 by the missionary John Watsford (1900:50) who observed that Fijians, too old to learn to read and write,

²⁰ The Lauan women referred to above told me the *same* I had recorded was taught to them by a woman from the island of Batiki about 200 nautical miles west of their village, Tubou.

²¹ It was certainly my experience that the large percentage of the *same* recorded had been taught either in full by someone from outside of the village or that the text had been composed separately and put to the music of the village.

attended schools and committed the lessons to memory, and his wife (he himself being unmusical) used Fijian ‘chants’ for lessons as well as prayers, some of which he says ‘were very good’. This is not an isolated story nor is the fact that Fijians had good memories: all oral cultures rely on memory in lieu of written language and Fijians were no exception. Western missionaries – coming from a different cultural background – by encouraging the utilisation of the existing musical and lyrical form of Fijian singing for a Christian liturgy ensured the preservation of an existing cultural tradition. If the belief that the original *same* were sung in unison is correct then perhaps it is possible that *same* compositions originated from the women’s classes with the encouragement of the missionary wives. Although this hypothesis is difficult to prove, the examination of the *taro* sung by Delaitokatoka has already shown a possible missionary hand in the singing of the punctuation. Missionary accounts show indigenous women, not men, leading the *same*, although men took an active part in singing the bass part. Both men and women composed the texts, and there was no musical reason why men could not also have taken the leading part as they do in the singing of *polotu*. Both men and women also lead the singing of their indigenous *meke*. So it seems likely the singing of *same* originated from the women’s classes.

The naming of these indigenous compositions as *same* (Fijian indigenised psalms) is a misnomer: they bear no direct relationship musically or poetically to Western psalms. Presumably the name was taken from Methodist hymnody, with the acceptance of the missionaries, and used to distinguish the music from secular *meke* to which it bears (textual subject aside) such a direct relationship. These oral compositions utilise vernacular poetry, fitted to indigenous musical forms, on a wide range of subjects which can be categorised as: quotations and stories from both the New and Old Testaments; reflections on Methodist theological principles; records of church events; and lessons or sermons on religious topics. All text is written in *meke* prosody: stanzas and lines of varying length, rhyming couplets with the addition of vocables on the end of a word or sentence, added vowels within the mostly assonant line, frequent use of metaphor and riddle, and no apparent limit to the range of subject material.

Same liturgical practice



Fig. 15: Singing of *same*, Nabubu, Vanualevu 2001. Photograph: E. Black

Same are sung during Sunday worship at some point after the first two hymns and before the gospel, often complementing the gospel theme with a similar subject. At the appropriate time in the service the women singers move into the aisle near the front of the church and form a circle around the leader, as in secular *meke* (Fig. 6). If the men join in, they sing from their seats in the church, not alongside the women.

The *same* commences when the *laga* sings the introduction, closely followed by the *taga*. Sometimes the *druku* (which may include a drone bass) joins in immediately following the introductory notes of the *laga* without the usual solo motif introduction of the *laga* and *tagica*, which is then not heard until the end of the first phrase. There is no set pattern for the entry of the vocal parts: these are a matter of individual performance practice. What is set practice is the overall musical style: two, three or four part Fijian polyphony; set vocal parts; melody in the middle line; small melodic movement; limited diatonic notes; small stepwise movement of and between parts; limited intervallic movement; solo motifs; strophic in structure; seamless progression of tempo and rhythm throughout; added vowels and meaningless tags to fit the phrase; long drone on the second note of the scale in the melodic line for most of the inner

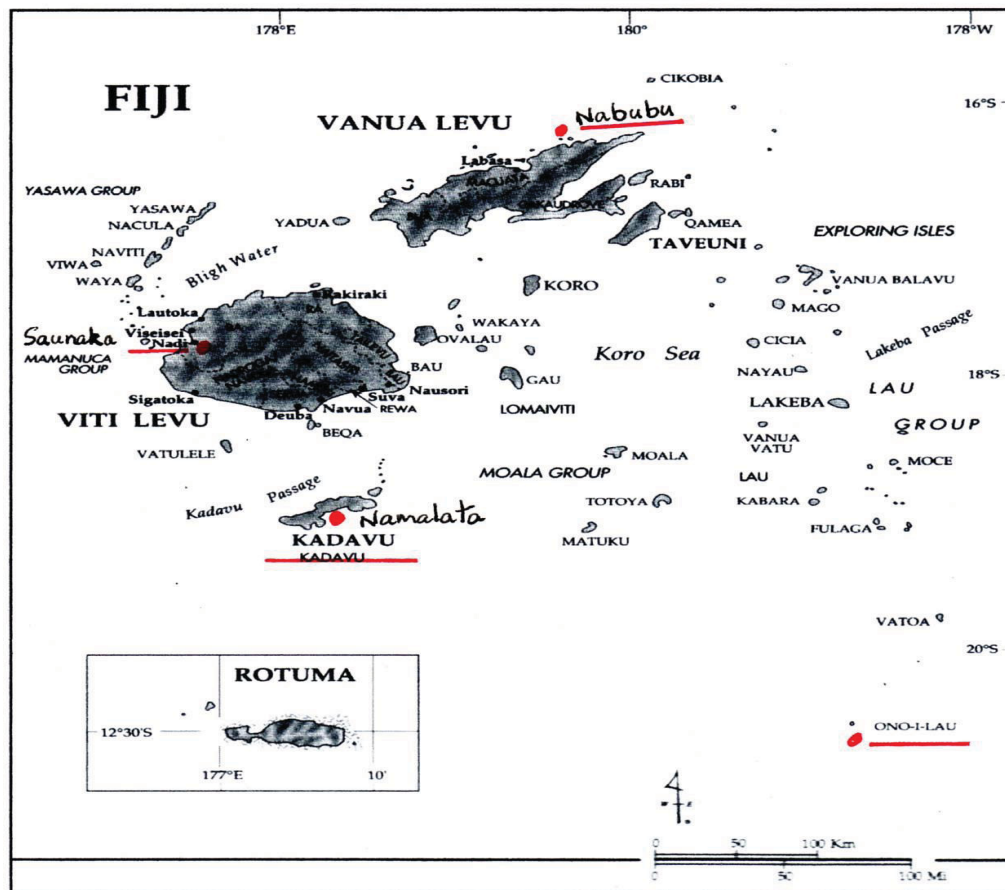
phrases; slowly drawing out the last notes or abruptly ending in unison. Raven-Hart confirms this description of *same* performance in his observation of Methodist church services in the Yasawas:

The most interesting feature of the church services is the singing of the *same*, which are memorised passages of Scripture, not necessarily Psalms. They are sung by a group of the women, forming a close circle, the men providing a bass on one note only; it is quite impossible to describe them, although conceivably on the analogy of the expression “Close Harmony,” the term “Close Discord” might be coined for them. There is nothing even vaguely resembling a tune: the voices wander about within perhaps 1 ½ tones above and below the octave of the drone, entirely without reference to one another. They increase in intensity (though no volume) towards the end of the passage, and end with a startling abrupt biting-off of the last syllable.... The special point of interest about them is that they are pre-Christian (1956:136-139).

Commander Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition in 1840 noted the Fijians’ lack of interest in ‘musical sounds’, while being ‘fond’ of their ‘verse-making’, appreciating the difficulties of compositional form including rhythm and the syllabic rhyme of the line endings (1985:247). Wilkes was describing the Fijian oral traditional relationship of poetic text to music. Clearly, far from being disinterested in the music, Fijians were paying attention to their poetic texts to fit an already existing musical form. And so it was with *taro* and *same*, Christian indigenous text fitted to a Fijian polyphonic form.

Musical structure of four *same* from; Namalata, Kadavu; Saunaka, Nadi; Nabubu, Vanualevu and Ono-i-Lau, Southern Lau Group

I will examine four *same* from different village communities (Map 6) throughout Fiji selected to show subtle differences and similarities. Though these communities are widely separated geographically the music and textual style are distinctively *same* and are passed down through the generations in the same way and manner as *meke* in missionary contact time.



Map 7: Identifying the villages where the four *same* were recorded.

The *Same nei Jiona* (*same* of Jonah) sung by women of Namalata village in the District of Tavuki, Kadavu, southern Fiji (CD Track 6).

*Yaco na gauna ni soqoni vata.
Na lotu na kau dau vua yaga.
Kila na qase ko Eparama.*

Come the time for the gathering together
The church, the tree that bears well
Known to the old man Abraham

*Ko Taniela tiko i na qara
Na Jiu e tolu kina bukawaqa
Ko Jioni kina yanuyamu lala.*

Daniel who was in the cave
The three Jews in the burning fire
John was on the uninhabited island.

*Mo tukuna na i vakadinadina
Ko Jiona sa talai i Ninive(ya),
vosa ni Kalou e dro takina,
na waqa i valu sa vodo kina,
na cava levu e labati ira.*

Speaking of witness
Jonah who was sent to Nineveh
ran away from the Lord's word
Boarded a warship
which was buffeted by a storm

*Era sa vakawiri madigi(ya)
baleti Jiona duadua kina
“Mo dou balati au ki waia”
Sa lutu sara i kete ni ika,
sa laki bogi tolu tiko kina.
Laki luaraka sara i Ninive.*

They cast lots and it fell on Jonah
who said
“Throw me into the water”
He fell into the belly of a fish
spent three nights there
The fish vomited him out at Nineveh

*Na lotu na wai drodro malua,
sa dave yani ki vei vanua
Ra gunu-va na lewe i vuravura,

ra gunu-va era sa qai bula*

The Church is the gentle flowing water
that flows to all nations
And is drunk by all the people of the
world
They drink it and it brings them life

Musical structure

This metaphorical *same*, loosely based on the story of Jonah and other Biblical characters, is a two-part Fijian strophic polyphonic composition with text composed in indigenous poetic form.²² The polyphonic elements and musical template are similar to the two *taro* and to the elements described (p140), all originating from indigenous *meke* form. The text for this *same* however is composed in five stanzas in Fijian poetic form and fitted to an existing musical template.²³

The musical template for this *same* has definitive patterning, falling into A, B and M (solo motif). Like the previous *taro*, the phrasing here is dictated by the position of the solo motif repeated throughout the *same* acting similarly to a cadential point in Western harmony. Here the motif begins on the last word at the end of every alternate line in the text and the first word of the following line. Within the phrasing the patterning of the third and second chords are clearly defined with little variation between them. The isometric rhythmic pattern of ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ with a ♪ leading into the beginning of every new pattern and phrase remains unchanged throughout. The chordal changes are dominated by the *laga* in ascending movements no larger than a third (Example 9).

²² The compositional style of Fijian prosody has previously been discussed in Chapter 5:106-107.

²³ The full transcription transcription of this *same* is included in the appendices. However because of space only transcriptions of the first stanza of the following three *same* will be examined.

Example 9

Same nei Jiona
Same

A B M A B

Tonal center D
♩ = 80

Ya-co na ga-u-na ni so-go-ni va-ta Na lo-tu na ka-u da-u vu-a ya-ga Ki-la na qa - se ko E (e)-pa-ra-
ma Ko Ta-ni (i)-e - la ti-ko(iya) na ga - ra Na Ji - u

In the above example of the first stanza which ends on *Eparama* (the end of the first line and the first note of the second line) the opening phrase A and B sung by the chorus and the solo motif of the *laga* and *tagica*, is the template with some variation for the whole *same*. Pattern A, the first part of the musical phrase follows every motif and begins on a quaver up-beat rising from a short ostinato pattern of third chords to second chords on the eighth quaver (or the second quaver of the fourth crotchet) (Example 10).

Example 10

Pattern B is the second and longest half of the musical phrase and comprises the movement of second chords to either a third chord or unison and back until the phrase is completed. The movement away from and back to the second chords always occurs on the second quaver beat, the return falling on the crotchet beat. This is an established movement and is varied only when there is a *sa* in the text (Example 11).

Example 11

A B M

do - u ba-la - ti a - u ki wa-i - a Sa lu-tu sa - ra i ke - te ni i - ka Sa(a) la-ki bo - gi to-lu ti-ko

There are five occurrences of *sa* in the composition and each one is a dotted crotchet with the exception of *sa* in the motif (Example 12).

Example 12



The addition of the extra quaver duration is necessary to keep the rhythmic patterning. The duration of *sa* in the motif therefore is accommodated by the addition of another vowel *a* (typical of Fijian compositional practise) because *sa* falls on a quaver beat. Instead of *sa* being sung as a dotted crotchet, as elsewhere in the *same*, here it is sung as a quaver and the added vowel a crotchet, thereby keeping the rhythmic patterning while still accommodating the added duration on *sa*.

There are five stanzas in this *same* and ten motifs. The position of the motif occurs on the last word of every other line of the text and the first word of the next line (Example 13).

Example 13

Yaco na gauna ni soqoni vata.
Na lotu na kau dau vua yaga.
Kila na qase ko Eparama.
Ko Taniela tiko i na qara
Na Jiu e tolu kina bukawaqa
Ko Jioni kina yanuyanu lala.

