THE MAKING OF *AI MATAI:* A CAUTIONARY TALE IN FIJIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PUBLISHING

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Ai Matai is the official history of the Fiji military's participation in the Malaya Emergency, written by Tevita Nawadra. What ought to be a milestone in Fijian historiography in fact has had little public or academic impact. Publication in the Fijian language and poor distribution have created a small readership that is largely local. Further official military histories are currently being researched in Fiji, and the experience of *Ai Matai* provides useful lessons and warnings about how to and how not to go about such projects. This article attempts to identify the difficulties in the writing of history in Fiji and to serve as a reminder of the basic problems that exist where technical resources are deficient, and attitudes, values, and procedures are different from those in the so-called developed countries. If the lessons of *Ai Matai* are heeded, it should be possible for Fiji to produce official military histories that will correspond with and share the positive features of their counterparts in the First World.

On 19 January 1996, in the spacious grounds of Government House, Suva, the president of Fiji launched *Ai Matai,* the official history of First Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment, in the Malaya campaign between 1952 and 1956.[1] Present at the occasion were an assortment of government officials, former servicemen, military officers, and their partners, but apparently there were no academics.

My interest in *Ai Matai* stemmed from difficulty in obtaining a copy. I knew the year before that such a book was in progress,[2] and I first saw a copy in a downtown Suva book shop in July 1996. A week or so later, I asked the University of the South Pacific Book Centre to order copies, but the

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army informed them that these were only available to service personnel. When I returned to the downtown book shop, there were no copies left on the shelves, but one was produced from under the counter—as though it were a pornographic magazine—and I purchased a hardback edition for the very reasonable sum of F$29.95. It was very puzzling and not a little suspicious that a book with obvious and legitimate public interest was under wraps to the extent that I had to obtain a copy by semisurreptitious means. On the principle that forbidden fruits taste sweetest, I decided to look into the matter.

In my follow-up research it became apparent that the print media had done a poor job of reporting *Ai Matai.* The *Fiji Times* reporter said that the "book was compiled by ex-servicemen headed by Colonel Joji Mate."[3] In fact, the book was authored by one Tevita Ratulailai Nawadra—as the book's spine, title page, and dust jacket all make clear—and the text had only been vetted, not written, by a committee of five veterans of the Malaya campaign under the chairmanship of the late Colonel Mate (p. 524). To this day the author has never received proper credit in the print media, and this is symbolized in newspaper photographs of the book launch. The *Fiji Times* photograph showed the president and Adi Lady Lala Mara, who is brandishing a copy of the book. In the Fiji-language newspaper *Volasiga,* the roles were reversed, with the president holding a copy and Adi Lala looking on. In the other Fiji-language paper, *Nai Lalakai,* three prominent Fijians are sitting side by side admiring a copy; again the author goes unmentioned and is nowhere to be seen.[4] The television news coverage was a good deal better: the Fiji One TV report correctly specified the authorship, and the author himself explained how he went about researching the book. But that was the only media acknowledgment of Tevita Nawadra at the book launch, and since then his name has hardly been mentioned in the print media.

But I had a more fundamental concern. *Ai Matai* ought to be a milestone in Fijian historiography. With over 500 pages of text, it is by far the largest history book in the Fijian language, and its impact should have been correspondingly significant. But the distribution of the book has been restricted, and it is still difficult to obtain copies. It is unusual to find it in book shops, meaning that the necessary constant reminder is not before the reading public, and knowledge of its existence overseas must be minimal. I hope, with this essay, to redress the situation—to make the book known to a wider audience, which, in turn, will give its author belated acknowledgment. It is not my purpose, except incidentally, to evaluate *Ai Matai.* Rather, I will relate how the book came into being, discuss the implications of its limited distribution, and comment generally on the Fiji Military Force's efforts to produce an official war history.

