

The Turning Point:

British Colonialism, Resistance, and Loss of Traditional Culture

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Process Paper

I have always been fascinated by turning points in history: my mind flew from ancient Chinese Dynasties to the downfall of the Roman Empire. However, it is important to focus on the people and their stories that are little known. I chose to focus on the native people of Fiji and their Melanesian culture.

Prior to this research, I had little knowledge of the Fiji Islands. I became interested in them after a school seminar on the cargo cult custom in the Pacific which introduced me to native Fijians and the Europeans who wished to colonize their islands.

I decided on British colonization as my historical turning point. This was a turning point both in terms of how it transformed Fijians and their native culture, in particular via the Deed of Cession, the legislation that contracted the entire archipelago and its sovereignty to Great Britain. While missionaries and officers stepped onto the island in the middle of the Pacific wishing to evangelize and educate the “barbaric” cannibals, they brought with them Christianity, unfair land allocation policies, and fatal measles outbreaks.

As the foundation of my research, I read *Disturbing History* by Robert Nicole to gain an overview of Fiji’s history during the late 1800s and early 1900s. By reviewing the bibliographies attached to the encyclopedia articles, I analyzed British colonial policies and Fiji’s religious beliefs. However, I was not able to fly to Australia or Fiji to read local archival sources, limiting the variety of primary sources I could consult. Another obstacle I encountered was finding primary sources for the Fijian language. However, newspapers from the 1880s, colonizers’

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letters, and annual office reports formed the bulk of my secondary research. Furthermore, I created a detailed plan for the structure of my argument to develop it in a logical sequence. Based on all this research, my paper evaluates the loss of native culture following the arrival of British colonizers.

My argument also focuses on the tension between Fijian and British colonizers. Christian villages were burnt down and men were assassinated. Although unintentionally, the colonizers also brought measles that killed 40,000 natives. People and culture died simultaneously. While I am critical of British colonization, this paper recognizes that British influence brought some benefits including increased education; technological advancements; and widening opportunities for those colonized.

This paper aims to explain how the Pacific, specifically the Fiji Islands, transformed under the Western colonizers. It also explains the reasons behind Fiji's more Eurocentric approach, instead of being bound by the false stereotype that all Pacific Islands were "savage cannibalisms." Colonization transformed modern Fiji, and this paper explores the effects of British imperial policy.

Introduction

Men eat men.¹ Because this shocking idea passed for conventional wisdom in the eyes of Western colonizers as they gazed at Indigenous Fijis, colonizers also believed that it was their

¹ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, "Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting Colonies and Frontiers in Nineteenth-Century Fiji." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (2010): 255–81. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417510000046>.

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responsibility to “civilize” and “modernize” Fijis and their “barbarism.”² In the early nineteenth century, and for the economic and political advantage of Britain and other major European states, colonial expansion occurred in the Pacific. This caused the assimilation of the Fiji Islands into the British Empire.³ In Great Britain’s pursuit of its imperialist mission to further control Australia and New Zealand, to spread Christianity, and to exploit sugarcane plantations, Captain James Cook set sail and stopped by Fiji Island.⁴

Despite the economic and military might of the British, the indigenous Fijis mounted serious resistance, resulting in such actions as the Colo War and the Tuka movement to repulse the Western colonizers.⁵ Despite these attempts at staving off British aggression, Fijian Chief Cakobau ceded Fiji and its sovereignty voluntarily to Britain on October 3, 1874, through the Deed of Cession.⁶

Before the arrival of Western colonizers, Fiji was home to over 500 different languages, various tribal music, unique wood carvings, and artifacts. By the 21st Century Fiji was heavily westernized, a legacy of the original colonizers. This shift towards Western culture in the last few centuries brought enormous changes to these islanders — whose popular culture and dress often mirror that of Western countries. Though colonization led to this loss of Indigenous Melanesian culture, few historians have considered if whether this swift development has

² Ellen Sebring, Civilization & Barbarism: “The White Man’s Burden” (1898–1902) - Global Research, *Global Research*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/civilization-barbarism-the-white-mans-burden-1898-1902/5461424>.

³ Antony Anghie, “Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law,” / Sovereignty and Colonialism in International Law 40, no. 1 (1999): 1–2, <http://ringmar.net/mycourses/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Anghie-1999-Finding-the-Peripheries-Sovereignty-and-Colonialism.pdf>.

⁴ Sean Arnet, “Captain Cook’s Voyage to Fiji: The First European to Set Foot on the Island | Private Islands Blog,” <https://privateislandsblog.com/captain-cooks-voyage-to-fiji-the-first-european-to-set-foot-on-the-island/>, January 28, 2024, <https://privateislandsblog.com/captain-cooks-voyage-to-fiji-the-first-european-to-set-foot-on-the-island/>.

⁵ Robert Nicole, *Disturbing History* (University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 32–123.

⁶ Hercules Robinson and Thakombau, “The Deed of Cession of Fiji to Great Britain” (1874), <https://www.fijijournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-Deed-of-Cession-of-Fiji-to-Great-Britain.pdf>.