In this *same* as in the Delaitokatoka *taro*, the motif is positioned at designated points in the text. The inclusion of a motif is a matter of choice, not all *same* or *taro* include them as in the *taro* of Nakorovou or later in the *same*, *Taniela na Parofita*. The positioning of the text in these motifs, means that the chorus enters on the second word of the sentence, a practice not unknown in Fijian composition (Example 13). Hale (in Fison and Gatschet 1885:383-389) in his observations of Fijian *meke* also noted that ‘The words in their singing, or rather their chanting, are divided according

to the tune, without reference to the sense, - a pause not unfrequently occurring in the middle of a word’.

Unquestionably, the *same* text has been fitted to an existing musical structure: not only are there extra vowels, *a o e i* and vocables *ga* and *la* to fill the musical phrase, but all the notes occur without reference to the spoken stress. This practice was also noted in connection with the use of ‘fillers’ in Fijian *meke* text. Gatschet (1885:196) says: ‘the Fijian poet scorns ... petty difficulties, and helps out his halting line ... by adding - ya, or - ye, - a, - e, - o, which shifts the accent and makes “all things lovely”’. Quain (1942:14) also has similar observations: ‘Ancestors chant the songs as they teach so that the rhythms implicit in the language are qualified by a musical style which can freely reduplicate syllables to change the stress in words...stress in language depends on vowel quality and word importance, rather than accent...’

All such observations are reflected in the *same* where the text written in Fijian poetic form is fitted to an existing compositional style. But for the textual content, this *same* could well be a *meke*, so completely is the *same* in indigenous form.

Text

The *same* of Jonah is a 21-line stanza full of symbolism and metaphor. The opening three lines give a clue to the substance of the text by reference to Abraham, followed by three other Biblical references from the Old and New Testament before the story of Jonah is retold. The lack of direct quotations (as in the *taro*) for the source of the stories, and the naming of characters or events with which they are identified, assume an intimate knowledge of the Bible.

In Western poetry the title normally refers to the subject of the poem, but Fijian indigenous verse including *same* is more complex. Together with the principal subject there is often more than one related or unrelated story, as in the *same* of Jonah, and in the text a deeper structure of metaphor and symbolism. This underlying structure of oblique references, sometimes including archaic words or in the case of a *same* dialect words, presents difficulties in giving the composition a title, so often composers

simply identify the *same* by the opening line. This *same* is identified by the story of Jonah, while the other Biblical references are just that: a mention of a name and event without elaboration, so only the final four lines of the stanza, known as the ‘golden verse’ (the moral of the story), reveal the subject.

The opening three lines of the *same* mentions a gathering of people, a fruitful tree, and a church:

<i>Yaco na gauna ni soqoni vata.</i>	Come the time for the gathering together
<i>Na lotu na kau dau vua yaga.</i>	The church, the tree that bears well
<i>Kila na qase ko Eparama.</i>	Known to the old man Abraham

The Biblical reference is Genesis 12:1-3, the story of Abraham’s journey from his country, his sojourn in foreign lands and establishment of a new tribe or community. The references here become a metaphor for the Connexion (the Church), the fellowship (gathering) and the community (tree that bears well) of Christianity uniting and rewarding people who worship the true God. Abraham the central figure in the Book of Genesis is regarded as a man of supreme faith and obedience beyond question. Tested often by God, as in his readiness to offer his only son as sacrifice, Abraham’s steadfastness and ultimate sacrifice are used by Christians as imagery for God the Father’s offer of his only Son on the Cross. The tree was often used also as a reference to the Cross.

The three references: ‘Daniel who was in the cave’ (Daniel 6:1-28), ‘three Jews in the burning fire’ (Daniel 3) and ‘John on the uninhabited island’ (Revelations 1:9-19) are all stories of persecution, strong conviction and unshakeable faith.

<i>ko Taniela tiko i na qara</i>	Daniel who was in the cave
<i>na Jiu e tolu kina bukawaqa</i>	The three Jews in the burning fire
<i>ko Jioni kina yanuyanu lala.</i>	John was on the uninhabited island.

The stories of Daniel and the three Jews, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, who were raised in the Babylonian court of King Nebuchadnezzar, come from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. All four were known to each other and their stories are similar: each refused to commit idolatry for which they were severely punished, Daniel being thrown into a lion’s den and the three Jews into a burning cauldron.

However they were spared and their stories like Abraham's illustrate God's reward for courage and strong conviction in the face of persecution.

The third of these Biblical references is to John the Apostle. John like Daniel and the three Jews was tortured for his faith albeit a Christian not a Jewish faith. He was plunged into a vat of boiling oil but remained unharmed, a miracle that resulted in Roman witnesses converting to Christianity. John was then banished to the Greek island of Patmos where it is thought he wrote the Book of Revelations. Like the others John was also a man of courage and conviction, a theme alluded to in the text in the passing references, yet all the underlying stories of these men have been carefully chosen for their dramatic and violent imagery. Such violence would not have been lost on the early Christians whose society at the time of conversion was politically unstable and who themselves were persecuted for their faith. All three stories are rallying calls to the cause: courage and conviction have their own spiritual reward.

The placement of the Jonah story is interesting because it neither begins nor ends the *same*, yet the composer has chosen the next ten lines of the stanza to précis the story, a patterning that is typical of Fijian poetic *meke* prose.

*Mo tukuna na i vakadinadina
Ko Jiona sa talai i Ninive,
vosa ni Kalou e dro takina,
na waqa i valu sa vodo kina,
na cava levu e labati ira.*

Speaking of witness
Jonah who was sent to Nineveh
ran away from the Lord's word
boarded a warship
which was buffeted by a storm

*Era sa vakawiri madigi(ya)
baleti Jiona duadua kina
"Mo dou balati au ki waia"
Sa lutu sara i kete ni ika,
sa laki bogi tolu tiko kina.
Laki luaraka sara i Ninive(ya).*

They cast lots and it fell on Jonah
who said
"Throw me into the water"
He fell into the belly of a fish
spent three nights there
The fish vomited him out at Nineveh.

The chronology of the Jonah story taken from the four chapters of the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament is accurate and told without comment. The line 'Speaking of witness' (*Mo tukuna na i vakadinadina*) confirms that the composer is making a further case for God's goodness and rewards for believers. The word *tukuna* means to report about or to tell (Capell 1991:242) and *vakadinadina* to confirm or to witness (Capell 1991:51). The text speaks of Jonah's disobedience; his flight to sea avoiding a

command by God; his meeting a destructive storm; being thrown overboard and swallowed by a fish in which he spent three days and nights; his repentance; God's forgiveness and Jonah's deliverance. Again we see two acts of violence, Jonah thrown overboard during a violent storm and his time spent in a fish's belly, a fitting image for a maritime nation. The object of the story in the *same* is to show the power of prayer in Jonah's repentance and the mercy of God in Jonah's deliverance.²⁴

The whole mood and language of the last four lines which complete the *same*, known as the 'golden verse', change:²⁵

*Na lotu na wai drodro malua,
sa dave yani ki vei vanua
Ra gunu-va na lewe i vuravura,
ra gunu-va era sa qai bula*

The Church is the gentle flowing water
That flows to all nations
And is drunk by all the people of the
world
They drink it and it brings them life

References to acts of violence are replaced by softer symbolic phrases such as 'gentle flowing water' and 'brings them life', word-painting imagery of the Church as a universal giver of life. This metaphoric reference to Christian faith, inclusive of all people, reiterates the words of the first verse of Charles Wesley's hymn 'Come Sinners to the Gospel Feast' which invites '*every soul to be Jesu's guest*' and '*no one to be left behind, For God has bidden all mankind*' (The Methodist Hymn-Book, 1954:287).²⁶ The image of the water's being 'drunk by all the people of the world' is a reassurance of the inclusiveness of worldwide Christian communities accepting the tenets of their faith, rewarded with spiritual salvation in Christ.

The musical form of the *same* does not reflect the sentiments of the text, yet the composer of this indigenous verse with all its constraints manages to convey so much in one short stanza. Every word, reference, and symbol has a very specific meaning: nothing is wasted in this extremely tight form. Carefully chosen Biblical examples highlight the composer's theme of steadfastness, courage, strong convictions and

²⁴ It is interesting to note that the word in the phrase '*i kete na ika*', *ika*, the Fijian word for fish, is used rather than *tavuto* sperm whale or *buisena* whale.

²⁵ The 'golden verse' refers to the 'moral of the story' and is called as such by the Fijians. My reference for this information came from Mrs Qalo Rokotakala, a *vakatawa* and my guide from the Fijian Methodist Secretariat.

²⁶ See also Chapter 3 of this thesis.

inclusiveness, exemplifying Christ's teachings. For the followers of these teachings within the Christian community there is an all encompassing fellowship and salvation.

The same, *Taniela na Parofita* (Daniel the Prophet) sung by women of Nabubu Village, Namuka, Vanualevu (CD Track 7).

Taniela na Parofita
Na nona i vola me au laki raica
na wase tolu au mani wilika
Au mani raici Nepukanesa
O koya na Tui

Daniel the Prophet
I saw his book
and read it in Chapter Three
Then I saw Nebuchadnezzar
who was the King

Nepukanesa au via tukuna
Ma sa biuta na Kolou bula
Ma bulia na matakau koula
Ma vakaduria e toloni buca
levu mai Tura

Nebuchadnezzar I want to state
Had rejected the living God and
Made a golden idol
And erected it in
the plain of Tura

Kena balavu au via tukuna
Kiupiti e ogo sagavulu(ya)
Kena raraba au tukuna mada
E ono na kuipiti au rawata
Buli na koula kei na parasa
Ma buli na tete kei na aironi talega

Its length let me state was
sixty cubits tall
Let me state its width
Six cubits I measured
Made in gold and brass
Made in clay and also iron

Lewa nu Tui me tukuni yani
Me vakarogoya na domoni lali
koneti na bitu na vakatagi na api
na lali ni vaka wâ
ni soliteri na pakipaipi na ka kecega
e rorogo vinaka
Buli oti na matakau koula
Ra soqo na turaga ni vanua
Mera cuva sobu ka vakamasuta
Kenai tologi au via tukuna
ke dua e tawa vakabauta
laki biu ena kurolevu ni buka
e vitu na katakata e rauta

The King wanted it made known
by the sounding of the lali, the
cornet, flute and harp
struck like a lali,
psaltery and bagpipe
and every sweet sound
After the making of the golden idol
All men assembled together
They adored and prayed to the idol
Its punishment I must state for anyone
who did not believe it would be thrown
into a large cooking pot on the fire
With its seven degrees of enough heat

Musical structure

This two-part strophic polyphonic composition has similar characteristics to the *same* of *Jiona* and the two *taro* already examined. What differentiates this *same* from the previous one (apart from the rhythmic structure) is lack of a definitive motif. However the long introductory passages beginning each new stanza sung by the *laga* and *tagica* before the *druku* enters could be considered a motif of different patterning. Like the *taro* of Nakovovou there is a steady crotchet rhythmic pattern, and like both *taro* there is a crotchet pulse throughout. Apart from the triplet there is no variation in metre or tempo. The chordal structure, as with the others, is mostly thirds and seconds. The musical template is clearly set in an A B patterning (Example 14).

Example 14

Taniela na Parofita

Same Nabubu

Tonal center B
♩ = 144 approx (1st Stanza)

A

B

The template for pattern A has clearly defined divisions of third chords (plus a second chord) moving to unison in a 3 - 1, 2 - 1 patterning (Example 15).

Example 15

There is no text relationship to the movement in the music – the unison for instance does not fall on any particular syllable. The first unison falls on an extended vowel *o*, the second on the first word of the second line *Na*, the third on the first syllable of *vola*, the fourth (after the triplet) on the first syllable *raica* and the final unison on *na* before the minim on the *se*, the second syllable of *wase*. Although the *same* is sung in Bauan, the use of the triplet on the words *me au la'i (laki)*, was used by the soloists to accommodate their own dialect (as was *wili'a* later sung by the *druku*), which has no *k* in it, though they do sing the *ks* in *Nepukanesa* and *koya*. As in all indigenous poetry this *same* uses vocables to fill out the phrase as in *Paro(o)fita* and *N(ai)pukanesa*, or to complete rhyme at the end of the line as in *wili(ka)*.²⁷

The *druku* entrance, pattern B, occurs in the second half of the stanza (Example 16).

Example 16

Taniela na Parofita

Na nona i vola me au laki raica
na wase tolu au mani wilika
Au mani raici Nepukanesa
O koya na Tui

Daniel the Prophet

I saw his book
 and read it in Chapter Three
 Then I saw Nebuchadnezzar
 who was the King

Example 17

to - lu au ma - ni wi - li 'a A - u ma - ni ra - i - ci N(a i) - pu - ka - ne - sa O ko - ya na Tu - i

Druku

Pattern B (Example 17), which completes the template for the *same*, is a musical contrast to A. For the most part this phrase is a long ostinato of second chords broken only by a movement from a third chord to a second chord and later a second chord to a third and back again to the end of the stanza. As in the first pattern there is no text relationship for the movement.

²⁷ All indigenous liturgical music is sung in the Bauan dialect, which to many Fijians was a foreign dialect and had to be learned – hence the missing *k* in the word *laki*. See Chapter 4, *Talatalas*, *vakatawas* (lay preachers) and *vakavuvuli* (teachers) in Christian Fiji.