The Author and the Making of the Book

In August 1987 Tevita Nawadra was approached by Sitiveni Rabuka (now the prime minister of Fiji) to write *Ai Matai.* It was not the first time that an attempt had been made to write an official history of the Malaya campaign (or the Malaya Emergency, as it was known at the time). Work commenced in the early 1980s, when Warrant Officer I Sam Gilhooly (himself a veteran of the Malaya campaign but retired and working for the Returned Servicemen's Association in New Zealand) took leave and came to Fiji as an honorary captain. He was assisted by another Malaya veteran, Honorary Lieutenant Afalusi Koroi, who died soon afterwards. Gilhooly returned to New Zealand to complete the job, but he too died, within three years. It is reported that his landlady burnt his papers, including his work on the book and the original First Battalion war diary. So Captain Nawadra had to start from scratch (p. xvii). By the late 1980s, moreover, there was an added urgency in that the Malaya campaign veterans were getting on in years, and if work did not resume quickly, many would not likely be around to provide their reminiscences or to enjoy the eventual book.

It would appear that the moving light for the book was the then president, the late Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, the former battalion commander in Malaya who had long wanted such a book written.[5] But the credit for choosing Tevita Nawadra surely goes to (then) Colonel Rabuka (p. xvii). Captain Nawadra does not know why he was chosen to write the book: he was never told and he never asked. But it can be surmised that he fitted the bill in most respects, being a well-educated former schoolteacher and public servant who had studied at the University of Leicester. His experience includes attachments to the Curriculum Development Unit (1971), the East-West Center in Honolulu (1972–1974), and the Fijian Dictionary Project (1974–1986). His new assignment would involve extensive interviewing of elderly Malaya campaign veterans, and it is not difficult to see that Nawadra's personality and education made him an appropriate person to approach the task with sympathy and understanding.

For the author the job offer was not only unexpected but gratifying—and the timing, so soon after the first 1987 coup, was auspicious. He was being asked by the man whom most Fijians regarded as their savior to perform an important task, and he could not refuse—even had he wanted to. He answered with approximately these words: "If you have done this [mounted a coup] for the Fijian people, then I am honored to do something for them too, especially those who gave their lives for peace." In this way, a retired civil servant without an armed service background found himself in the army on an indefinite commission, in November 1987, with the rank of

lieutenant (later captain), and thrust into the unfamiliar role of military historian.

Much else was unfamiliar in what he described to me as "a new life." He had to be shown how to wear a beret and how to salute—and the first time he was saluted was an emotional experience. It was very different from "the office," that is, his previous dictionary work, and he had to learn quickly how to present himself and to be "perfect in my turnout." Being a regular soldier, he feels, provided insights into the military mind that enabled him to better envisage the day-to-day life of a combat soldier and helped when interviewing Malaya campaign veterans. It brings to mind the famous dictum of Edward Gibbon that service in the Hampshire Militia was useful to him as the historian of the Roman Empire. Indeed, Captain Nawadra went to Malaysia in 1988, shortly after the commencement of the project. There he visited the areas where the First Battalion operated and heard Malaysian versions of what Fijian troops did there (p. xviii). In this respect he is akin to Thomas Babington Macaulay, who visited every battlefield described in his *History of England.*

Ai Matai makes some use of documentary evidence, but the major source is overwhelmingly the veterans' recollections. The interviewing proceeded fairly rapidly at first, because many of the veterans had been called up for service in the immediate aftermath of the 1987 coups. Many were close at hand in barracks in and around Suva and available for interviewing, often in groups. Some 800 Fijian soldiers served in the Malaya campaign in 1953 alone, and 146 of them are listed as having been interviewed (pp. 522–523). This, however, is a lower-bound figure, because Captain Nawadra was sometimes unable to get the names of everyone in the early group interviews. Once the political situation settled down, the veterans dispersed and had to be interviewed in their villages. Tracking them down was not easy, but the Battalion Commander's Diary was a starting point, as it contained names of many of the soldiers (p. xviii).[6]

The bulk of the interviews and associated transcribing took five years—until 1993—and predictably, with so many different people, there were extremes of reaction. A few, but not many, were downright uncooperative, usually because they genuinely did not want to talk about painful and searing experiences: "They had served their country, come back, and put it behind them" was how Captain Nawadra explained it. Others of taciturn mien needed coaxing. At the other extreme were a few who never stopped talking, and Captain Nawadra would eventually make good his escape "with my ears ringing." One such person talked compulsively for several hours and made the captain very late for his next appointment in the same village. He eventually turned up for his second appointment at five in the afternoon to find

lunch still waiting for him, replete with *yagona.* The grog bowl was replenished and the interview commenced with less than ideal results. The trouble was that Captain Nawadra and the respondent came from rival areas in Fiji (one from Verata, the other from Bau), and neither was prepared to be the first to stop drinking. The man insisted on talking at length, but Captain Nawadra, tired from his previous interview, was having trouble simply staying awake. So the host talked into the tape recorder while the captain drifted into sleep, and every half hour he was woken to turn or change the tape: "I only found out what he was talking about when I got back to base." Such is a day in the life of an oral historian.