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brought more damage or benefits to Fijians. The core tenet of my argument proposes that British colonization over Fiji in the late 1800s, especially the signing of the “Deed of Cession,” the Colo War of 1876, and Christianity’s erasure of Indigenous culture, marked a turning point in Melanesian culture, as it initiated a tragic loss of traditional custom, language, and culture for native Fijis.

The Deed of Cession

On October 3, 1874, the British “Deed of Cession” marked the most significant turning point in colonized Fiji’s history. The Deed of Cession— which transferred Fiji’s land and its “form or constitution of government” to Queen Victoria, who, through the deed, gained the legal right to control Fiji and its people.⁷ Signed by Cakobau Tui Viti (“King of Fiji”) with 12 other chiefs, they claimed that they were “desirous [sic] of securing the promotion of civilization and Christianity and of increasing trade and industry within the said islands.” In return, the British government promised to preserve and respect local customs and indigenous people’s rights.⁸ Despite these claims, the negotiations over the deed were likely one-sided: Fiji chiefs feared conflict instigated by the British and were in search of conditional reciprocation for “Her Majesty’s mercy and protection”.⁹

There is ambiguity about whether Cakobau and the other chiefs were willing to offer all of their land, property, citizens, and sovereignty just for a vague promise of protection. Even

⁷ Hercules Robinson and Thakombau, “The Deed of Cession of Fiji to Great Britain” (1874), <https://www.fijijournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-Deed-of-Cession-of-Fiji-to-Great-Britain.pdf>.

⁸ Joeli Baledrokadroka, “The Fijian Understanding of the Deed of Cession Treaty of 1874,” (Traditional Lands in the Pacific Region: Indigenous Common Property Resources in Convulsion or Cohesion, 2009) (Traditional Lands in the Pacific Region: Indigenous Common Property Resources in Convulsion or Cohesion, 2009), 7–11, <https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/1151/Baldesrokadroka.pdf?sequence=1..>

⁹ Colin Newbury, “History, Hermeneutics and Fijian Ethnic ‘Paramountcy’: Reflections on the Deed of Cession of 1874,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 46, no. 1 (2011): 27–57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41343775>.

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before the cession, Sir Arthur Gordon, the first British Governor of the Fiji Islands, openly claimed that “missionaries [should] continue their work of civilizing the islanders of the South Pacific and winning them to Christianity.”¹⁰ If Cakobau were more informed of the British’s condescending and discriminating view of his Indigenous subjects, perhaps he would have rejected this supposed cooperation with the British state.

Before British colonization, land use regulations and possession in Fiji were vague and without limits, leaving spaces for negotiation between dominant British governors and local Fijis. According to historian Oskar Kurer, although a portion of agricultural land was preserved for indigenous people, in 1875, “alienation of all native land was prohibited altogether,”¹¹ meaning that individual Fijians could no longer sell or buy the land that they owned in their clan or *mataqali*—an extended family unit. Under the strict British legislation, more than 6,000 *mataqali*, holding an average of 243 hectares of land each, were proscribed from selling or granting private property rights to individual members.¹² On the other hand, colonizers could access land for “races other than native Fijians,” which was an irritating and inadequate decision made by Gordon.¹³

By 1905, under the Native Land Act passed the same year, the Ministry of Fijian Affairs promised that “Native lands shall be held by native Fijians according to native custom as

¹⁰ C. C Eldridge, "The Imperialism of the 'Little England Era': The Question of the Annexation of the Fiji Islands, 1858–1861," *New Zealand Journal of History* 1, no. 2 (1967): 171-184. muse.jhu.edu/article/865651.

¹¹ Oskar Kurer, “Land and Politics in Fiji: Of Failed Land Reforms and Coups,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 36, no. 3 (2001): 299, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169559>.

¹² Stewart Firth, “Review Article: The Contemporary History of Fiji,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 24, no. 2 (October 1989): 242–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223348908572619>.

¹³ *The two chief apologists of British policy both adopt this view (Roth 1973 and Bruns 1963). ** Could not find the original source

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evidenced by usage and tradition.”¹⁴ However, due to the expense, limited documentation, and heavy prejudices against local Fijians, Gordon ignored Fiji’s local customs.¹⁵

Before the arrival of Europeans, Fiji had a local land tenure hierarchy for centuries. Land tenure was a complex system focusing on the “relationship between people and the land, and how local laws and customs define that relationship,”¹⁶ meaning that simple “bulldozed” decisions could not solve it.¹⁷ Land custom classified Fijians into three generalization groups: *yavusa*, *mataqali*, and *i tokatoka*, representing kinship groups of descending order of size—underscoring the importance of kinship when distributing the rights to use uncleared land, usually depending largely on “amicable relationships” between each other.¹⁸ However, British colonizers passed rigid rules to “mark out and define boundaries of any lands,”¹⁹ which was initially decided within specific *mataqali*, creating potential conflicts between indigenous and British colonizers. Even under Sir Gordon’s command to cut off land transactions, more than 400,000 acres of land were registered as Crown Grants land, preserved in the 1978 version of “Laws of Fiji” where “freehold estate of any person in land in respect of which a Crown grant or native grant has been issued is acquired by the Crown, the title to such land shall be taken in the name of the Director of Lands of Fiji for and on behalf of the Crown,”²⁰ meaning all public land right was conserved for the British government and the Crown.