The distinctive musical template for this *same* is clearly divided into two musically different phrases. The first half of the stanza is full of movement between third and second chords to unison, while the second half is an almost unbroken ostinato of second chords. Whilst this patterning is different from the other compositions in style there is also much in common and all are known musical templates to which the text is fitted.

Text

Although the title of the *same* suggests the story of Daniel the Prophet, it is in fact the Old Testament story of King Nebuchadnezzar and the golden idol taken from the Book of Daniel, Daniel 3:1-19 as stated in the opening stanza. In the *same* Daniel is the narrator of the story from which the text is repeated. The connection is though the stories of Daniel and the three Jews (the Biblical references in the *Same* of Jonah) to the wider story of the golden idol. The *same* text in indigenous poetic form is the composer's interpretation, rather than a direct Biblical quotation, and like all *same* text is told in the first person. The story involves King Nebuchadnezzar and the casting of a golden idol with details of its dimensions, materials and place of casting, and the celebrations following its installation. The 'golden verse', the last four lines of the *same*, graphically details punishment for non-worshippers of the idol.

On the face of it the text would seem a mere retelling of a well-known story about the worshipping of a golden idol and the vanity and fickleness of a King, yet like all Fijian poetic text the storytelling has a deeper meaning and assumes Biblical knowledge. This *same* is no exception, so to know the preceding Chapter in the Bible is to understand the *raison d'être* for the *same* of Daniel. A quick summary then of Chapter Two will be helpful in understanding the moral, which underpins the *same*.

The legend states that King Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by a dream, which the wise men of his court and his spiritual advisers were unable to interpret. In anger and frustration the King declared them all charlatans and ordered their death. Daniel's position in the court as a sage meant that his life was also endangered. But with God's

inspiration, Daniel reinterpreted the King's dream, for which he was well rewarded. The King then declared that: 'Of a truth it is, that your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou hast been able to reveal this secret' (Daniel 2:47). There are two important points of relevance to the *same* text in Chapter Two: first, the dream revealed to the King involved the sighting of a great image made of four metals – gold, silver, brass and iron as well as iron mixed with clay, which were interpreted as the four 'kingdoms' or empires that would follow Nebuchadnezzar's reign; second and more important was Daniel's prophesy involving the destruction of the image (the 'kingdoms') the consequence of which would eventually lead the people to God's kingdom: 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed' (Daniel 2:44).

In the first stanza the composer establishes the story and three important facts: the source of the story, the Book of Daniel; the exact place in the Book of Daniel Chapter Three; the main character of the story King Nebuchadnezzar. However there is no hint in the opening stanza of where the story is leading, just who is involved. The true meaning comes in the next stanza. Having presented the background, the reason for the interest in the story is revealed.

*Taniela na Parofita
Na nona i vola me au laki raica
Na wase tolu au mani wilika
Au mani raici Nepukanesa
O koya na Tui(ya)*

Daniel the Prophet
I saw his book
And read it in Chapter Three
Then I saw Nebuchadnezzar
Who was the King

*Nepukanesa au via tukuna
ma sa biuta na Kolou bula
ma bulia na matakau koula
ma vakaduria e toloni buca
levu mai Tura*

Nebuchadnezzar I want to state
had rejected the living God and
made a golden idol
and erected it
in the plain of Tura

The text in the second stanza cites the making of a golden idol and its erection in the plain of Tura. The plain is actually called Dura in Hebrew Biblical text, but that word was deemed unsuitable in Fijian translation, because the Bauan meaning of the word *dura* is 'to flirt together'.²⁸ In this stanza we see the prophecy of the earlier Chapter, the making of an idol or image brought to fruition. This however is less important

²⁸ Capell 1984:64

than the King's rejection of 'the living God' despite his public acknowledgement of the 'superior' power of that God over his gods. There is no mention of this rejection in the Bible, here is the composer's own comment in relation to making an idol which in the third stanza is described in detail. The analogy for Fijians is not lost on the Christians, whose own spiritual culture included the worship of many gods.

Having made the idol, the King calls for his leaders to gather when they hear 'every sweet sound' which in the fourth stanza is described as the sound of the *lali*, '*na domo ni lali*', the cornet, '*na domo ni koneti*', the flute, '*na bitu na vakatagi*' (the Fijian nose flute), the harp, '*na apa*' and an instrument which is given a curious translation. The Hebrew Old Testament from which the Fijian Old Testament was translated refers to the instrument as a trigon (meaning a triangle) from which the name of the Greco-Roman harp was derived.²⁹ The instrument '*na lali ni vaka wa*' mentioned in the *same* is difficult to translate but taken literally means a *lali* that is struck or an instrument struck like a *lali*, and is differentiated from '*na domo ni lali*' (mentioned earlier in the list of 'every sweet sound'), which means the sound of the *lali*. The final two instruments are the psaltery, '*na soliteri*' and the bagpipe, '*na pakipaipi*' which is a Lauan word, as the phoneme *p* does not occur in the Bauan dialect. Most of the fourth stanza is taken directly from the Fijian Old Testament *Taniela* 3:5. The fifth stanza relates that all men called by the King must obeyed his wishes and 'adored and prayed to the idol', for a terrible punishment awaited those who disobeyed, they would be thrown into a large pot and cooked over a great heat. The actual words in the Fijian Old Testament '*ko ya ki no loma ni lovo ni buka waqa*' are that they would be burnt alive in a *lovo* or Fijian underground oven, an allusion to cannibalism, likening Biblical idolators to pre-Christian Fijians. In this transliteration the message is the same: there would be dire consequences for the disobedient.

Unusually there is no 'golden verse' as such in this *same*, although the last four lines could be interpreted in that spirit, in the clear though somewhat tenuous message that severe punishment awaits the disobedient. The composer has chosen to interpret the story in the first six verses of Daniel Chapter 3. The reference to the King's rejection of 'the living God', not in the Biblical text, harking back to events in the previous

²⁹ There is no mention of this instrument in the King James translation.

chapter is entirely the composer's observation and assumes a Biblical knowledge linking the two. The *same* is sung in the Sunday worship before the gospel reading, often reflecting the theme of the day, so this *same* lends itself well to comment and reflection.

The text is written in indigenous poetic form: note the use of assonance – ending with the same vowel; in this *same* 'a' is either added or is part of the word at the end of each line, similarly in the fourth stanza with the letter 'i'. The stanzas are of different lengths and the imagery is vivid. Detailed attention paid to the size and metals of the idol for instance, and the inclusion of all the instruments even those outside the Fijian musical corpus, is a reinterpretation. There is obvious intent to make the text as relevant as possible, as noted in the struggle to describe the 'trigon', yet the non-Fijian equivalent is still indigenised so that everything is included as described in the original text. The last four lines while referring to the story leave no doubt that the punishment, as told in the *same* and the Biblical text, is a salient reminder of past times and the price of disobedience. However given the Fijian love of metaphor, the last four lines could also be linked to the comment in the second stanza of the King's rejection of God. It was noted in the previous chapter that Daniel had foretold the eventual demise of Nebuchadnezzar and his followers and the subsequent conversion to the one true God. It may well be possible that the semiotics of the text of this *same* with such vivid images as false idols, false worship and terrible punishment, is really a metaphor for spiritual loss, in particular the spiritual loss for a pagan soul without the 'living God'. The *same* text like all *meke* text has a deeper meaning, with the skill of the composer being judged accordingly, yet this liturgical text has extra significance for the message is evangelical and its purpose is for contemplation and understanding.

The *same*, *Au Tubutubu i Jisu* (the Genealogy of Jesus) sung by women from the island of Ono-i-Lau, southern Lau (CD Track 8).

*Vola ni Tubutubu ni noda turaga
O koya na luvei Tevita, O koya na
luvei Eparama.*

Book of the genealogy of Our Lord
He is the issue of David, who is the issue
of Abraham

*Ai vola ogo cava na yacana
me volai me Tukutuku vinaka
O Maciu ma vola na tiko na
vale ni vakacavacava
Ma kacivi koya na turaga
Muri au mo na yaga*

What is the name of this book to
be written as the Good News.
Matthew who worked in the tax
office wrote about his call by the Lord
“Follow me
So you will be fruitful

*Vola ogo cava na yacana na
veitarataravi ni tamata
Tekivu vei Eparama
me yacovi Tevita na tamada
E tini ka va e sa macala*

What is the name of this book the
genealogy of people
Beginning with Abraham and ending
with David
Fourteen generations it is clear

*Tubu na tamata e rogo voli
ka sa teteva na Koloni
Lewa na Tui ka sa mosi
ra sa vesuki me ra sa kau ki Papiloni
Levu ni tamata mai soqoni
E tini ka va e kilai voli*

The people grew and spread throughout
the colony
A painful edict from the King caused
their imprisonment in Babylon
Total number of generations when added
Fourteen is widely known

*Noda tiko kina au via tukuna
ma tawa macala na kena gauna
Ma sa loloma na Kalou bula
me ra sa sereki me ra
sa kau ki noda vanua Donu(ya)
ni sucu ko Jisu (ya)
Levu ni tamata au sa cavuta
E tini ka va au sa na numa*

Let me tell you of their story, the length
of time is unknown
God in his love set them free to return
to their homeland
during the birth of Jesus
The number of people (generations) let
Me tell you
Fourteen I can think of

*Taba tamata au sa cavuta
musu vakakdua se vakarua
Sa donu(ya) nai vakakbula Kedra
levu e vasagavulu ka rua taba
tamata era sa bula
Sa huvu oti ko vuravura*

Let me state the number of generations
divided once or twice
until the Saviour.
The whole sum is forty two generations

The world has been flooded

Ono-i-Lau was the first island in Fiji to accept Christianity as a whole community and from this island many young Christians became the first evangelists for the Church. Although situated geographically closest to Tonga, with which the people of Ono-i-Lau still have a close connection, the examination of this *same* will show that the music and indigenous poetic text are in every way a Fijian composition.³⁰

³⁰ It has been said that some women in Tonga sing *same* which my informant the late Professor Epeli Ha'ofa though was Tongan. This is not possible, *same* are wholly Fijian. There are however cross-cultural links including music between Lauans and Tongans (see Chapters 2,4 and5).

Establishing and confirming agnatic connections within the *Vanua* is very important within Fijian societies whose genealogies are recorded in the texts of their *meke ni vucu*, the *vola ni kaubula* and the *tukutuku raraba*.³¹ Just as *vucu meke* are important records of Fijian identity, so too is the establishment of the identity of Jesus Christ within the Christian community. The *same*, *Au Tubutubu i Jisu*, ‘The Genealogy of Jesus’, then in Fijian tradition establishes the earthly connections of Jesus whose family line as stated in the text begins with Abraham and can be traced through forty-two generations to his birth.³² This is a celebratory *same* whose joy is reflected in the music. There is an added connection to secular *meke* in the use of frequent pauses, utilised for reflection on the text. The text of this style of *meke* known as *lālālē* reflects events of importance: the life of a deceased person of rank, a natural disaster, heroic tales of life or death stories of special significance to the larger community. The recording of the genealogy of Christ falls into this category.

Musical structure

More musically complex than previous compositions, the template for this *same* centres round the tonal centre of F and has four distinct phrases (A-D), two changes of tempo and two pauses. Typical of secular *meke*, the long introductory passage (A) sung by the *druku* establishes the subject. The composer used the practise of an introductory passage to highlight the short opening stanza of the text emphasising the importance of its subject – the genealogy of Jesus.³³ After a pause and a change of tempo the second phrase (B), sung by the *laga* and *tagica*, asks the question. This is followed by another pause before the answer from the *druku* (C). The fourth and final phrase (D) is an antiphonal dialogue between the *laga* and *tagica* and the *druku*.³⁴ There is a steady crotchet pulse throughout even allowing for a change in tempo and constantly changing rhythmic patterns in each the phrase (Example 18).

³¹ See Chapter 2 Societal Structure: Chiefly Structure.

³² See also Brewster 1922:148-149 for a similar description of a sermon on the death of Absalom in which his birth, lineage and chiefly connections are given full consideration.

³³ In secular non-dance and dance *meke* in particular there is often a long introduction establishing the subject and mood of the *meke*. This is followed by a pause before the *meke* proper starts, heralded by a distinct change in tempo and rhythm.

³⁴ Antiphonal *meke* has already been discussed, see Chapter 5:109-110.

Example 18

Au Tubutubu i Jisu

Same

Tonal Center F
♩ = 100 - 112

Ono-i-Lau

Introduction and 1st Stanza

A

(A) Vo - la ni tu - bu - tu (u) - bu ni (i) no (o) - da Tu (u) - ra - ga O ko - ya na lu (u) - vei

A1

Te - vi - ta O ko - ya na lu - ve - i E - pa - ra (a) - ma I Vo - la o - qo ca - va na ya - ca - na me

B

vo - la - i me tu - ku - tu - ku vi - na (a) - ka O Ma - ci - u ma vo - la na ti - ko na va -

M

le ni va - ka - ca - va - ca - va Ma ka - ci - vi ko - ya na Tu - ra - ga Mu - ri a - u

D

mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga

M

mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga

M

mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga

The opening phrase (A) of this *same* has the same rhythmic patterning of crotchet, quaver, quaver as *Same nei Jiona*, and the same long ostinato patterning as the two *taro* and the *same*, *Taniela na Parofita*. In this *same* the choice of bass note is C instead of the fundamental note F, whereas in the *taro* of Delaitokatoka the drone bass is the fundamental note (E ♭). Unlike *Same nei Jiona* though the chordal patterning once established remains unchanged until A1 (Example 19).