The interviews were open-ended with few set questions, although each respondent was given a list of dates to jog the memory and to help prevent the chronology getting skewed or separate events being conflated. At first the captain used an old tape recorder from his dictionary days, a bulky affair resembling a small suitcase. Eventually the army provided more suitable equipment. He initially had a field assistant who also transcribed his own interviews, and trainee secretaries were allocated, but they had difficulty in coping; it was often easier to do things himself. The work was time-consuming, because the tapes were transcribed in full rather than summarized. The captain had to believe in the basic sincerity of his respondents, or writing the book would have been impossible (p. xviii) Sometimes, however, he was given conflicting versions of the same event and had no external means of verification. A case in point is the story of the action leading to a particular soldier's being awarded the Military Medal (p. 304). He recorded several versions of the same story, but details varied between the widely dispersed tellers. Unable to get the various people together or to return to ask follow-up questions, he attempted to reconcile the differing versions and produced a composite account—very much as a historian will often do when the documentary evidence conflicts. At other times, as he explained on television during the book launch, he had to decide which version was the most likely.

Ai Matai is essentially an oral history of the Fijian soldier in the Malaya campaign. It is not based on that blend of oral testimony and documentary evidence typical of many other such histories. The reasons for the stress on the oral record relate to opportunity and the preservation of sources, and the point can be illustrated by the contrasting examples of other war books. When writing his dissertation (in the late 1960s) on Australian soldiers' experiences in the First World War, Bill Gammage corresponded with 269 (of 350 asked) veterans and interviewed some of them. His sample of respondents was necessarily limited by the event having taken place fifty years earlier; and many of the respondents passed away in the period between the acceptance of the dissertation and the publication of the book deriving from

it. Gammage's main source, however, was the diaries and letters of almost 1,000 soldiers in the Australian War Memorial and other repositories.[7] By contrast, the Fijian experience in the Malaya campaign did not generate much of a written record from the ordinary soldiers, and in any case there is no repository in Fiji comparable to the Australian War Memorial. Hank Nelson's book on Australian prisoners-of-war of the Japanese provides another contrast. In addition to interviews with 158 survivors, Nelson drew on a variety of written records including diaries and reminiscences, official war histories, and almost fifty books by and about the POWs.[8] There is simply not the richness of written documentation on the Fijian contribution to the Malaya campaign. A third example is John Barrett's analysis in the 1980s of some 3,700 bulky questionnaires from Australian World War II veterans, many of whom were contacted through the cooperation of the Returned Servicemen's League.[9] It is difficult to imagine that Fiji's veterans would, in any numbers, return completed questionnaires. In all, circumstances in Fiji conspire against writing such finely grained military histories unless the researcher is prepared to go to quite inordinate lenghts.

Historiographic Location

War is a subject of enduring and seemingly universal interest; and the historiography of warfare is as diffuse as its practitioners are varied. Military history is an incredibly diverse subject and home to the whole spectrum of so-called amateur and professional historians. Alongside a huge and heavily pictorial literature for a wider reading public and a sizable corpus of soldiers' reminiscences[10] is a more scholarly literature, enormous in size and varied in scope—the product of "that monstrous modern regiment, the academic strategist."[11] This ranges from studies from the vantage point of high command, military-government relations, and diplomacy through to history-from-below books that focus on the soldiers' experience. The latter trend, indeed, is under way in Pacific Islands historiography as academic researchers —predominantly anthropologists but including historians—have "gone to war," resulting in several publications in recent years focusing specifically on the islanders' experience during World War II.[12] The increasing emphasis on the Pacific Islanders' role and experience is a welcome development.[13]

