

strictly the subject-matter discussed in the book, the title can be changed something to: *Economic Impact of Landownership System in Fiji*. Such a shortening of the book's title will help avoid devoting so much space to the discussion of more general issues of institutions and property rights. Also, one should appreciate the fact that, as noted above, land rights are normally not included in the discussion of property rights.

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British Documents on the End of Empire, Fiji, Series B Volume 10, edited by Brij V Lal, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London, 2006, etc.

The major challenge facing the Pacific Islands in the mid-1950s was to create nations out of tribal societies under colonial tutelage. For Fiji, the challenge was greater because in addition to 300 tribes or so, there were newer communities forged out of indenture. In addition to Europeans, Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians, Indians were by far the largest community, at that time, larger than indigenous Fijians.

This book is a goldmine of information on Fiji's history of decolonization because it traces the tentative steps taken by Fiji's multicultural community leaders and their British mentors to galvanize a society, with no prior experience of internal self government, into a nation of citizens. The publication of the official papers documenting the end of British rule is to be warmly applauded and welcomed. In the nineteenth century, Fijians and Rotumans initiated British rule. In twentieth century, the return of that rule was largely in the hands of the British. It was to be returned to a totally different Fiji and Rotuma.

The decolonization process began in earnest after the Second World War, with India leading the charge for independence in 1947. The 'winds of change' took fifteen long years to blow through the Pacific, largely because its people in most parts were happy with the prevailing winds. Many foreign powers ruled the islands with a mixture of benign dictatorship, minimalist development and infrastructure, happily leaving education and community to mission hands.

For Fiji, despite 37 years of independence, the challenge of forging a nation out of indigenous tribes and diasporic communities remains a festering sore. Its people have been broken hearted and torn apart having seen at least

three constitutions, three military coups and a civil uprising, and its brightest leaving their homes and working in foreign lands. Many of the decisions for independence were necessarily taken behind doors and often in London. The legacy of colonial Fiji was benign apartheid.

If the challenge to nationhood is to be seriously addressed, developing and preserving an institutional memory of what happened during that crucial period leading to independence is essential to Fiji's present and future. Without securing its institutional memory, nationhood is only a dream. Families, neighbours, and future remain uncertain.

Nowhere is institutional memory more important than at local government, provincial, district and village councils. Anyone remotely interested in Fiji's immediate past, present and future, will find Lal's expert compilation of documents tracing Fiji's decolonization history refreshing and a relief; refreshing because of the succinct commentary on the events leading to the evolution of a constitution, and relief because of the public's immediate access to the primary sources which shaped contemporary history and immediate future. Thanks to Lal's labour of love, students and practicing historians of colonial administration no longer need to scour in remote corners of the archival world. All of the major documents relating to Fiji's recent history - from January 1955 to October 1970 - are neatly collated and available in just one volume.

The chapters of documents are neatly chronological, beginning with background from 1955, implanting the seed of multi-racialism in the early 1960s, forging and articulating long muted local political aspirations, the road to London and back, the experiments and experience of forging an Alliance government, Independence and its achievement in 1970.

One will find official despatches, minutes of meetings, position papers expounding the thinking of Governors, local leaders from rival camps, gems like the Wakaya Letter, modern Fiji's architects and more to whet the appetite.

All of this valuable material is expertly adapted by Professor Lal to provide a very informative summary of events which contextualizes these documents and the period they relate to.

The publishers have performed a salutary service to the Commonwealth by compiling and publishing these documents and one can only hope that locals will supplement these with their own memories before they vanish into the meanderings of oral tradition.

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