Example 19

A A1

Introduction and 1st Stanza

(A) Vo - la ni tu - bu - tu (u) - bu ni (i) no (o) - da Tu (u) - ra - ga O ko - ya na lu (u) - vei
Druku X X X X X

Te - vi - ta O ko - ya na lu - ve - i E - pa - ra (a) - ma
X X

Example 20 ☆

ga O

vi - ta

The utilisation of C in this *same* defines a chord, F A C for example, not just the interval, F A if the fundamental F had been the bass note (Example 20). The choice is deliberate and the ending of phrases A and D the clue, as the final note resolves on the tonal centre F (Example 18).³⁵

The grouping of the notes falls easily into four crotchets beats as marked with an X (Example 19). There are also tied crotchets over extended vowels such as *u* in *Tubutu(u)bu*, *o* in *no(o)da* and *u* in *lu(u)vei*. It is not clear whether the tied crotchets are utilised here to accommodate the text or whether the extension of the vowels in the words is utilised to accommodate the music. But there is no alteration to the crotchet pulse. Where there are no tied crotchets there are changes in the music, either movement of thirds or seconds, and in the case of the word *Tevita* (A1) extended crotchets to accommodate the rhythm.

³⁵ As mentioned earlier Lauan liturgy will be examined later in the Chapter when examining *polotu*. It has been noted that Lauans kept their own liturgy after first missionary contact while singing both the *taro* and *same* as well as their own *polotu*. All this music is the canon of Fijian Methodist liturgy, but the hymnody of Lau is particular to that Island Group. The *taro* of Delaitokatoka and this *same* of Ono-i-Lau (both Lauan) illustrate some of the differences as well as the many similarities to the others.

The pause at the end of the phrase A indicates firstly a change of musical pattern, tempo and style as the next phrase is sung by the soloists, and secondly time to reflect on the text.³⁶

Phrase B is an extended motif sung by the *laga* and *tagica*. Stylistically different from the introduction, this phrase has more flexibility of movement between parts; combinations of third and second chords and unison; and a pattern on the last four notes that becomes the solo motif for the rest of the composition. The tempo quickens and the crotchet rhythm is sung with the pulse (Example 21).

Example 21



The melodic movement in this phrase is similar to all the other compositions examined, both in the relationship between the soloists and in particular the movement between the chords. The choral pattern of unisons to thirds and thirds to seconds is repeated throughout the composition in various combinations, either in the constantly changing patterns of this phrase and the *same* of *Jiona*, or in the longer passages of the *same*, *Taniela na Parofita* or the *taro* of *Delaitokatoka*. All follow the compositional style of *meke*.

The minim of *oqo* is compositional not textual. The five-note motif completing this phrase is also repeated in the final phrase D (with different rhythmic patterning). The phrase ends with a short pause before singing phrase C and another change of musical patterning. Phrase C can be rhythmically subdivided into three sections (Example 22).

³⁶ There are similar pauses at the end of each stanza the three *meke* examined in Chapter 5:107-112 (CD tracks 1, 2 and 3).

Example 22

C 1 2

O Ma - ci - u ma vo - la na ti - ko na va - 3

le ni va - ka - ca - va - ca - va Ma ka - ci - vi ko - ya na Tu - ra - ga

The crotchet pulse established in the previous phrase is continued to the end of the *same*. As in the previous phrase the minims here are compositional, not text related. The distinctive patterning of the first section, a combination of third and second chords and minims and crotchets, is reminiscent (apart from rhythmic difference) of the patterning of the Delaitokatoka *taro* and *Same nei Jiona* following each motif. The same can also be said of section C2, in particular the long ostinato passages occasionally broken by movement to another chord.

This use of ostinato is utilised by the Fijians for long passages of text and in fact section C3 is really an extension of that ostinato, which has been rhythmically changed with the addition of minims.

The final phrase is musically related to the text. Essentially this is an antiphonal dialogue between the *druku* and *laga* and *tagica* (motif) where the last line of the stanza is repeated three times before resolving the *same* on the fundamental note F (Example 23).

Example 23

Mu - ri a - u

M P M

mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga Mu - ri a - u mo na ya - ga

The musical patterning changes again in this section and like the previous sections A and C, most of the chords are thirds, which with the added bass changes their nature.

To summarise, the template for this *same* while different from the other compositions in musical diversity has like the others all the characteristics of a known template. The Lauans have chosen to arrange their *same* differently in the choice of bass note, tempo changes, use of a combination of note values (minims, crotchets and quavers and tied crotchets) for rhythmic interest and musically diverse phrasing. At the same time they have utilised the *meke* compositional template as in the other compositions in their use of: chordal patterning, ostinato, motif, antiphonal response, drone bass and extended vowels in the text to fit the musical patterning.

Text

The introductory stanza is almost verbatim from the opening passage of The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter 1:1 in the Fijian New Testament:

Ai vola ni tubutubu I Jisu Karisto na luve i Tevita, na luve I Eparaama

(The book of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, the offspring of David and the offspring of Abraham).

The Greek translation of the *same* text from which the Fijian New Testament is taken is: ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’.³⁷ However in the opening stanza of the *same* there is no mention by name of Jesus Christ, instead the reference is to ‘*ni noda turaga*’ (Our Lord) rather than *Jisu Karisito* (Jesus Christ). The only mention of Jesus comes in the fifth stanza. It would have been deliberate on the part of the composer to make such a distinction to keep attention on the following text, rather than reveal the nature of the text from the opening stanza. This is typical of Fijian indigenous poetic style with its highly prized metaphor and riddle. The *same* is told in the first person and the narrator, in *meke* style, keeps the audience attentive with questions. Although the questions are

³⁷ The source of the English translation of the Greek New Testament comes from www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-text/newtestament.

unanswered, there is enough information and assumed Biblical knowledge to heighten the interest, hence the pauses.

The first clue to the question of the source of the receptacle for this information is given in the mention of Matthew. Matthew is mentioned as the narrator and his occupation – a receiver of custom – a tax collector. His chance meeting with and subsequent following of the Lord (Matthew 9:9) establishes his credentials as a writer, so verifying the recorder and recording of such an important historical event. There is no Biblical reference to this information in the text and once more an understanding of the New Testament is assumed to make the connection. The record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ comes from Matthew 1:17.

From here threaded through the next three stanzas is the mention of ‘fourteen generations’, reference to the generational connection to Abraham. The continual mention of ‘fourteen generations’ bypasses verses 2–16 which detail the ancestors of Jesus and instead focuses on verse 17 summarising the preceding sixteen verses. However the actual information in verse 17 is not told at once but reiterated through the following three stanzas. Also woven through the text are stories of Jewish migration and colonisation from Abraham to Jesus. There are clues all the way through the text to the full substance of the *same* text which, had the composer followed the Biblical text to the letter, would have taken many stanzas to retell. Instead the text has been written in six stanzas in the tradition of Fijian of *talanoa-taka* (storytelling) with questions, hints, fragments of Biblical text, references obvious and oblique, and a sense of excitement in the telling of momentous events connected with the genealogy of Jesus.

The final stanza is the ‘golden verse’. Everything preceding it, the continual mention of the ‘fourteen generations’ albeit with subtle variations; the establishment of Matthew as the recorder of the genealogy and his credentials; the movement of the Jewish people away from their homeland; the birth of Jesus – all lead to the revelation of the number of generations counted in the genealogy. It is then announced that by the composer’s calculation, ‘Let me state the number of generations divided once or twice until the Saviour’, the number, ‘The whole sum’ is forty-two generations’. To which the narrator exclaims ‘The world has been flooded’.

This *same* text is an excellent example of Fijian indigenous poetry. It addresses the difficulty of imparting important information from the New Testament in a manner that keeps attention and focus on the story through clever oblique connections to the main story. All the references are reminders of known events: Matthew, a disciple of Jesus; Abraham and David, leaders of the Jewish people; the exile of the Jews to Babylon; and a brief mention of the birth of Jesus, and yet the object of the text is establishing a genealogy. The chronology of the genealogy of Jesus is well documented in the opening chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, but apart from the mention of Abraham and David and the constant mention of generation numbers, there is no other direct mention of agnatic relationships. The precise Biblical source on which the text is built is actually only verse 17: 'So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away unto Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away unto Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations'. The narration, with the inclusion of related details, slowly builds to the last stanza, the 'golden verse' in which it is stated that through his birth, Christ's agnatic connections date back through forty-two generations to Abraham. Each stanza except the introduction has within it a subject for discussion and the whole *same* is full of interesting details and Biblical references.

The *same*, *Gauna Oqo* (This Time) sung by women of Saunaka village, Nadi (CD Track 9).

*Gauna oqo na gauna vinaka.
Na nona gauna noda Turaga na
kauveilatai e colata.
E nanumi vuravura na tamata
drodro vakawai ki na bukawaqa
madua siga ko vuravura*

This is the right time
It is the time of our Lord, the Cross
he carried for the world
where people are flowing
like water to the fire of hell
Shame on the world

*Sa qai vosa nai Vakabula
E vakamamasu ka sa tukuna
"I Tamaqu me'u mate me ra bula"
Dra tabu sa drodro malua
me savai na lomai vuravura
Bula vou dina na kena gauna na*

The Saviour has spoken. He pleaded
and said;
"My father let me die for them"
The sacred blood gently flowed for
the cleansing of the world
New life truly this is the time

*tamata kece me vakabauta.
Me nanumi na dra i Jisu(ya)*

for people to believe
to remember the blood of Jesus

*Sa cabo oti nai soro yaga
Sa qai vosa noda Turaga,
E vosa vei ira na nona tamata
Etukuni koya mei gaunisala
“Ko au na sala na vuni dina
na vuni bula kei na Rarama”
Madua siga ko vuravura ya.*

The sacrifice has been offered
Then our Lord spoke of himself to his
People when he said “I am the Way,
The source of the Truth and the source
Of Life and of Light”.

Shame on the world.

*Me kua soti na vakatitiqa
Sa vo e dua na cakacaka
na veilewai levu na yacana
Na lewai kina ko vuravura
Me wasei rua kina na tamata.
Ki nai mawi na tamata cala
ki nai matau na tamata
yagu ko lomalagi ra sa rawata
Sa oti kina ko vuravura alleluia
ki na Turaga*

Do not disbelieve. There is one thing
left the Last Judgement to judge
The world, to divide people.
To the left all the wrong-doers,
To the right those who have attained
Heaven by their good works

The world will end then alleluia to
the Lord.

The final *same Gauna Oqo* (This Time) is written in the form of a lesson in the *meke ni lēlē* style, with pauses at the end of each stanza for reflection on the preceding text. The text of *Gauna Oqo* focuses on one of the central tenets of Methodism that God sacrificed his only son Jesus Christ so the world might be saved. There are oblique Biblical and metaphorical references in the four stanzas and a text full of symbolism.

Musical structure

The template for this *same* has all the characteristics with the addition of a *vakasalavoavoa* (descant) to the other compositions examined: a steady crotchet pulse, solo motif, introduction by the soloists *laga* and *tagica*, long ostinato passages, chords of thirds and seconds as well as unisons and extended vowels to accommodate the musical phrase. There are two musical phrases, each following the two solo motifs (Example 24).

Example 24

Gauna Oqo Same

Tonal center D

♩ = 108 approx (1st stanza)

Saunaka (Nadi)

Vakasalavoavaa

Laga Tagica

M A1

Ga-u-na oq-o na ga-u-na vi-na (a a i a) ka Na no-dra ga-u-na no-da

Druku (Chorus)

M A2

Tu-ra-ga na ka-u-ve-i la-ta-i e co-la (a a i a)-ta E na-nu-mi

vu-ra vu-ra na ta-ma-ta dro-dro va-ka-wa-i ki-na bu-

ka-wa-qa ma-du-a ni si-ga ko vu-ra-vu-ra (ya)

(3 second pause)

The short introduction to the *same* is an extended motif sung by the soloists, ending on the motif proper. The patterning consists mostly of movement between third chords then repeated in the motif. The six note motif is sung on the word *vina(a a i a)ka*, with added vowels to complete the phrase ending the first line of the stanza (Example 25).

Example 25

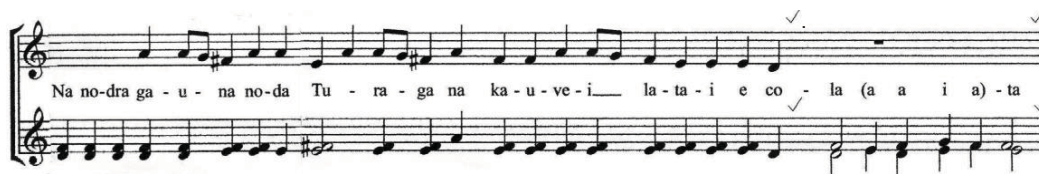
M

Ga-u-na oq-o na ga-u-na vi-na (a a i a) ka

The motif begins and ends with minims and like the motif of *Same nei Jiona* has a combination of thirds to unison, ending on a second chord. It is utilised in this *same* where a full stop in the text occurs.³⁸

There is no break after the motif as the next phrase begins with the chorus. Although there is no clearly defined note patterning in the relation to the movement between third and second chords or the text, nevertheless the ostinato patterning is in keeping with Fijian compositional style and follows the patterning of long phrases of the other compositions (Example 26).