¹⁴ Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, “Native Land Acts.” (1905), http://www.paclii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/nla131/.

¹⁵ Tony Chapelle, “Customary Land Tenure in Fiji: Old Truths and Middle-Aged Myths,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 87, no. 2 (1978): 71–88, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20705332>.

¹⁶United Nations, “Land Tenure,” UNCCD, n.d., <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-tenure/overview>.

¹⁷ Tony Chapelle, “Customary Land Tenure in Fiji”, 71.

¹⁸ Mele Rakai, I C Ezigbalike, and I P Williamson, “TRADITIONAL LAND TENURE ISSUES for LIS in FIJI,” *Survey Review* 33, no. 258 (October 1, 1995): 247–62, <https://doi.org/10.1179/sre.1995.33.258.247>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Fijian Affairs. 1905. Native Lands Act.

²⁰ Ministry of Lands, Energy and Mineral Resources, “Crown Lands Act” (1946), http://www.paclii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/cla134/.

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The misinterpretation and oversimplification of the *mataqali* land tenure system has led to racial tension, political unrest, and loss of the Fijian cultural identity expressed in the system. In the late 20th century, although Indigenous Fijians owned 84% ²¹of land, the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) held complete control over the selling and buying of lands. ²² Under British manipulation, Fiji’s sugarcane industry rose exponentially, bringing an abundant Indian population to Fiji. More than 60,000 individuals migrated to Fiji as indentured laborers from 1879 to 1916. In 2024, the Fiji’s population is composed of 56.8% iTaukei (original settlers) and 37.5% Indo-Fijian²³. With ambiguous laws unable to distinguish protected ethnicities, it is difficult to define the “indigenous” groups of Fiji. In addition, the land tenure system is not only a pragmatic institutional system but an essential piece of Fijian’s soul and heart of Fijian identity²⁴.

Christianity and the Colo War of 1876

In the 1870s, while holding the belief that “[European] civilization was superior to anything the Pacific islanders enjoyed,”²⁰ British colonizers were determined to establish a colony on the inland Kai Colo. By prohibiting martial resistance by Colo Tribes, they intended to “deter violence in controlled area[s]”. British missionaries’ Christian beliefs reinforced this oppressive decision—offered under the guise of “pacification”—which provoked the Kai Colo to resist violently.

²¹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs U.S. Department of State, “Background Notes: Fiji 5/96,” 1997-2001.state.gov, 2001, https://1997-2001.state.gov/background_notes/fiji_0596_bgn.html.

²² Ministry of Fijian Affairs, “Native Land Trust Act” (1940), http://www.paclii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/nlta206/.

²³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Fiji,” CIA.gov (Central Intelligence Agency, April 26, 2022), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/fiji/#people-and-society>.

²⁴ Ratu Mosese Volavola, The Native Land Trust Board of Fiji, in CUSTOMARY LAND TENURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 47,49 (Ron Crocombe ed., 1995).

²⁰ Peter J Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific* (editorips@usp.ac.fj, 1984).

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On February 24, 1875, Fijian tribes and colonial secretary J.B. Thurstan at Navoso met on the Rewa River to negotiate “peace and civilization.”²⁵ The Kai Colo had been murdering white settlers in a violent rebuke to their colonization. For instance, a “white man” was killed for “simply walking through [the natives’] mountains,” demonstrating the aggressive confrontation between Fijis and the settlers.²⁶ Moreover, the escalation of hostile resistance, exemplified by the killing of “several Christian natives,”²⁷ suggests that indigenous Fijians developed a deep-seated animosity towards Christianity and Christian missionaries. Ironically, the British still emphasized that it was a “successful meeting,”²⁸ continuing their strategic use of violence to suppress the protesting inhabitants.

Gradually, individual murders escalated to hostile warfare. Starting in 1874, Lomaicolo forces assaulted a Christian village located in Naigunugunu, Naitasiri.²⁹ The attack resulted in approximately 57 fatalities. Furious indigenous people then burned several Christian towns, numerous Kai Colo lost their lives, and Ratu Dradra, a key leader among the hill clans, surrendered. Approximately 2,000 men, women, and children were captured and transported to the coast. The intensified conflicts increasingly stemmed from religious disputes. From the British colonizers’ perspective, these non-Christian attackers were “heathens” to be converted and baptized.³⁰ In an 1872 news article titled “Fijian Experience,” the reporter portrayed the locals with “faces painted hideously black” and only covered by “strips of tappa and banana

²⁵ “Pacification of Fijian Tribes.,” *Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate*, February 24, 1875, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/77249647>.

²⁶ “Pacification of Fijian Tribes.”

²⁷ Sydney Morning Herald Correspondent, “FIJI.,” *Express and Telegraph*, July 14, 1874, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/208171098>.

²⁸ “Pacification of Fijian Tribes.”

²⁹ Swanston, Carew to Swanston, 30 March 1874, The Swanston Collection, NAF.

³⁰ “FIJIAN EXPERIENCES.,” *Adelaide Observer*, December 16, 1871, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/158947917>.