There is also a well-defined genre of official war histories, into which *Ai Matai* fits; and it is a little-known fact that there is an official history of Fiji in the Second World War, written by an expatriate officer.[14] Genre or not, government-sponsored war histories are also highly differentiated in terms of authorship and scope, qualities that are nicely captured by the *Official His-*

tory of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939–1945. It contains four series: "Campaign and Service" (nineteen titles), "Unit Histories" (twenty-one titles), "Episodes and Studies" (twenty-four booklets, consolidated into two volumes), and "The New Zealand People at War" (three titles). Like other countries' multivolume official war histories, there are the usual battalion and campaign histories and a smaller number of domestic accounts. The individual authors come from a wide variety of service and nonservice backgrounds, and sometimes a combination of both—although the campaign and unit histories are usually written by people with combat experience. The domestic accounts, typically, were written by career academics with nonservice backgrounds, and in fact the volume *Political and External Affairs* was Professor F. L. W. Wood's *opus magnum.* Typically also, the authors had unrestricted access to official documents and the overall time frame is lengthy; the last volume was completed in 1982 (and even then publication was delayed until 1986).[15]

The diversity of the multivolume official war histories—in New Zealand and elsewhere—makes it difficult to locate *Ai Matai* even within this genre. The mix of theme and author makes it the more so. It is a conventional battalion history but, unconventionally, is written by one with no combat experience. Nor can Captain Nawadra, as an official war historian, compare with careerists such as C. E. W. Bean or a Samuel Eliot Morison, both of whom wrote numerous volumes about a single war.[16] *Ai Matai* is additionally unconventional: being based on oral testimony rather than official documents, it resembles more the history-from-below books than the typical battalion histories, which are equally concerned with strategy and command. *Ai Matai* is also at once a battalion history and an entire official war history in itself, again an unusual situation but explicable because of the relatively small-scale extent of Fiji's involvement in the Malaya Emergency.

In short, *Ai Matai* captures in miniature the nebulous qualities of official war histories, with their overlapping categories. The book is difficult to categorize, because it is the exception to just about every rule: a battalion history that draws lightly on official documents, relying mostly on oral testimony; an author with an unusual background (which implies no criticism); and a relative lack of secretarial and research support. The only point with which the author can be faulted is that insufficent use was made of the documentary record, even taking into account the enormously time-consuming task of almost single-handedly collecting the oral testimonies and then transcribing some 260 cassette tapes. But more use could have been made of the official documentation in what is supposed to be an official history, after all.

Funding and Distribution

The book was produced under fairly rudimentary circumstances. The resources available to Captain Nawadra do not compare, say, with those at the disposal of the New Zealand oral-pictorial project on the 28 Maori Battalion in the Second World War. In addition to gathering oral testimony, the 28 Maori Battalion Project is collecting letters, diaries, songs, poems, photographs, and memorabilia and entering detailed biographical data (including video images and voice) of some 4,000 individuals into a computerized database. Although operating on an amazingly low budget given the amount and variety of work, this Massey University–based project draws on resources (including volunteer helpers) that Captain Nawadra never dreamed of.[17] Another computer-based military history project, involving resources beyond those of the Fiji Army, is the First Australian Infantry Force project at the Australia Defence Force Academy.[18]

Yet the army was beneficent within its means. Captain Nawadra's salary was met from public funds, but extra efforts had to be made to see the book to a conclusion. The army raised F$50,000 toward the book, the proceeds coming from the profit from an insurance premium that would otherwise have been distributed among the troops. The army then decided, in May 1995, to organize a massive fund-raising exercise to meet the balance of the book's production costs. A senior army spokesman declared: "We did not want to depend on Government assistance, and we're not considering Government funds."[19] A F$51,000 target was reported,[20] commencing with a dinner costing F$100 per couple. But the main thrust of fund-raising would be runathons involving every battalion, and when the day came, they all tried to outdo each other. The follow-up newspaper report, while itemizing a number of substantial private and district donations, did not specify the total money raised.[21] In fact, the fund-raising realized a staggering F$72,000, which brought the total to F$122,000. This sum more than covered the eventual printing (F$47,000) and other costs (F$43,000), and Captain Nawadra returned F$32,000 to the army with the recommendation that a revolving fund for future historical projects be established.[22]

The typesetting and printing were undertaken by the Government Printer (who is slow and costly), and the print run was 1,500 hardback copies and an equal number in paperback. Copies sold at the official book launch "like hot cakes," according to the television news coverage; 104 copies changed hands, to be precise. Thereafter, the plot thickens. In a strange decision, instead of the book's being made publicly available, sales of *Ai Matai* were initially restricted to service personnel. No security issues were at stake, the book was likely to have widespread appeal (among Fijians at any rate), and

sales would have helped to recoup the initial outlay and provide funding for future historical projects.