Example 26



The *vakasalavoavoa* (descant) enters for the first time. The presence of a descant is common to secular *meke* and *polotu* but not as common in *same* compositions, especially in the distinctive form seen in this *same* (Example 27).

Example 27



The descant line (when present) is always the highest female part in Fijian *meke* composition and either doubles the melodic line or sings an inverted drone on the fundamental note.³⁹ Yet here as in the *same*, *Au Tubutubu* the descant musical pattern

³⁸ It should be noted that the punctuation in Fijian prosody again is a Western not a Fijian practice.

³⁹ In collecting this music I encountered some villages where the singing of the descant was important, usually among the older women of the congregation. The descant part mostly involved singing above the chorus in a sort of reverse drone on the tonal centre. I was unable to ascertain whether this practice was regional, because *same* are oral compositions passed down through generations and different geographical locations. There is however similar musical patterning in some *meke*, so it could be assumed that the *same* sung in this style are a natural extension of an existing form.

‘fills out’ the harmony defining major and minor intervals with predominantly second chords of the *druku*. The contrapuntal pattern of the descant is basically the movement between two notes with passing notes in between (Example 27). In phrase A, unlike the end of the stanza, all parts finish on the D before the entry of the second motif.

The style of this descant is reminiscent of other *meke* forms, in particular *vaqiqivatu*. In *meke* composition there is a male part known as the *vaqiqivatu*, which enters after the *meke* has started and leaves before it has finished.⁴⁰ The similarity here is the lateness of the descant entry in the first phrase, and a woven pattern independent of the *druku* ostinato. The latter is also reminiscent of the second part of a two-part polyphonic composition known as *vakalutuivoce* which weaves its melodic line around the *laga*.⁴¹

The patterning for A2 is an extension of phrase A. Again the descant fills out the harmony against the long extended ostinato in the *druku*, in a repeat of the patterning in phrase A. The first stanza then ends on an unresolved major second chord and an abrupt vocal *ya* in all parts (Example 28).

Example 28

The musical score for Example 28 consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (F# major, bass clef).
 System 1: The vocal line begins with the lyrics "E na - nu - mi". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note ostinato.
 System 2: The vocal line continues with the lyrics "vu - ra vu - ra na ta - ma - ta dro - dro va - ka - wa - i ki na bu -". The piano accompaniment continues the eighth-note ostinato.
 System 3: The vocal line concludes with the lyrics "ka - wa - qa ma - du - a ni si - ga ko vu - ra - vu - ra (ya)". The piano accompaniment continues the eighth-note ostinato until the final note, which is followed by a 3-second pause.

⁴⁰ The *vaqiqivatu* was previously discussed in Chapter 5:106.

⁴¹ *Vakalutuivoce* is mentioned in Chapter 5:101.

The non-resolution here is unusual because, as in all other compositions examined, the final phrase always ends on the fundamental note, which also signals the end of the stanza. Like many *meke* though there follows a three second pause, before the next and following stanzas are sung.

This *same* like all the other compositions follows a known style: steady crotchet pulse; movement between chords of thirds and seconds (unison in the introduction and the motif); two solo motifs; a descant whose melodic pattern is woven above and with the chorus; long ostinato passages; extended vowels to fit the musical template; a spoken vocable on the final extended syllable (a practice typical of Fijian *meke*.) and a prosody that is fitted in the Fijian manner to the music. To the template is added a personal style in the particular note patterning of the introduction; use of extended vowels not words to fill the motifs; the extensive use of second chords in the long ostinato passages and a musically unresolved ending. These factors, including the utilisation of Fijian prosody for the religious text fit into a known template of Fijian compositional practise.

Text

The text of this *same* is composed in the *vucu* style of storytelling. The subject involves one of the central tenets of Methodism – sacrifice and redemption. From the opening stanza the moral of the text is stated, Christians are reminded of their redemption through Christ's death and the fate for unbelievers in the 'fires of hell'. The Biblical reference to 'hellfire' (although not mentioned in the text) is found in Revelations 20:14-15 and links the subjects of the first and last stanza. The last line '*Madua siga ko vuravura* , Shame on the world' is echoed throughout the *same* reminding the faithful of their unworthiness and consequent need for the magnanimity of Christ's sacrifice.

Again the second stanza reflects on Christ's sacrifice, with the vivid image of flowing blood as a cleanser for the world, the ultimate sacrificial gesture for new life. The words or the sense of the words of Christ on the Cross, 'Father why hast thou forsaken me?' the composer interprets as 'My father let me die for them', highlighting

the magnitude of the sacrifice.⁴² The composer then reflects on the gift of ‘new life’ given through the shedding of blood and juxtaposes the violence of death with the ‘gently flowing sacred blood’ as imagery for death and salvation. The text is written for reflection on the accounts of the Crucifixion in the four Gospels of the Four Apostles without direct mention or quotation, because once again prior knowledge is assumed.

Although the Crucifixion is briefly alluded to in the opening line of the third stanza, the rest of the text deviates from that theme in a style of indigenous poetic licence known as *kenai kau*.⁴³ The focus changes to Christ’s meeting with his disciples which took place before the Crucifixion. The Biblical reference for this stanza is John 14:6 ‘Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ There is no attempt here at chronological accuracy, instead the composer follows the theme of Christ the Redeemer with the words ‘the source of the Truth (*vu-ni-dina*), and the source of Life (*vu-ni-bula*)’ directly quoting from the Fijian New Testament (Joni 4:6) ‘*Oi au na sala, kei na vu-ni-dina, kei na vu-ni-bula*’. The use of the Biblical quotation, already familiar to Fijian Christians, adds impetus to the content of the *same* text, reinforcing the message of Christ’s omnipotence. And again the faithful are reminded of their unworthiness with ‘Shame on the world’.

There are many Biblical sources for a vision of the Last Judgement in the Old and New Testaments, but Matthew 25:3-46 would seem the nearest in spirit to the final *same* stanza of the allusion to the separation of the believers and non-believers. Although the last stanza is the ‘golden verse’ it is really the eschatological culmination of the previous three stanzas. There is the warning in the opening line ‘Do not disbelieve’, followed by a vision of the final judgement. Here all are held to account and divided according to their state, or lack of grace. The *same* text does not tell of the consequences for those who are not the chosen ones but rather concentrates

⁴² The *same* quotation is not found in any of the four canonical Gospels as text spoken by Christ on the Cross but neither do the Gospels all agree on exactly what was said at the time as the Gospels were written some time after the event.

⁴³ There is no exact dictionary meaning for these words in either Capell or Hazlewood. For reference see Tippet 1980:32. As discussed previously, *kenai kau* means a stanza that is inserted to change the theme or mood of a poem, which may or may not have relevance to the theme of the *meke*.

on the rewards for those ‘who have attained Heaven as a free gift of God.’⁴⁴ The final line ‘The world will end then alleluia to the Lord’ is certainly a warning to all to be ready, for there will be a Last Judgement rewarding only the believers.

The text of the *same* is written in the form of a sermon and the language is plainer than some other *same* texts yet there is still metaphor and imagery: rivers of people, flowing blood, fires of hell, cleansing the world, new life and a heavenly vision of the Last Judgment. There is also a constant reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, sacrifice for sins. The tenets of Methodism: ‘atonement, sanctification, love for Christ, guilt, fear of hell and of unworthiness’ are all present in these four concise stanzas, each could stand alone as topics for discussion and yet there is a linking thread to the final stanza, the vision of the Last Judgment and a salient reminder of the need for Christian constancy.⁴⁵

History and Musical examination of *polotu*

Polotu

Polotu like *same* is a non-Fijian word and although there is no clear explanation for its origin, it appears to be an acculturation from the early missionaries in the eastern Lau Group, particularly the Tongan missionaries sent by Taufa’ahau in 1838 to help Cross and Cargill establish the Fijian mission. As has been discussed, there are historical cross-cultural links between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa dating back several thousand years, which have been maintained.⁴⁶

Although there is no *p* in the Bauan dialect, the dictionaries of Capell (1991:160) and Hazlewood (1850:99) note that *p* is present in Lauan dialects. Moyle (1987:34) offers an explanation for the meaning of the word *pō* in the Tongan language, saying the word has two meanings, ‘night’ and an ‘occasion for’, and McLean (1999:144-145),

⁴⁴ See Chapter Three for a previous discussion on the attainments of Methodist spirituality in the section ‘The people called Methodists’.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ For discussion of these historical links see Chapter 2:8-9.

quoting a 1918 report, also notes the use of the word ‘bolotu’ [*po lotu*] which he says referred to a choir competition between church congregations on Sunday nights, an observation which supports Moyle’s. The second part of the word *polotu* is *lotu*, the Polynesian word for Christianity, also the adopted word for the Christian church in Fiji.⁴⁷ It would seem that in the Lauan context the word *polotu*, while not in itself a Fijian label, has been appropriated as a generic term for all music associated with the liturgy of Lauan congregations, with the exception of *same*, *taro* and the singing of the Methodist prayers.

Included in the genre of *polotu* are: all hymns with text from the *Ai Vola Ni Sere Ni Lotu Wesele E Viti* (The Fijian Hymn Book); hymn text composed by Lauan Christians, either set to their own music or to music dating back to earlier hymn tunes which have been indigenised; the method of performing some of this music; and of particular interest here, Lauan compositions with indigenous poetic text (like *same*) set to music which like their hymns have been appropriated and indigenised.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for the adoption of *polotu* as the word (not necessarily meaning) for the Lauan liturgy was the presence in Lau and other parts of Fiji of a Tongan/Tongaviti community among whom the missionaries had made first contact.⁴⁸ The early converts would have been familiar with the Tongan *b (p)olotu* as were the first Tongan mission helpers from whom the word may have entered the vocabulary of the Lauan mission and come to represent their liturgy, as the word *same* would in later missions in Vitilevu. Many of these communities were also in close contact with their own countrymen in Tonga, which at the time of missionary arrival in Fiji had been converted to Christianity for only thirteen years. Tongan Christians were singing Methodist hymns and beginning to appropriate those hymns for their own compositions. However, these early Tongan hymns Moyle (1987:25) tells us, were called *hiva usu*, *hiva* meaning song and *usu* an archaic word of disputed meaning. *Hiva usu* though was not a name adopted in the Fijian church, rather the Fijians used their own word *laga sere* (song) and referred instead to their own appropriated hymns as *sere vaka lotu* or *sere ni lotu* (songs of the church), as in the

⁴⁷ Both Hazlewood (1850:79) and Capell (1991:126) note the word *lotu* refers to the Christian religion.

⁴⁸ See the discussion in Chapter 4 entitled ‘*Talatalas, vakatawas* and teachers in Christian Fiji’. See also Tippet 1980:32-33.

title of the Fijian Hymn Book. *Hiva usu* and the Wesleyan hymns of the missionaries were the liturgy first heard by Fijian converts. Tippet says of the early Fijian church ‘The Fijians were very discriminating in religious expression and behaviour. They borrowed from both Tonga and the West but they adapted everything to their own lifestyle. Thus in the Windward Islands [Lau]) the *polotu* became indigenised and in now regraded as Lauan i.e. Fijian.’ (1980:33). Tippet is saying therefore that adopting a name identifies the origin of the composition from whose characteristics evolve a new and indigenous form. It could also be argued that Fijians themselves have always adopted styles of compositions which become part of their wider repertoire, as in the *vakamalolo meke*, and others originating from cross-cultural contact.

Although none of this liturgical music bore the name *polotu* (which, as previously noted, referred in the early 20th century to a Tongan hymn and anthem singing competition), a style of singing in the Lauan liturgy became associated with the word and in time came to be referred to the styles of composition by that name.⁴⁹ *Polotu* hymns using the text of the Fijian Hymn Book are oral compositions of indigenised Lauan origin. In contrast, the music of the Fijian Hymn Book while also influenced by Wesleyan hymns, uses tonic sol-fa notation. The use of this notation was useful in the teaching of anthems and other ‘borrowed’ Western music and is still in current use in Fijian Methodist congregations. The text of both kinds of hymns is sung in Bauan and taken from the same source, so there may often be two different tunes to the same Fijian Hymn Book text (see CD track 10 for a comparison of two hymn tunes to the text of *Tuberi Au* (FBH 212) – the first hymn is standard and the second Lauan in *polotu* form).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ It has already been noted that Lauans continued to sing their own liturgy (Calvert 1985:224) and still do today although the liturgy is now sung in Bauan.

⁵⁰ Although it is not possible to say exactly how long Lauans sang their liturgy in their own dialect, it is likely that when Bauan became the dialect of Biblical translations it also became the standard text of the liturgy. In my field recordings I have a few Lauan hymns sung in the dialect of the congregation, but these hymns are not a standard part of Lauan liturgical music.