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leaves.”³¹ In these negative descriptions, we see how contemptuous and Eurocentric the colonizers were when dismissing local culture and faiths. Certain officials, including G. B. Evans, the government’s Secretary for Ba and the Yasawas, referred to the mountaineers as "the filthiest race I ever had to contend with.”³² The Colo traditions were considered sinister, barbaric, and uncivilized.

Christianity and an Epidemic

Measles spread rapidly among indigenous Fijian communities in January 1875, with little to no immunity to this highly contagious viral infection. Fijis suffered a death rate of around 27%, with approximately 40,000 dead.³³ The spread of both disease and Christianity resulted in the loss of traditional medicine along with the deaths of many native people.

Beforehand, Fijis’ traditional healing processes were an inseparable part of the Indigenous culture, mainly focusing on the “cultural-spiritual-social causes” of disease within iTaukei healers.³⁴ One British onlooker critically noted Fijian efforts to cure measles infections by “trying to cool their fevered bodies by lying for hours in the water and in damp places,” and that “a child heated with fever is plunged into cold water or set naked in the breeze or damp grass to cool its body.”³⁵

³¹ “FIJI.”

³² Swanston, Evans to Swanston, 2 November 1873, Cakobau Government, Ministry of Native Affairs, Inward Correspondence: 41, Cited in Macnaught, 1971: 19.

³³ Andrew Cliff and Peter Hagett, “THE SPREAD of MEASLES in FIJI and the PACIFIC Spatial Components in the Transmission of Epidemic Waves through Island Communities,” 1985, https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/132970/1/HG_18.pdf.

³⁴ Dan Frederick Orcherton, Maria Orcherton, and Matthew Kensen, “Understanding Traditional Healing Practices and the Categories of Practices from Fijian iTaukei’s Perspectives,” *Sustainability* 13, no. 16 (August 12, 2021): 9003, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13169003>.

³⁵ Cliff and Hagett, “THE SPREAD of MEASLES,” 27.

Fijians in fact focused on building a spiritual connection with God, represented by nature, and the individual. In their belief, lying in “water and in damp place” and being “naked in the breeze or damp grass” were the best ways to cool down their fevered and heated bodies.

However, without quarantining or vaccinations, these traditional practices did not effectively stave off the disease. Christian missionaries therefore demonstrated Christian charity and compassion by treating them with more advanced medical care. However, Reilly Ridgell, a Pacific historian, noted that most missionaries saw Fijis as immoral savages and held little respect for islanders, their cultural beliefs, or their customs.³⁶

Measles treatments by Christian missionaries saw some success. For instance, at the Wesleyan Mission Training Institution, Navuloa, Rev. J. Waterhouse anticipated and prevented the upcoming measles outbreak by efficiently preparing “a quantity of tapioca starch” and building a “convenient outhouse” for every dwelling. Ultimately, Waterhouse lost a single patient.³⁷ Christian missionaries had a well-planned organization compared to native customs, with trained students and more modern medicinal practices. The perception of Christian missionaries’ effective measles treatments diminished the use of traditional medicine and further convinced British colonizers of their superior civilization to that of native Fijis.

Disease wiped out over half of the chiefs and many rebellious native Fijians within three months.³⁸ To maintain their social and political prominence, Kai Colo “ascribed the new mysterious malady to the wrath of the ancestral gods”³⁹, which led to the pre-Christian dominant

³⁶ Ridgell, *Pacific nations and territories: The islands of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia*

³⁷ R.A. Derrick, "1875 : Fiji's darkest hour-an account of the Measles Epidemic of 1875" *In Transactions and proceedings of the Fiji Society for the years, 1955-1957* 6(1): 3-16.

³⁸ Cliff and Hagett, “THE SPREAD of MEASLES,” 27.

³⁹ Nicole, *Disturbing History*, 32–123.

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Fijian Cult, ancestor worship. Each tribal priest performed the ceremonial religious ritual *Yaqona*, or drinking juices from the Piper plant, using a complex set of bowls, cups, and stands “ritually to promote or block the circulation of *mana* [miracle] in embodied Fijian land”.⁴⁰ Historically, Indigenous Fijians aspired to their deified ancestors for supernatural magic power “to modify their embodiment of clan ancestors and their relations with the *mana* of external gods and stranger chiefs.”⁴¹ However, this sacred ritual is now reduced to a profane tourism attraction in Fiji.

Although native people reacted defiantly in their rejection of Christianity,⁴² when some Fijians relented and accepted Christianity, they were seen as equating native practices and beliefs with “Cannibalism and heathenism”—which only further justified the British stereotype of native people.⁴³

Over time, the missionaries successfully replaced native animism and ancestor worship with their Christian beliefs. Today, Christians comprise nearly two-thirds of Fijian believers. Once the dominant belief system, animism was no longer mentioned in the 2007 Census, but is used as a commercial tourism attraction.⁴⁴ It is this change that represents a microcosm of traditional cultural loss due to the colonizers’ introduction of Christianity.

⁴⁰ Los Angeles County Museum of Art, “Respecting the Ancestors,” LACMA, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.lacma.org/node/39241>.

⁴¹ Allen Abramson, “Drinking to Mana and Ethnicity: Trajectories of Yaqona Practice and Symbolism in Eastern Fiji,” *Oceania* 75, no. 4 (2005): 325–41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40331992>.