So what should have been a milestone in the historiography of Fiji was largely hidden from sight. A sense of the author's quiet disappointment came across during our discussions. He was presented with the unexpected opportunity and challenge to produce something of lasting worth. As he said to me, "The book had to be from a uniquely Fijian perspective—written by a Fijian from the experiences of Fijian soldiers for a Fijian audience, and for future reference." The book was intended to celebrate and to create a public awareness of the Fijian contribution to the Malaya campaign, but these objectives are largely negated if the book's distribution and availability is so limited, especially among those too young to remember the event—anyone under age fifty. Restricting it to service personnel is akin to preaching to the converted, not creating a wider public awareness. Neither does the limited distribution do anything to foster habits of reading—which are becoming increasingly required—among people who are more comfortable with orality. There seemed no valid explanation for the decision to limit circulation, except perhaps as a function of a restricted literacy setting where the tendency is to have a secretive attitude toward knowledge.[23]

Actually, it was nothing more sinister than a few wires getting crossed within the army. The book was intended for public sale, but the person responsible for distribution had not been made aware of this. Thus, the University of the South Pacific Book Centre placed an order in July 1996, only to be told that copies were not available to the general public. In March 1997, at my prompting, the Book Centre placed another order, and on this occasion the army agreed to make copies available. They would not, however, accept an LPO (local purchasing order) but required that someone from the Book Centre pick up copies at the Nabua base. They further specified a cash on collection arrangement—which is contrary to normal book trade practices where the publisher or distributor arranges dispatch. Even without such mixups, sales would be limited, not least because of the lack of good book outlets in Fiji. Nor is it likely that sales will be augmented by excerpts from *Ai Matai* that were serialized in *Nai Lalakai,* beginning on 19 March 1997, because the book itself is not mentioned.

Then there is the small matter of the F$32,000 that Captain Nawadra returned to the army to establish a revolving fund for other such projects. To this sum can be added whatever monies have been realized through sales—which would have been somewhat more had the book been publicly available from the onset. Because no taxpayers' money is involved, these funds have not been spirited away into consolidated revenue but, instead, placed in a separate bank account for future historical work. A priority is an English

translation of *Ai Matai.* Plans are also afoot for a volume on the Fijian contribution to peacekeeping in the Sinai desert—as Fiji One TV reported in its coverage of the book launching ceremony—but on this occasion the army will seek outside funding. The feeling is that they have done their bit with *Ai Matai,* and now it is the government's or a sponsor's turn to pick up the tab. Indeed, two official histories of Fiji peacekeeping operations are in preparation. The writer of the Sinai history is Captain Stan Brown, a retired naval officer (who has just completed an official history of the Fiji police force). Costs are minimal because, as a retired person, he receives no salary, only out-of-pocket expenses. The Lebanon history is being written by Jim Sanday, a former lieutenant-colonel, with some funding being provided by Taiwan.[24]

Summary

A balance sheet on *Ai Matai* has its debits and credits in about equal measure. The quality of newspaper reporting is regrettable, but in no way is the army accountable for the print media's shortcomings. The army's fund-raising efforts were magnificent but are offset by the inept distribution of the book. The latter can be put down to inexperience only up to a point, considering that the army's original intention was to sell copies to civilians as well as to war veterans. There has also been a tardiness in using the monies raised through *Ai Matai* to get a translation under way. This can only partly be put down to pressure of other work combined with key army personnel being absent on tours of duty.