Fig 16: Church worship in Delaivioni, Taveuni, 2003. The male singer in the blue shirt in the centre is the *faji* who leads the congregation in a *polotu* hymn. Photograph: H. Black

Another practice falling under the generic *polotu* is a liturgical performance known by the same name in which *polotu* hymns, anthems and other music of the liturgy are sung as part of a Christian gathering involving the meeting of an unprescribed number of choirs for prayers and hymn singing. The *polotu* opens with the congregation seated (usually in their choral groups) in the meeting place, church or a hall, while a choir outside commences singing. It is the usual practice for a verse to be sung before processing up the aisle to the front of the congregation. When the hymn or choral piece is finished, a prayer is said and a collection of money may be offered. The first choir then joins the congregation as the next choir waiting outside repeats the performance. This *polotu* can go on for as long as the congregation wants and is a popular means of a communal gathering and celebration.⁵¹ The origin of these practices is unclear but may have been influenced by Tongan meetings of a similar kind (McLean 1999:144-45), although there is no clear description as to the exact performance of this kind of meeting.

⁵¹ This sort of *polotu* has become popular in Fiji and is a very successful moneyraiser for the community and the church. Mrs Sainimari Niukula (wife of the past President of the Methodist Church) remembered that in the 1950s a *polotu* meeting took place over a period of some six or seven hours in Centenary Church in Suva and remarked that this was not an uncommon practice (personal communication, August, 2005).

The third of the musical genre of *polotu* and of particular importance are the Lauan compositions with indigenous text. Of this genre Tippet says:

One of the finest examples of the way in which a truly pre-Christian cultural element can remain and impress itself on a young Church, is the custom [Fijian] known as *Polotu*. Culturally (i.e. in form) it is thoroughly endemic; religiously it is thoroughly Christian and therefore new. Here is an example, not of a Christian imposition on an ancient culture, but an ancient culture's steadfast refusal to disintegrate in spite of dramatic religious change.... These are ancient lyrics, composed in the measures and with the techniques that were once used for the hero-stories of Fijian mythology. It was in these rhythms that islanders of generations of the pre-Christian era heard [their stories].... The technique ... has been transferred to the new faith (1980:84-95).

Like *same*, *polotu* are wholly composed by Fijian Christians with text written in indigenous poetic style on Biblical subjects of the Old and New Testament, theological subjects in the manner of lessons and records of Church history. Like *same*, *polotu* in this genre are sung in the *So Kalou* before and often complementing the theme of the gospel. Unlike *same* the whole congregation, not just the women, participate in the singing and are led by a single tenor known as *faji* who keeps time with a triangle (*taimi*).⁵² *Polotu* in this genre have four standard parts, bass (*drugu* - Fijian), tenor (*faji* - Tongan), alto (*oloto* - Tongan) and soprano (*kanokano* - Tongan) as in the English hymns, however to these parts are added up to four others (with some doubling) included at the composers' discretion.⁵³ The names for these extra parts are known variously as *tenoa* (different from *faji* but still in the same range), *oloto* (another alto part in a similar range to the main alto) *solo* (which is in the top soprano range) and *vakasalavoavao* (descant). It would seem some of these names have been adopted to distinguish the *polotu* style of composition from others and also as an echo of their origins. Assigning parts is up to the composer and varies from island to island, for threaded through the four main parts are others added by the composer, creating a musical tapestry and a distinguishing compositional style.

⁵² There is no clear evidence of the origin of the triangle except for the presence of the Western missionaries in Lau. Keeping time though is an integral part of secular *meke* particularly for changes of rhythm for which the *lali ni meke* is utilised.

⁵³ The naming of parts varies from island to island which can cause some confusion. Their names, like the four set parts are a mixture of indigenised English, Tongan and Fijian.



Fig 17: Working with Mrs Galu Vakabua, Tukavesi Village, 2007.

Photograph: M. Dituvaluva

Polotu compositions also reflect the speech patterns of the composer and are recognised for this regional distinction: for instance *polotu* compositions from the island of Fulaga in southern Lau tend to be slow and deliberate in style, whereas *polotu* compositions from Vanuabalavu in northern Lau are lighter and quicker following their speech patterns. The freedom with which the parts are added also reflects the musical tradition of the composers' *mataqali* and the use of those parts passed down through the generations. Although *polotu* originates in Lau they are also sung outside Lau wherever Lauan communities are situated.⁵⁴ The *polotu* in this discussion was taught to the Methodist congregation of Tukavesi village in Vanualevu by Mrs Galu Vakabua (Fig. 17) whose uncle, from the southern island of Kabara, had composed it in the early 1930s. This and other *polotu* of this genre are the intellectual property of the composer's family and jealously guarded.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Lauan church ministers working in different congregations for instance teach *polotu* to their parishioners. When I judged the Annual Choir competition in Suva in 2003, a choir from Rotuma came to sing a *polotu* taught to them by a Lauan minister who had been stationed there.

⁵⁵ It is with the family's permission that I have included their *polotu* for examination. I have also included a recording (Track 12) of another version of *Ko Solomon* sung by the village of Naigigi, Vanualevu. The text has been appropriated and is sung in the *polotu* style of that village.

Polotu in this genre are substantial compositions with continual changes of tempo and style in the manner of secular *meke*. Like *same* the stanzas are written in *meke* poetic form using the same textual devices with the addition of vowels and lexically meaningless tags at the end of phrases to achieve rhythm. Tippet calls this form ‘thought-rhythm’ which he says is ‘a significant configuration of cultural poetic pattern’ not found in English poetry (1980:29). The music is composed and taught orally and contains many secular *meke* characteristics including a leading part in the middle of the composition, antiphonal passages, changes in tempo and rhythm, changes in themes (*kenai kau* and *dulena*), accompaniment, limited movement and close correlation between all the parts, and a chorus.

The *polotu*, *Ko Solomoni ni Tui* (Solomon the King) sung by the Methodist congregation of Tukavesi village, Vanualevu (CD Track 11)

Ko Solomoni, na vuku levu
E vuravura, e kerea ga
Vei koya na Kalou

Solomon, the wisest on earth
 asked God

Me lewai ira na kawa Isireili
E na gauna e sa buli kina me Tui
Era wili taucoko mai

To judge the descendents of Israel
 at the time of his coronation as King
 They were all counted (as in a census)

E va walega na ka e sega ni kila
Nai davodavo ni gone mai na
kete na yalewa
Nai vukavuka ni manumanu
mai na tauaca
Nai doladola ni gata
mai na dela ni vatu
Nai lakolako ni waqa mai na dela ni wai

There were only four things he did not
 know
 The baby’s bed in the
 womb of the woman
 The flight of the young bird
 from the nest
 The place where the snake slithers
 on the rock
 The way the boat sails on the water

Chorus

Koya na Rosi ni Saroni
Kei na viavia ni buca

She is the Rose of Sharon
 And the lily of the field



Fig 18: Recording the singing of the *polotu*, *Ko Solomoni ni Tui* in the village of Tukavesi, Vanualevu. Note that the men are gathered around the *faji*, as he leads the singing. Photo E. Black.

Musical structure

The *polotu*, *Ko Solomoni ni Tui* is a six-part composition with accompaniment, led by the *faji* tenor part. The parts from the lowest to the highest include *drugu* (bass), *tenoa* (tenor), *faji* (tenor), *oloto 2* (alto 2), *kanokano* (alto 1) and *solo* (soprano). The naming of the parts in this composition is the composers' choice and while some names are different from other *polotu* compositions the musical structure is fundamentally the same.⁵⁶ The whole congregation participates in the singing led by the *faji* and the text is Fijian prosody. The *faji*, lead singer and conductor, is always a male solo part who keeps time by beating a triangle (*taimi*) or in smaller gatherings by tapping on a book, or the mat or a couple of spoons.⁵⁷ Alto 2 is the principal harmonising female part and

⁵⁶ In some parts of Lau including the island of Moce the *kanokano* is the soprano part, while in other islands the soprano part is called the *tali* (meaning to weave) while the descant is the *kanokano*.

⁵⁷ His role is similar to the keyboard conductors of the European Baroque period.

the bass the principal lower male part. These parts then form the triadic musical structure, while the others: soprano doubling the *faji*, alto 1 and tenor 2 in this composition weave around and between them as in the *same*, *Gauna Ogo*. *Polotu* are oral compositions and from an early age each member of the congregation knows their part; for instance if an alto, this part you will always be what you sing. Outside the triadic staple though there is some interpretative freedom, but such is the musical structure of the *polotu* that freedom is limited, as the following examination will show. There are five changes of tempo and metre and all are announced by a change of beat on the triangle. The *faji* leads into each new section, with an upbeat on the vowel of the previous note (Example 28 - X).⁵⁸

Based around the tonal centre of D, the harmonic structure of this composition stays in D with no modulation. The changes in tempi and rhythm typify Fijian *meke* polyphony, especially in some narratives and dances, and are utilised in this composition to highlight changes in the text. Metres range from 12/8 to 2/4, 3/4, 9/8 and back to 2/4. Apart from the passing notes all the parts stay firmly within the tonal centre with much doubling of parts (Example 29).⁵⁹

The musical template for the opening stanza of the *polotu* is a *vei sau* (antiphonal) dialogue between the *faji* and soprano and the other four parts in a crotchet quaver rhythmic pattern (Example 29) over a steady crotchet pulse.⁶⁰ The stanza begins with an opening phrase by the *faji* keeping time on the *taimi*, answered by the bass, tenor and alto 2. The phrase is then repeated by the *faji* together with the soprano answered in the same way by the other four parts. This antiphonal patterning is sung three times before the entry of the *kanokano* who sings above alto 2 with the *faji* and the soprano to the end of the section and is then repeated. The dotted crotchet rhythm is maintained throughout this phrase including the *taimi* beat. In this *polotu* the beat of the accompaniment varies between the rhythmic patterning of the notes and the pulse.

⁵⁸ Example 28 is the first stanza in full, but the *polotu* is a long composition, so only certain passages will be included here for examination. However the full transcription will be in the appendices.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that the composer would not have thought of the composition in Western harmonic terms: key structures, time signatures, modulations et cetera, but would have used the triadic base as building blocks to which other parts were added as in Fijian polyphony.

⁶⁰ For ease of recognition the bass (*drugu*), tenor (*tenoa*), soprano (*solo*) and alto 2 (*oloto*) will be referred to by their English names. The *faji* and *kanokano* will remain with their Fijian names.

Example 29

Ko Solomoni ni Tui Polotu

Tukavesi

Tonal Center D
♩ = 63, 66

2nd time only

Solo
Ko So - lo - mo - ni Na vu - ku - le - vu

Kanokano
(Oloto 1)

Oloto 2
Ko So - lo - mo - ni Na vu - ku - le -

Tenoa
Ko So - lo - mo - ni Na vu - ku - le -

Faji
Ko So - lo - mo - ni Na vu - ku - le - vu

Drugu
Ko So - lo - mo - ni Na vu - ku - le -

Taimi

S.
E vu - ra - vu - ra E ke - ve - a ga

O1
E ke - ve - a ga

O2
vu E vu - ra - vu - ra E ke - ve - a ga

T.
vu E vu - ra - vu - ra E ke - ve - a ga

Fa.
E vu - ra - vu - ra E ke - ve - a ga (a)

Dr.
vu E vu - ra - vu - ra E ke - ve - a ga (a)

Tai.

♩ = 84

S. Ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo - (o) Ka - lo - u

O1. ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo (o) Ka - lo - u

O2. ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo (o) Ka - lo - u

T. Ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo - (o) Ka - lo - u

Fa. Ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo - (o) (o) - u Ka - lo - u (o) - u

Dr. ve - i ko - ya na Ka - lo - (o) Ka - lo - u

Tai.

At the end of every phrase, the next change is indicated by the change of *taimi* beat and the up-beat solo entry of the *faji*, before the entry of the *drugu*. This first change is between stanzas as well as phrases and announced here by a change in metre to a faster crotchet pulse, and the two quaver up-beats on the extended last two vowels of *Kalou* (o u) (Example 29 - X). The rhythmic patterning in each repeated part, of which there are three, is the same with the exception of the tenor entry in the first statements (Example 30 X).

Example 30

S. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa I - si (i) - ri (i) - li

O1. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa I - si (i) - ri (i) - li

O2. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa I - si (i) - ri (i) - li

T. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa I - si - (i) - ri (i) - li

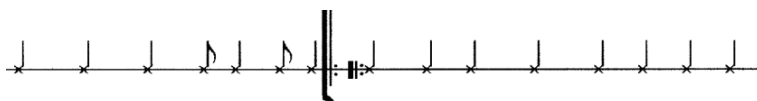
Fa. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa I - si (i) - ri (i) - li (i i)

Dr. Me le-wai ir - a le-wai i - ra na ka - wa si - ri - li

Tai.

Although the rhythm is the same, the movement between parts is of contrasts and a closely woven pattern. The overlapping parts weave through each other in small melodic steps, some in similar, others in contrary motion, never more than a third or fourth apart; the chordal examination shows much doubling. Each of the three phrases has similar melodic patterning until the final phrase, which comes to an end with the heralding of a rhythmic change in the accompaniment alone (Example 31).