⁴² A. J. Gordon, “Expedition across Viti Levu by Mr. A. Gordon and Mr. Carew.” 18 November 1875, 75/1644, CO 83/7. PRO.

⁴³ G Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, London, Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1968, pp. 80–81.

⁴⁴ Fiji Bureau of Statistics, “Religion - Fiji Bureau of Statistics,” www.statsfiji.gov.fj, 2007, <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/statistics/social-statistics/religion.html>.

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Endangered Indigenous Languages

Modern anthropologists agree that “each language is the means of expression of the intangible culture which underlies it decays and crumbles, often under the impact of intrusive, intrusive, powerful, usually metropolitan, different culture.”⁴⁵ Language is essential, then, for preserving indigenous culture.

Over time, Christianity blended into native Fiji beliefs and language. Missionaries translated Fiji into English to teach the Bible. But due to gaps in translation, understandings of Christian and Western terminology were unintentionally misguided as “local audiences, however, have not always correlated truth efficacy in the same way.”⁴⁶ For instance, David Hazlewood’s pioneering dictionary defined *mana* as a noun meaning “a sign, or omen; a wonder, or miracle,” implying that a spiritual concept was described as tangible.⁴⁷ Gradually, these translation errors would contribute to the irretrievable loss of native Fiji culture. Native Fijis could not distinguish “between the truth and efficacy, and evaluating their alignment,” which became critical tasks for missionaries teaching new converts.

In 2024, English, Fijian, and Fiji Hindi serve as Fiji’s three official languages. Around 200,000 people speak English, while only around 40% of people speak Fijian.⁴⁸ Indigenous

⁴⁵ Tove Skutnabb-Kangas et al., *Sharing a World of Difference* (Unesco, 2003).

⁴⁶ Matt Tomlinson, “Efficacy, Truth, and Silence: Language Ideologies in Fijian Christian Conversions,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 64–90, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27563731>.

⁴⁷ David Hazlewood, “Mana,” in *Fijian English Dictionary*, 1850.

⁴⁸ World Population Review, “English Speaking Countries 2020,” worldpopulationreview.com, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/english-speaking-countries>.

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languages, such as the iTaukei, are at risk of extinction due to two main reasons: the lack of written records and a preference for the colonizer's language, English.⁴⁹

Missionary education was designed and taught in English, contributing to the loss of native languages initially. To fully assimilate Fijis, children were “punished for speaking in their native languages.”⁵⁰ Many indigenous languages were abandoned within several generations. Language and culture scholar Paul Geraghty said, "The peculiar colonial history that we have is to a large extent to blame...for the loss of indigenous languages in Fiji ." ⁵¹

To this day, Fijis widely prefer English. Scholar Konai Helu Thaman claims that indigenous people prefer English to keep up with the modernizing world.⁵² Even after their political independence in 1970, English remained the dominant language in formal education. As a multicultural nation, Fiji needs assistance to safeguard its rich linguistic history.

Conclusion

The enduring British colonization of Fiji's indigenous culture cast a long shadow over the nation's historical trajectory, eroding local customs, belief systems, and languages, leaving a profound impact on its cultural identity. British colonization also brought about disease, warfare, and death in the short-term. The consequences of these had oppressive and brutal impacts on Fijis. The 1874 Deed of Cession ultimately undermined native rights to land, while the 1876

⁴⁹ World Population Review, “English Speaking Countries 2020.”

⁵⁰ Rachael Nath, “Quality of iTaukei Language under Threat Says Expert,” RNZ, October 5, 2022, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/476126/quality-of-itaukei-language-under-threat-says-expert>.

⁵¹ Nath, “Quality of iTaukei Language.”

⁵² Konai Helu, Thaman, “Whose Culture (and Language) in the Curriculum?: A View Thaman, From the South Pacific”, Invited address, HAAPAE Conference, Sheraton Hotel, Honolulu, April 28-30(year unmentioned).

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Colo War resulted in intense casualties and property loss. Most significantly, the fatal measles pandemic wiped out one-third of the indigenous population.

In the long term, the colonization facilitated the tragic loss of indigenous languages. Beyond mere linguistic diversity, these languages were harbored oral histories, unique cultural practices, and communal values passed across generations. Their near extinction exemplifies the fading of rich indigenous knowledge that varied between tribes, leaving future generations uninformed of their collective cultural identity.

Though the British colonizers exploited and had significant detrimental effects on the Fijians, they indeed helped the locals to transform into a global capitalist economy in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. British forces introduced a more scientific and organized medical system, as well as new educational systems.

Colonizing forces shaped the modern Melanesia country today. The extent of cultural loss in Fiji reminds us of the legacy of colonial oppression and the resilience of indigenous Fijis. Recognizing and restoring colonial injustices; amplifying indigenous voices to narrate their own stories; and revitalizing Indigenous culture must occupy the consciousness of all Fijis. Through this, 21st century Fiji can aim to honor and protect its heritage and forge a more inclusive future.

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Adelaide Observer. "FIJIAN EXPERIENCES." December 16, 1871.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/158947917>.

This newspaper article revealed how the British colonizers viewed the locals condescendingly. It also provided a polarized review that biased the Western colonizers. Thus, the conflicts between the British and locals were highlighted.