The lack of an English-language version has prompted strong criticism in some quarters. It was decided to publish a Fiji-language version in the first instance for the sake of the Malaya campaign veterans, meaning that *Ai Matai* is detached from a considerable literature on the Malaya Emergency.[25] Critics have said that greater sales and an international audience would have resulted had the book been written in the English language; and from a commercial as well as an academic standpoint they are correct. The earlier-mentioned official history of Fiji forces in the Second World War was first printed in English and only later in Fijian, and adherence to this precedent would have been better for sales.[26] Sales of *Ai Matai,* as of late March 1997, were limited to the 104 copies sold at the launching ceremony; another 241 copies were distributed but not necessarily sold (and a number of complimentary copies were given out). In keeping with the plan to make *Ai Matai* available to Fijian people and especially the campaign veterans, those 241 copies were distributed for sale by district councils, who are no more experienced at book distribution than the army; in any case, the retail prices of F$20 (hardback) and F$17 (paperback), while very reasonable given the size

of the book, are either beyond the means or more than the average Fijian villager is prepared to pay for a book. A print run of 3,000 was overly ambitious, but at least the book is unlikely to go out of print in the immediate future. Nor have there been attempts to promote *Ai Matai* overtly in its serialization in *Nai Lalakai,* by specifying that the installments are excerpted from the book and indicating where and for how much copies may be purchased.

To continue the economic argument, an English version could have been distributed to a network of overseas service clubs and returned servicemen's associations, not to mention military academies and university libraries. An English-language version is clearly needed, but it is easier said than done. Probably the most difficult aspect of the eventual translation exercise will be to find someone both appropriately qualified *and* available. However, to date the army has made no serious attempt to translate their good intentions into reality.

Why were so many copies printed when likely sales were so limited? The army discussed the print run at some length, and the final decision was based on the combination of assumed sales and printer's quotes. The expectation that veterans and their families would readily purchase copies was overly optimistic. What settled the matter, however, was a quote from the Government Printer, who advised that a larger print run would result in a lower unit cost. This quote pushed the army into agreeing to the untenably large print run. Whereas a reviewer thought that the mere 500 copies of the first volume of *New Zealand and the Korean War* was "amazingly" insufficient, it would have been a realistic figure for *Ai Matai.*[27]

The care and preservation of the tapes containing the oral testimony will also need looking into. As of August 1997, they were securely housed with the transcripts and other research material at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Suva. Provision will need to be made for those 260 or so cassette tapes' transfer to air-conditioned premises and for extra copies to be made as a safeguard. It is for the better that the National Archives of Fiji, which has appropriate facilities, has considered laying claim to the tapes on those grounds.

A further concern is the question of the author's independence and rights to his own interpretation. This is one of the most vexatious problems connected with commissioned histories: there is a fine line indeed between "effective supervision" and heavy-handed "meddling or censorship."[28] Although the latter scenario was not the case with *Ai Matai,* the cynic might find tendencies in that direction. Captain Nawadra handed over the completed manuscript to the then president, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, in late 1992. The president kept it for almost a year, which laid to rest the author's hope that the book's publication would coincide with the reburial of the

repatriated remains of twenty-two Fijian veterans of the Malaya campaign, scheduled for November 1993.[29] But the president decided that the book would be vetted, and he formed a committee under Colonel George Mate, who went through the manuscript page by page. The legitimate purpose was to weed out any factual errors that might have resulted from the reliance on oral testimony—a worry compounded by the fact that Captain Nawadra had never been a regular soldier in Malaya, or anywhere else for that matter. Captain Nawadra is happy with the committee's work, but he did lament that it "could have been done earlier."

One can only agree. The requirement that the book be vetted should have been stated at the onset; then the committee could have read each chapter while the next one was being written. Had this been done, the book might have been published in time for the reburial, and there would probably have been the bonus of additional sales.

The vetting procedures—or lack of them—set down for *Ai Matai* might well provide a precedent for overt interference next time round, where the correction of factual error spills over to a more thoroughgoing intervention concerning interpretation and conclusions. This is a distinct possibility and at odds with the conventions of official war histories elsewhere, where authors have unimpeded access to documents and freedom from political interference—whether from politicians, bureaucrats, or the armed forces.[30] These matters should be resolved for the official histories currently under way on the Sinai and Lebanon peacekeeping operations.

But any reservations are outweighed by the achievement of producing *Ai Matai* in good time. Eight years between commencement and actual publication may sound like a long time, but it is reasonable by the standard of official war volumes and especially when so much oral testimony had to be collected, transcribed, and digested.[31] The manuscript, moreover, once out of the clutches of the vetting committee, was promptly printed—unlike some war history volumes, where unconscionable delays are experienced between completion of the manuscript and its eventual publication.