Example 31



The third section is short and without the bass which only returns at the end of the second repeat. By deliberately pitching all parts in the female range it would seem the composer was drawing attention to the text:

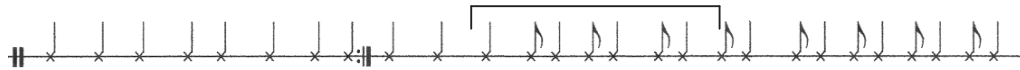
‘E va wale(ga) na ka e siga ni kila; There were only four things he [Solomon] did not understand’ (Example 32).

Example 32

The image shows a musical score for Example 32, featuring multiple vocal and instrumental parts. The score is written for Soprano (S.), Oboe 1 (O1), Oboe 2 (O2), Tenor (T.), Flute (Fl.), Drums (Dr.), and Tai. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 66$ and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in English and a local language. The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line. The first system contains the first two phrases of the music, and the second system contains the third phrase. The lyrics for the first system are: "wi - li ta - u (u) co - ka (a a a) ga". The lyrics for the second system are: "E (e) va wa - le - ga na ka". The Tai part at the bottom is a single melodic line with a repeat sign and a key signature change.

The tempo is slowed and most of the melodic movement in a similar direction gives an impression of harmonised unity. This phrase has a steady crotchet pulse and contrasts markedly with the denser note patterning of the preceding phrase. Crotchets, quavers, dotted minims and a slower tempo give this whole phrase a stately air. The wordpainting here effectively captures listeners' attention in preparation for the phrase that follows, again heralded by a change in beat in the *taimi*. The change in tempo is played out through the semibreve – the last note of the previous phrase (Example 33/34).

Example 33



The tempo returns to the original dotted crotchet beat of the opening phrase and starts with a short quaver introduction by the *faji*. Articulating the four important points of the text in answer to the preceding phrase, this is longest phrase in the *polotu*.

Example 34

♩. = 66

1. 2.

S. e (e) se - ga (a) ni ki - la ni ki - la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

O1 e (e) se - ga ni ki - la ni ki - la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

O2 e (e) se - ga ni ki (i) la ni ki (i) la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

T. e se - ga ni ki - la ni ki - la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

Fa. e se - ga ni ki - la ni ki - la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

Dr. ni ki - la Na - i da-vo - da-vo (o) ni go-ne

Tai.

All parts sing the same rhythm through the repeated patterning as the four points of the text are vocalised, yet each part with the exception of the *faji* and soprano moves independently, weaving a polyphonic pattern around and through each other. All parts including the *faji* and soprano move between smaller intervals in their individual parts but not against each other. The *kanokano* for instance moves in thirds and fourths between the soprano and alto 2, while alto 2 moves in fifths and sixths against the soprano which, when inverted, gives the intervals of seconds and thirds. Both *kanokano* and tenor sing the same notes an octave apart, like the *faji* and soprano.

There is a musical dialogue between the three female parts in (a) *manumanu mai na ta waga*, particularly chords with intervals of fourths and seconds - A, D and E on 'waga', followed by repeated C# to B in the *kanokano* against the repeated G to F# in alto 2 against the E in the soprano sung against the A in the bass (Example 35).

Example 35

S. Na - i vu-ka - vu-ka (a) ni ma-nu - ma-nu mai na ta - wa-ca

O1 Na - i vu-ka - vu-ka (a) ni ma-nu - ma-nu mai na (a) ta - wa-ca

O2 Na - i vu-ka - vu-ka (a) ni ma-nu - ma-nu mai na ta - wa-ca

These intervals are sung against the A of alto 2 on *waga*, and the F# and E of alto 2 and soprano against the B of the *kanokano* on *mai*. The ending of the phrase also has a chordal progression with two seventh chords: a dominant seventh on *waga* and another seventh chord in fourth position on the sixth degree (B) on *dela*, all confluent in the tonic at the end of the phrase. But composers of this music are not trained and cannot write or read Western notation, the placing of notes around tonic and dominant triads comes from an indigenous compositional style rather than a deeper knowledge of another notation.

The composition then moves into the chorus and again this move is heralded on the *tai*mi by a change of rhythm from a dotted crotchet to quavers over the semibreve of the previous phrase and a quickening of the tempo (Example 36).

Example 36



The antiphonal dialogue between the *faji* and the other parts then follows in the chorus. The *faji*'s question is a short dialogue, answered by the chorus on a descending scale (with the exception of the bass), all parts singing the same rhythm. This pattern is repeated twice over the two lines of the text before another tempo change. This time there is a comprehensive second repeat as the composition returns to the opening phrase '*e va walega na ka e sega ni kila*' and the whole of the following phrases are repeated in the same first time pattern. When the composition returns for the second time the chorus is repeated again twice as the *polotu* fades to a slow completion on the final '*buca*' (Example 37).

Example 37

Example 37 is a musical score for a chorus, featuring antiphonal dialogue between the *faji* and other parts. The score is written for six parts: Soprano (S.), O1, O2, Tenor (T.), Fagot (Fa.), and Drum (Dr.), with a Tambourine (Tai.) part at the bottom. The tempo is marked as 76, and the score includes a 'fade' instruction. The lyrics are as follows:

S. Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu - ca_____

O1 Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu - ca_____

O2 Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu (u) - ca_____

T. Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu - ca_____

Fa. Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu - ca_____

Dr. Ko (o o) ya (ya) na Ro-si ni Sa-ro-ni Ke - i (i) na vi - a - vi - a ni bu-ca (a a) ni bu - ca_____

Tai. [Rhythmic notation]

Remnants of the origin of this genre of *polotu* are still to be found in this composition: echoes of triadic harmony, resolutions at the end of phrases, naming of parts and the repeated sections. Yet the composers of this music are not schooled in Western notation, and the music is not notated but taught orally. What evolved from those first Western/Tongan hymns are indigenised compositions overlaid with the indigenous polyphony of their *meke*. The signs are present in the music:

- same rhythm patterning
- small intervallic melodic movements
- sometimes overlapping parts
- doubling
- similar vocal positioning to *same* and *taro* compositions, with the melody in the middle and the other parts above and below in support
- antiphonal responses
- sectional repeats (as the solo motifs of *same*).

The bass in *polotu* moves between the rise and fall of the tonic and dominant yet the bass parts in *meke* compositions have a similar though smaller intervallic role, that of supporting cadential points having perhaps not quite so much movement. The *faji* in the role as leader has full control of the performance, in the same way as the *laga* in *meke*. He gives all the starting notes, sets the metre, heralds the tempo changes and leads into all the new phrases with the underlying metric and rhythmic beat utilised throughout the sections. The melodic movement in the *faji* and all the other parts is small and stepwise, ascending or descending, with occasional intervallic leaps of a fourth or third. The tenor and *faji* parts are reminiscent of *vakalutuivoce*, a *meke* popular with Lauans in two parts, sung by males on long sea voyages.⁶¹ The leader commences the *meke* and is joined by the *tagica*, weaving a pattern in and around the leading vocal line. Similarly such a pattern, although less musically sophisticated,

⁶¹ *Vakalutuivoce* (already mentioned in Chapter 5:101), meaning to drop the oars is a polyphonic *meke* without accompaniment or movement and sung as a diversion on long voyages. See Kubuabola, Seniloli and Vatucaawaqa 1978:10-11.

occurs between the tenor and the *faji* in the *polotu*. This distinctive patterning is not present between other parts, though there are part crossings in the composition as a whole. The two alto parts are similar in style to the *laga* and *tagica* of the *same*. Alto 2 has limited melodic movement, mostly between one to three notes frequently sung on a repeated ostinato pattern, while the *kanokano* (alto 1) singing above has more melodic freedom. The soprano has the melody with the *faji*, and the *kanokano* the decorative female part sometimes doubled with the tenor.

Text

The text of *Ko Solomoni ni Tui* is relatively short, which accounts for the many repeats, yet as with *same* text it has symbolism, metaphor and a diverse number of unstated Biblical references. Biblical knowledge is assumed as statements are made without explanation or enlargement. The text is written as one stanza with five musical divisions. There are however three distinct ideas: first, Solomon at the time of his coronation asked God for judgement; second, four things Solomon did not understand; third, Solomon was ‘the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley’.

The Biblical references for the first text are: 1 Kings 1:37-40, 1 Kings 3: 5-15 and 1 Chronicles 29: 20-25.

Ko Solomoni, na vuka levu
E vuravura, e kerea ga
Vei koya na Kalou

Solomon, the wisest on earth
 asked God

Me lewai ira na kawa Isirili
E na gauna e sa buli kina me Tui
Era wili taucoko mai

To judge the descendents of Israel
 At the time of his coronation as King
 They were all counted (as in census)

The Biblical texts refer to the accession of Solomon to the throne of David and the granting of wisdom to Solomon by God. The counting of the descendents of Israel mentioned in the text refers to the Israelites over whom Solomon reigned: ‘Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as King instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel hearkened to him. And all the princes, and the mighty men,

and all the sons likewise of King David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the King', 1 Chronicles 29:23-24.⁶²

Having established the wisdom of Solomon, the second idea in the text is to name four things that Solomon did not understand.

E va walega na ka e sega ni kila

There were only four things he did not know:

Nai davodavo ni gone ma una

The baby's bed in the

kete na yalewa

womb of the woman

Nai vukavuka ni manumanu

The flight of the young bird

mai na tauaca

from the nest

Nai doladola ni gata

The place where the snake slithers

mai na dela ni vatu

on the rock

Nai lakolako ni waqa mai na dela ni wai

The way the boat sails on the water

The Biblical reference here is Proverbs 30:18-19 'There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a young woman'. The *polotu* text is slightly altered from the original. The first point mentions a baby in the womb rather than the act of love between a man and a young woman. The second point mentions the flight of a young bird from the nest rather than an eagle (which is not a Fijian bird).

The last two are similar to the original text which is taken from the 'Song of Songs' 2:1:

Koya na Rosi ni Saroni

He is the Rose of Sharon

Kei na viavia ni buca

And the lily of the field

The composer's use of *koya* (third person pronoun) here changes the sense of the original text from I to he, which fits the storytelling style of the *polotu* (as in *same* text) although the quotation seems unrelated to the preceding text (*dulena*). These two lines are then sung four times.

⁶² <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>. This is also the text for the Handel's Coronation Anthem 'Zadok the Priest' who anointed Solomon as King of the Israelites.

The story of Solomon is a favourite with Fijian Christians for much is known about him from the Old Testament. He would have been considered a great chief with all the accompanying *mana*, yet in the text he preceded Christ. He is shown to have qualities valued by Christians: wisdom, justice and humility. Of the first two he chose to request the gift of wisdom to be able to rule with justice and fairness, and of the last Solomon, for all his power, still had the gift of simple wonderment at the ordinary things of God's creation. Here for these qualities he is celebrated in the 'golden verse' with Christian symbols of the flowers, rose – love and lily – purity, which are the composer's tribute to the qualities of Solomon.

Polotu poetic text like that of *same* assumes an intimate knowledge of the Bible to understand the symbolic and metaphorical references in the text. This short text is no exception and the linking of these three seemingly disparate ideas is inspiration for reflection. In true indigenous poetic style the text of *polotu* speaks directly to Fijians in the manner of their culture, connecting them to their Christian ethic.

Summary

From the outset of the mission, the appropriation of indigenous musical and poetic structures for Christian liturgy gave the Fijian Church a voice in the manner of their own culture speaking directly to the community. From examination of *taro*, *same* and *polotu* compositions it is clear that the text – Fijian prosody and Methodist catechism – had been fitted to existing musical form, one unifying force in an otherwise disparate society. All the compositions have the same musical template to which are added regional or personal style. Both the indigenous musical form and prosody were ideally suited for Christian liturgy. As Methodist theology was introduced into Fijian communities, Christian converts utilised their indigenous compositions as an evangelising tool to introduce the fundamental tenets of Methodism within the catechism and indigenous hymnody.

In the Biblical translations too, cultural models were used wherever possible to achieve a closer affinity with the stories. Instead of Biblical musical references and

without detracting from the text, *meke* and the Fijian instrumental canon in all their indigenous forms were used extensively.

Inspired by the early hymns of the Tongan missionaries, Lauan Christian converts assimilated the Tongan hymns into their own compositional style with their indigenous Christian text enabling the liturgy to speak to them directly. The indigenous texts of *same* and *polotu* are written with the hallmarks of their cultural practice: stanzas of different lengths, insertion of extra vowels and tags to complete a phrase for the rhythm and metre, stanzas of seemingly unrelated subjects (*kenai kau* and *dulena*), use of metaphorical and symbolic references, and inclusion of antiphonal stanzas and cultural references.

Inserted into their *meke* musical form, these compositions – *taro*, *same* and *polotu* – formed a unique and comprehensive liturgical canon for the Fijian Methodist Church all over the Fiji Islands which continue to this day.

Conclusion

Fijian society in the mid 19th century evolved over some 3,500BP following the arrival of the first people known as Lapita, the ancient Polynesians who colonised Fiji from Near Oceania. An Austronesian-speaking maritime people, they settled and resettled in variously sized communities. Over the following centuries was a continuous migration of peoples other than the original colonists, including Melanesians who are thought to have arrived around the 15th century. Fijian society evolved over time into complex, diverse, sociopolitical groups bound by ties of place, ancestor and language.