Abramson, Allen. "Drinking to Mana and Ethnicity: Trajectories of Yaqona Practice and Symbolism in Eastern Fiji." *Oceania* 75, no. 4 (2005): 325–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40331992>.

This journal includes a concise description of how ingenious Fijians are following the rituals of Yaqona Practice to pray to their ancestor god. However, this lost tradition has been commodified to a tourist attraction under British colonizers' impact.

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs U.S. Department of State. "Background Notes: Fiji 5/96."

1997-2001.state.gov, 2001. https://1997-2001.state.gov/background_notes/fiji_0596_bgn.html

The governmental report on the Republic of Fiji provides factual insights into the percentage of indigenous Fijian-owned land. Moreover, this report highlights how the Native Land Trust Board was overshadowing the ambiguous land tenure system and legislation boundaries.

Cliff, Andrew, and Peter Hageitt. "THE SPREAD of MEASLES in FIJI and the PACIFIC Spatial Components in the Transmission of Epidemic Waves through Island Communities," 1985.

https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/132970/1/HG_18.pdf.

This is a medical report discussing the transmission of the fatal 1875 measles pandemic that had caused 40,000 deaths. From this report, I have chosen an excerpt that narrates how local Indigenous treat this unknown disease through their local custom, which was ineffective and might transmit the measles more extensively. This was useful in foreshadowing the success of the Christian missionaries with their more modern medical care.

Derrick, R.A. 1955. "1875 : Fiji's darkest hour an account of the Measles Epidemic of 1875."

In *Transactions and proceedings of the Fiji Society for the years 1955-1957* 6(1): 3-16

I have excerpted a narration on how the missionaries treated and cured the dangerous transmissible measles more organized than the traditional Fiji healing process.

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Fiji Bureau of Statistics. "Religion - Fiji Bureau of Statistics." www.statsfiji.gov.fj, 2007.

<https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/statistics/social-statistics/religion.html>.

This is the 2007 Fiji Census which concluded the different proportions of religious belief in modern Fiji. However, the two most prevalent nineteenth-century religions-- divination and animism-- were no longer recorded, meaning the loss of importance of these two once significant religions was overtaken by Christianity, which made up 66.4% of the population.

Firth, Stewart. "Review Article: The Contemporary History of Fiji." *The Journal of Pacific History* 24, no. 2 (October 1989): 242–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223348908572619>.

In this journal, Firth gives examples of the transforming land tenure system legislation under British rule. For instance, tribal land shared within each extended family unit was prohibited from being sold or bought, creating chaos and conflicts between individual Fijians.

Gordan, Arthur "Expedition across Viti Levu by Mr. A. Gordon and Mr. Carew." 18 November 1875, 75/1644, CO 83/7. PRO.

This is a private journal of Sir Arthur Gordon, also the first British Governor of Fiji. After the 1875 measles pandemic, he noticed during his journey across Viti Levu, that indigenous Fijians quickly deserted Christianity. I used this source as evidence of the native Fiji's initial rejection of Christianity in favor of their traditional customs.

Hazlewood, David. "Mana ." In *Fijian English Dictionary*, 1850.

I have used the definition of "mana" in David Hazlewood's 1850 dictionary to compare it with its original Fijian meaning to underscore the nuanced mistakes made during translation into English. This aims to show how the British colonizers' arrival changed Fiji's linguistic tradition.

Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development. Native Land Acts. (1905).

http://www.pacii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/nla131/.

In 1905, the Ministry of Fijian Affairs passed the Act to show how they respected the native land custom and would stick with it. However, the ambiguous legislation boundaries resulted in the loss of Fiji's customs and land rights.

Ministry of Fijian Affairs. Native Land Trust Act (1940).

http://www.pacii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/nlta206/.

In 1940, the Ministry of Fijian Affairs passed another Act to amend supplementary legislation corresponding to the 1905 law.

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Ministry of Lands, Energy and Mineral Resources. Crown Lands Act (1946).

http://www.pacii.org/fj/legis/consol_act_OK/cla134/.

More recently, in the mid-twentieth century, the Ministry of Lands, Energy, and Mineral Resource, which was still under the airtight control of the British royal family, established the legislation to protect the Queen's royal crown land.

Robinson, Hercules, and Thakombau. The Deed of Cession of Fiji to Great Britain (1874).

<https://www.fijijournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-Deed-of-Cession-of-Fiji-to-Great-Britain.pdf>.

This is the uttermost crucial primary source that marked the turning point of Fiji's modern history. Thakombau, or the King of Fiji, agreed to transfer all of Fiji's land, people, and sovereignty to the British Empire in exchange for peace and protection. I have chosen this legislation as my turning point further to discuss the cultural loss in the colonized land.

Ridgell, R. (2006). Pacific nations and territories: The islands of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. Honolulu: Bess Press

This book is written to fill the void of Pacific history in textbooks. It covers basic geology, general geography, culture, economy, politics, and major problems of major Pacific islands, including Fiji. I have referred to a document in which Ridgell noted that missionaries had little respect for the locals.

Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate. "Pacification of Fijian Tribes." February 24, 1875. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/77249647>.

This nineteenth-century newspaper documents the tensions between British colonizers and native Fijis.