At the time of missionary contact Fijian society comprised a complicated web of disparate societies. Fison in his Paper entitled 'Land Tenure in Fiji' noted that:

The question between Ancient Custom and the Power of the Chiefs...is...complicated by the fact that neither one nor the other is uniform throughout the Group. Custom differs very widely. Succession, for instance, is through males in some parts of the Group, and through females in others, as among certain tribes on Vanualevu.... The chiefs too in some places are very powerful, while in others they have but little ruling authority, though they are profoundly revered. Hence no description of what is the custom in any one place can be taken as of universal application (1903:3).

Finding a workable solution to this demographic paradox was crucial to the missionaries' success. Recognising and engaging the powerful forces driving Fijian societies was the single most important factor in their introduction of Christianity. Aware of their vulnerable position and dependence on chiefly goodwill, the missionaries in supporting the 'existing structure of Fijian authority' would introduce Christianity without, says France, 'a violent cultural clash' (1969:34, also Williams 1985: Chapter 2, Baleiwaqa 2003: Chapter 3).

“Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of God upon the earth (Wesley 1951:215).

In this emotive letter to Alexander Mather on 6th August 1777 John Wesley exhorted his Methodist brethren to be fearless, pure in their hearts and use all followers to convert the faithless. Some fifty-five years later the echo of these words would resound in the work of the indigenous Fijian Christian men and women who introduced Christianity to their own people. Critical to this success was the harnessing for the liturgy of their indigenous music (*meke*) with Christian text.

In no way was the Fiji mission easy for the European missionaries, for as Tippet noted ‘the evangelistic attack on Fiji was an extremely dangerous venture from the start [both] for the missionaries and dangerous for the Fijian who became involved before his chief, or the petty chief before his superior’ (1954:3). On Tippet’s first point: that the venture was ‘extremely dangerous’ for the missionaries, there is no argument. They came with 19th century values and opinions many at odds with Fijian culture: with an ethos often the antithesis of the Fijian way and with little awareness of the deeply complex society whose spirituality was closely bound to ancient custom. Many were slow to grasp the diversity of Fijian culture as outsiders in this world they were cohabiting. Missionary lives were often threatened, particularly in areas away from the main missions, culminating in the death of Thomas Baker in the interior of Vitilevu in 1868. Yet they stayed strong in the spirit of their faith, achieving with their Fijian clergy most remarkable and unique success in Fiji.

Tippet’s second point: that Fijians at all levels of society were in ‘extreme danger’ in accepting Christianity before their societal superiors is also beyond argument. Fijians, who accepted Christianity before their chiefs, risked alienation and their lives. Acceptance of another spirituality was seen as a betrayal of community and of the fundamental ethos of their society. Yet those Fijian acceptors would ultimately be the axis on which their countrymen would turn from the religion of their ancestors to Christianity embracing one God instead of their many gods.

Fijian Christians understood those social mores and while their position as Christian acceptors were no less vulnerable; they transcended many of the difficulties by living among their people and offering them an alternative spiritual path through the intricacies of their custom. But like the missionaries, they too needed a single language for meaningful dialogue (Thornley 2005:174-183, Wood 1978:47-53). The solution was to select a dialect from the many spoken in Fiji to standardise communication. Their choice was Bauan, enabling the missionaries to introduce literacy into Fiji (and speed Biblical translations). By giving Fijians a *lingua franca*, which became the language of the Church, they gave Fijian Christians the means of communication and the tools for evangelisation, hastening the implementation of conversion. As the missionaries established schools, medical centres and training institutions for Fijian clergy and teachers, Fijian Christians began their own missionary work.

The importance of the lay preachers and teachers can never be overstated, for these men and women were vital to the lasting success of Christian acceptance (Calvert 1985:429-432). Although many faced huge problems away from their own social groups, where customs and dialects were different (Cumming 1882:169), they were the best qualified to explain the complexity of the Christian ethos to their people in the deep structure of their language. Western missionaries did not have the same subtlety of language or the same communicating skills, nor were they able to withstand the physical conditions of living at village level. This fact did not negate their influence, but Fijian pastors were the principal spiritual authority in the village and exerted a stronger and more lasting influence (Thornley 1996:33-49, Lange 2005:127-148 and Tippet 70/21:1-11). The single most important effective tool in their evangelisation was the utilisation of their sung poetry – *meke*.

Meke at the time of missionary contact was the one important unifier linking Fijian social groups. This music, with indigenous poetry text, was at the very heart of Fijian tradition. Like all societies with an oral culture, Fijians had prodigious memories and in the style of their *meke* all text of this music was memorised. Although there were dialectic differences and some variation in musical form according to the place of composition, there were however, general common characteristics both in musical composition style and indigenous poetic text. Polyphonic compositional form, vocal

parts, method of composition through the specialist composers of *meke* (*dau ni vucu*) and distinctive indigenous prosody, which was added to an existing musical form, were standard in all *meke*. This indigenous form, accommodated to Christian instruction and liturgical worship, directly connected Fijians. The preface to the Methodist Hymn-book (1954:iii) states ‘Methodism was born in song’. This statement equally fits Fijian evangelism.

Literacy was acquired slowly because of the large geographical size of Fiji and the small number of missions and church personnel. But the liturgy of the Christians was sung as soon as Fijians composed their own. Visionaries among missionaries, Hunt, Lyth and Hazlewood in Fiji between 1837 and 1856 recognised the value of the music as a significant communicative tool for both instruction and reinforcement of Methodist theological principles (Tippett 1980:34). Tippett wrote, ‘When he [Hunt] found Fijian converts disposed to chant scriptures in the form of cultural expression they knew, he opened the door and allowed them freedom to express themselves in their own way’ (1980:28). To this end, particular styles of *meke* were considered suitable with Christian text for inclusion as liturgical compositions including: *vucu* (epics); *lālē* (laments); *vakalutuivoce* for long sea voyages; and *meke ni yaqona* or *vakaturaga* (*yaqona* ceremonies). None of these *meke* had unsuitable associations or overtones to offend the 19th century missionary ethos such as sexual promiscuity (McLean 1999:143), traditional dance or close connections with ancient religious beliefs (Midian 1999:xii).

Most documentation in the literature referred to indigenous singing as ‘chant or chanting’ as Erskine in 1857 noted; ‘Some parts of the service such as the “Te Deum” were chanted in the regular Feejeean manner, a most judicious arrangement, not only as assimilating the worship to their old custom, but as attracting many heathen listeners, who, standing outside the door, seemed, with respect and attention, to enjoy the music going on within’ (1987:223-224). Some twenty years later there were still reports of the utilisation of indigenous music in the worship: ‘the missionaries...wisely made use of native customs when practicable. The purely national tunes...have a certain attraction in their drone-like monotony; those borrowed from us are generally discordant.’ (Cumming 1882:86, see also Wood 1978:84, Calvert 1985:275).

The three indigenous or indigenised liturgical compositions, *taro* (catechism), *same* and *polotu* though different are linked. They have musical and poetic forms in common and with other *meke*. *Same* and *polotu* draw on similar sources for texts while *same* and *taro* are what Thomson calls a ‘direct outgrowth’ of older Fijian *meke* (1966:15 and 1980:84-85). Around 1844, the missionary Calvert, commenting on singing in a public worship, sheds light on indigenous liturgical style:

... the most striking effect was produced by their chanting of the Confession and *Te Deum* to one of their own wild strains. One person would chant the first sentence in a subdued tone [*laga*], followed by another [*tagica*], who took the next octave higher, and then the whole congregation [*druku*] joined in with the third clause in unison; and so in regular order through the entire composition’ (1985:257).

Although Calvert made a mistake in naming the musical intervals, his was the first formal description of the musical patterning and style of *taro* and *same*. Freedom to capture indigenous musical and textual form for the liturgy was unique for a Pacific mission, not that other nations did not allow indigenous or indigenised music in worship, but for the fact that this music from the outset of missionary contact was a central component of indigenous liturgy.¹ Except for the ten *polotu* texts in the 1913 edition of the Fijian Methodist Hymnbook, all this unique Christian music has remained an oral tradition. The subjects of the texts (with the exception of the catechism) are woven into Fijians’ poetic form with their love of metaphor, simile, symbolism and riddle, so highly prized and so easily accommodating Christian theology. All three compositions are to this day an integral part of Sunday worship - *taro* before the worship and *same* and *polotu* during the service.

Polotu deserves special mention. Formed from the early hymns of the Tongan lay preachers, Lauans utilised the music as foundation for compositional style. Echoes of Western musical style (also present in the Tongan hymns) are heard in the repetition of sections and in the triadic harmony. Remembering the long historic connections between Tonga and Lau and the cross-cultural oral compositions between the two at the time of missionary contact, it is fair to deduce that this natural process allowed

¹ For other indigenous or indigenised hymns see: Stillman 1993:89-99, McLean 1999:Chapter 26.

Lauans to assimilate Tongan Christian music into their own musical form for Christian liturgy. This they achieved successfully, adding their own poetic texts and polyphonic parts to the existing triadic harmony, forming a unique compositional style for worship and evangelisation.² This music is still the foundation of their liturgy which Lauans have steadfastly preserved, together with the hymns and anthems of the Church. Singing this music is their unique prerogative and the sound of the whole congregation singing *polotu* in the worship is an uplifting spiritual experience. There is more to be learned about the historical and musical connections of this rare music: a more comprehensive study should go beyond the parameters of my fieldwork.

The Western missionaries gave Fijians the tools with which to labour: education, standardised language, theological framework, Biblical text and above all a musical focus in the worship. They worked through an existing social system, utilising Fijian cultural form where possible for this worship and, through the ethos of their religion, removed the more extreme excesses of Fijian society without a fundamental sociocultural shift. The early missionaries in particular, aware of their own vulnerability, encouraged Fijians to engage with their people in their own forms of evangelisation.

Fijian Christians, living the Wesleyan Christian ideal of ‘fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God’ went among their people bringing tenets Christianity to enrich their lives. The poetry of the Bible, the wonder of the written language, the ‘aura’ of the Western missionaries and the appeal of Western trade goods: dangled in front of some chiefs tantalising prospects for self-advantage through Western contact; contributing in a superficial way to the eventual acceptance of Christianity. Deeper and lasting acceptance though came from singing of indigenous music – the *meke* – with Christian text, through which Christian theology was transmitted in indigenous form.

In coming to comprehend the descriptions of key missionaries such as Williams, Waterhouse and Calvert and examining the music of Fijian liturgy it is possible to

² It could also be said that the process preserved the Tongan music of the time.

describe, from the examination of the different elements of this music, the compositional form and style of the *meke* at the time of pre-missionary contact. There is also ample evidence from the current Fijian canon: dance *meke* of the prominent confederations, ceremonies, epics, laments and others, of the nature of pre-European musical culture.

This music, arranged by these early Christians for worship, theological education and congregation participation, was therefore the catalyst to fuse the text immediately and enduringly through an existing form.³ The lines between old and new, the pre-missionary musical form and the new liturgy, were blurred because one was an adjunct of the other. Within *same* in particular are the musical and textual forms of the music Fijians utilised for their worship and evangelisation.

So intrinsic was this music to Fijian worship that even as Fijians became literate and began to sing and compose Western based hymns and anthems, *taro*, *same* and *polotu* remained in their original form: central to their worship. The English and Fijian Methodists, with missionary zeal, forged with lasting success a new religious musical form. This indigenous music was and is truly “*Sere dina ni Lotu Wesele i Viti*”: the true songs of the Fijian Methodist Church.

³ There is a collection of 30 early school *meke* in the Tippet Collection in St Mark’s Library in Canberra (TIP 70/40/1/10).

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Appendix 1

Text and transcriptions

Title	Performers	Reference page
1. <i>Meke ni vucu</i>	Cuvu, Nadroga	(102-103)
2. <i>Taro 2:8</i>	Delaitokatoka, Suva	(143-147)
3. <i>Same nei Jiona</i>	Namalata, Kadavu	(152-160)
4. <i>Ko Solomoni ni Tui</i>	Tukavesi, Vanualevu	(188-200)

Appendix 2

Recordings

Title	Performance	Recording date
1. <i>Meke ni vucu</i>	Cuvu, Nadroga.	25.3.49
2. <i>Vakamalolo</i>	Wailevu, Vanualevu	1974
3. <i>Meke ni Yaqona</i>	Nakelo, Rewa	1.6.1999
4. <i>Taro 7:1</i>	Nakorovou, Rewa	2.10.2001
5. <i>Taro 2:8</i>	Delaitokatoka, Suva	27.5.2001
6. <i>Same nei Jiona</i>	Namalata, Kadavu	31.8.2001
7. <i>Taniela ni Parofita</i>	Nabubu, Vanualevu	26.6.2001
8. <i>Ai Vola ni Tubutubu</i>	Ono-i-Lau, Lau	20.8.2001
9. <i>Gauna Ogo</i>	Saunaka, Nadi	25.9.2000
9. <i>Tuberi Au</i>	Delaitokatoka, Suva	21.8.2003
10. <i>Ko Solomoni</i>	Tukavesi, Vanualevu	10.6.2001
11. <i>Ko Solomoni</i>	Naigigi, Vanualevu	23.6.2001