Swanston, Carew to Swanston, 30 March 1874. The Swanston Collection. NAF.

Found in Nicole Robert's book *Disturbing History*, this is a collection of Swanston documents relating to military campaigns whose creator was a Methodist missionary, later promoted to the Minister of Native Affairs. From this source, I learned that Fijians were constantly assaulting the Christian churches as a form of rebellion.

Swanston, Evans to Swanston, 2 November 1873. Cakobau Government, Ministry of Native Affairs.

Inward Correspondence: 41. Cited in Macnaught, 1971: 19.

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This is also an archival collection of Swanston materials on military campaigns found in Nicole Robert's book "Disturbing History." I used this as evidence of Fiji attempts to rebel.

Sydney Morning Herald Correspondent. "FIJI." *Express and Telegraph*, July 14, 1874.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/208171098>.

This is a valuable Australian newspaper published in the 1870s, which reported on the hostile tension between the British colonizers and Fijis, such as the burning of several Christian villages and the murder of white settlers. Through this, I could better understand the stressful relationship between the two groups. Moreover, it should be noted that this newspaper was written in a colonial voice, favoring biasedly the British colonizers.

World Population Review. "English Speaking Countries 2020." worldpopulationreview.com, 2023.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/english-speaking-countries>.

This data shows that most Fiji people know how to speak English, implying the near extinction of the native iTaukei language.

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Secondary Sources

Anghie, Antony. "Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law." / *Sovereignty and Colonialism in International Law* 40, no. 1 (1999). <http://ringmar.net/mycourses/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Anghie-1999-Finding-the-Peripheries-Sovereignty-and-Colonialism.pdf>.

This journal analyzes the motives of British colonial expansion from a nuanced and neutral perspective. Anghie explained, through the lens of law, why the Pacific Islands were targeted, for their economic, political, and geographical advantages.

Arnett, Sean. "Captain Cook's Voyage to Fiji: The First European to Set Foot on the Island | Private Islands Blog." <https://privateislandsblog.com/captain-cooks-voyage-to-fiji-the-first-european-to-set-foot-on-the-island/>, January 28, 2024. <https://privateislandsblog.com/captain-cooks-voyage-to-fiji-the-first-european-to-set-foot-on-the-island/>.

This article attempts to provide an overview of the preliminary British colonial expansion as stage as Captain Cook sailed around the Pacific searching for suitable colonizing spots. This article gave me a bigger picture of what the British wished to establish in Fiji: Christianity and sugarcane plantations.

Arutangai, Selwyn, Ron Crocombe, University Of The South Pacific, and Et Al. *Land Tenure in the Pacific*. Suva: University Of The South Pacific, 1987.

This journal highlights the importance of the traditional Fijian Land Tenure System and explains the basic concepts inside the system. To the local people, the system is a symbol of their culture heritage that is engrained in their daily life.

Baledrokadroka, Joeli. "The Fijian Understanding of the Deed of Cession Treaty of 1874," 2009. <https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/1151/Baldesrokadroka.pdf?sequence=1>.

This conference paper attempts to examine the long-term impact of the 1874 Deed of Cession on modern Fiji laws. It helps explain how many Fijians had inappropriately misunderstood this legislation, which failed to protect the indigenous people's rights and cultural identity.

Banivanua-Mar, Tracey. "Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting Colonies and Frontiers in Nineteenth-Century Fiji." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (2010): 255–81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40603087>.

This is an anthropological study on Fiji cannibalism, which gave me an overview of the traditional brutal custom applied by indigenous Fijians back in the 1800s. Also, it discussed how

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we perceived this custom as savagery , which had a long-term impact on colonial-dominated voice.

Chapelle, Tony. "Customary Land Tenure in Fiji: Old Truths and Middle-Aged Myths." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 87, no. 2 (1978): 71–88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20705332>.

This article narrates the limitations of the colonial office's finances, documentation, and staff. I have learned why Arthur Gordon, the British Governor, was unable or unwilling to stick to their original legislation- to respect local custom as they did not have the effort to achieve so. Also, Gordon was characterized as a conceited officer who viewed the Indigenous culture in despise.

Eldridge, C. C. "The Imperialism of the 'Little England Era': The Question of the Annexation of the Fiji Islands, 1858–1861." *New Zealand Journal of History* 1, no. 2 (1967): 171-184. muse.jhu.edu/article/865651.

This article raised many questions about the purpose of the British government's colonization of Fiji. Although Fiji occupied a geographically advantageous spot, its future was obscure and uncertain, leading to many inconsistent British policies.

G Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, London, Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1968, pp. 80–81.

This book focuses on the interdisciplinary field of anthropology and history, highlighting how culture evolves. I have quoted the barbaric perception British colonizers held for the natives and, in return, the colonizers' excuse to conquer Fiji.

Hempenstall, Peter J, and Noel Rutherford. *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific*. editorips@usp.ac.fj, 1984.

This book discusses the economic, industrial, violent, and millitarian protests in the late 1800s in Fiji. From reading this book's excerpts, I have a better understanding of what the British colonizers wished to establish, which is peace and cooperation. However, it ended up with unabating violent resilience.

Kurer, Oskar. "Land and Politics in Fiji: Of Failed Land Reforms and Coups." *The Journal of Pacific History* 36, no. 3 (2001): 299–315. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169559>.

This article describes the consequences of prohibiting a large portion of the indigenous Fijians were prohibited from trading their land. This again conveys the inconsistency of British policies, which created ethnic tensions.

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Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "Respecting the Ancestors." LACMA. Accessed June 30, 2024.
<https://www.lacma.org/node/39241>.

The LACMA underscores the significance of ancestral worship in the traditional Fijian culture and how the Yaqona ritual plays an important role as a sacred practice to connect its believers to their ancestor.

Nabobo-Baba, Unaisi, and Sakul Kundra. "It's Now or Never - Endangered Indigenous Languages." The Fiji Times, March 15, 2022. <https://www.fijitimes.com.fj/its-now-or-never-endangered-indigenous-languages/>.

This website article portrayed the dilemma of losing the indigenous language in Fiji. Although I did not use this source directly in my paper, the sourcebook "Whose Culture in the Curriculum?" written by anthropologist Konia Helu Thaman was conducive for me in further research.

Nath, Rachael. "Quality of iTaukei Language under Threat Says Expert." RNZ, October 5, 2022. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/476126/quality-of-itaukei-language-under-threat-says-expert>.

This article helped me understand the loss of language diversity in Fiji and the potential crisis of language extinction. It focused on the iTaukei language's status and provided expert opinions on why oral language is declining.

Newbury, Colin. "History, Hermeneutics and Fijian Ethnic 'Paramountcy': Reflections on the Deed of Cession of 1874." *The Journal of Pacific History* 46, no. 1 (2011): 27–57.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41343775>.

This article explains in detail what drove the Fiji chiefs to agree to relent to the British colonizers and sign the Deed of Cession. The complex reasons behind this were fear of violence and the exhaustion of unremitting civil wars between tribes.

Nicole, Robert. *Disturbing History*. University of Hawaii Press, 2010.

This is a marvelously detailed book that outlines Fiji's history from the first forty years of Fiji's colonial history (1874-1914) and their corresponding resistance in chronological order. It contains many valuable archives about the 1876 Colo War and the Tuka Movement, including interviews between chiefs and war casualties, inside out through this book.

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Orcherton, Dan Frederick, Maria Orchardton, and Matthew Kensen. "Understanding Traditional Healing Practices and the Categories of Practices from Fijian ITaukei's Perspectives." *Sustainability* 13, no. 16 (August 12, 2021): 9003. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13169003>.

This medical journal analyzes the modern convention of Fiji's traditional healing process, which focuses on building spiritual relationships between patient and healer. It helped me to build a basic understanding of how customary medical care transformed after colonialism.

Rakai, Mele, I C Ezigbalike, and I P Williamson. "TRADITIONAL LAND TENURE ISSUES for LIS in FIJI." *Survey Review* 33, no. 258 (October 1, 1995): 247–62. <https://doi.org/10.1179/sre.1995.33.258.247>.

This article examines the land tenure structure engrained in Fiji for centuries and the issues of changing traditional land customs connected through kinship into vague legislation. It helps understand why conflicts arose after the British controlled the land.

Sebring, Ellen. Civilization & Barbarism: "The White Man's Burden" (1898–1902) - Global Research. *Global Research*, July 9, 2015. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/civilization-barbarism-the-white-mans-burden-1898-1902/5461424>.

This is a research report analyzing how the British colonizers tried to exploit the "barbaric savages"'s land and labor under the guise of education and modernization. The condescending attitude highlights the haughtiness of British settlers in confronting the natives.

Thaman, Konai Helu. "Whose sCulture (and Language) in the Curriculum?: a viewThaman, From the South Pacific". The invited address is the HAAPAE Conference, Sheraton Hotel, Honolulu, April 28-30 (year unmentioned).

This book dives into Fiji's educational system's relationship with language. Moreover, Thaman conducts several experiments on teaching language in Fiji today. I also referred to Thaman's observational opinion that most Fijians preferred English to fit in the modernizing society.

Thomson, Basil, Bolton Glanvill Corney, and James Stewart. *The Fijians: A Study of the Decay of Custom*. Kessinger Publishing, n.d.

This book discusses the loss of Fiji's traditional culture , from cannibalism to religion. It was essential

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to develop my argument of tragic cultural loss as it offers many perspectives to consider.

Tomlinson, Matt. "Efficacy, Truth, and Silence: Language Ideologies in Fijian Christian Conversions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 64–90.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27563731>.

This linguistic study portrays how the local Fijians responded to novel English and Christianity. Specifically, Matt Tomlinson evaluated the deficiency gaps between the local Fijian language and English, which accumulated cognitive bias through language and religion.

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Luisa Maffi, David Harmon, UNESCO, World Wildlife Fund, and Terralingua. *Sharing a World of Difference*. Unesco, 2003.

This book discusses the importance of cultural diversity and highlights the significance of language in preserving traditional culture. I excerpted the preface to highlight why focusing more on the forgotten indigenous languages is critical and valuable.

United Nations. "Land Tenure." UNCCD, n.d. <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-tenure/overview>.

This article explains in brief the concept of land tenure and its status around the world. I used it to define the idea of a land tenure system.

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