There is bound to be criticism in some quarters about the very subject matter and its implied celebration of war and all its horrors.[32] It must also be admitted that *Ai Matai* will have little, if any, appeal to the Indian community, who view the army askance as an overtly Fijian institution. The army's involvement in the 1987 coups is an emphatic reminder on that point. But the problem goes back further. The Indo-Fijians' near-universal refusal to enlist in 1943, unless given the same pay and conditions as European troops, has been held against them ever since, although "more for modern political emphasis than for any honest attempt to understand the problem."[33] By contrast, army service is an honorable vocation for Fijians, and villagers like a

son to join the army, just as it was once the ambition of French Catholic families to have a son in holy orders. Even if an English translation eventuates, *Ai Matai* and books like it will find little favor with Indo-Fijians. Some might even argue, on the one hand, that *Ai Matai* will only serve to accentuate existing ethnic tensions, but that comment would apply to many books about Fiji where an appeal to one group entails rejection or indifference by the other. On the other hand, *Ai Matai* has obvious uses as a school and university text for Fijian culture and language courses.

Any realistic assessment needs to recognize that Fiji does not have the resources or local expertise to produce official war histories on the scale that the developed countries can.[34] Future activities will be limited by such contingencies, and again a contrast with New Zealand is instructive. With a population of about three million (compared with Fiji's 770,000), New Zealand has some fifty public historians being paid for what they do.[35] The very different financial and educational situation of postindependence Fiji has resulted in a miserly five commissioned historians in the past twenty-seven years. The first was Deryck Scarr, from the Australian National University, who wrote the biography of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.[36] More recently, Sir Robert Sanders (who had long service in the Fiji administration) assisted the incumbent president, Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara, in the writing of his memoirs—the project receiving financial backing from the Republic of China.[37] There are also the above-mentioned official histories of the police force and of the peacekeeping operations by Captain Brown and Colonel Sanday. The only ethnic Fijian (as distinct from expatriate, resident European, or part European) in this small group is Tevita Nawadra, the author of *Ai Matai.*

This record points to the dilemma of historical writing in Fiji. On the one hand, no young historians are being produced by the University of the South Pacific, largely because the discipline is seen as irrelevant to one's career prospects.[38] On the other hand, complaints have long been voiced that Fiji history, and Pacific history generally, is overwhelmingly written by outsiders rather than by Pacific Islanders. But the remedy—if this is really such a problem—has to come from within, and the necessary structural, institutional, and financial arrangements must be put into place. At the moment, commissioned histories in Fiji are being written by overseas academics, whose salaries are met by their home institutions, or by retired persons who live off their pensions and only expect out-of-pocket expenses. Only Colonel Sanday is a local person with discipline-specific academic training. It must be stressed that history does not come cheaply, only with different degrees of expense;[39] and historians take a long time to train. But a start needs to be made and the necessary skills nurtured—and it is pointless to complain about

the prevalence of outside researchers when no serious attempts are made to develop home-grown historians. In the meantime, Tevita Nawadra's *Ai Matai* stands as an exemplar.

NOTES

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1. Tevita R. Nawadra, *Ai Matai—Malaya: 1st Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment, Far-East Land Forces, 1952–1956* (Suva: History and Archives Unit, Republic of Fiji Military Forces, 1995), xx + 524 pp. Page numbers in parentheses within the text of this article refer to *Ai Matai* (which translates into English as "The First"). The First Battalion has served in other war and peacekeeping zones, including the Solomon Islands and Lebanon. The terms "First Battalion" and "*Ai Matai*" in this article relate only to the Malaya Emergency, during which time the First Battalion was popularly called "the Malaya Battalion." The Malaya campaign lasted some twelve years, but the First Battalion was present only from 1952 to 1956. The consequences for the soldiers and their families are negatively assessed by Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 149–151. Deryck Scarr mentions the campaign in passing in *Fiji: A Short History* (Sydney/London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 164. Brief accounts of Fiji's part in the Malaya campaign are provided in R. J. B. Ackland, "Notes on the Historical Development of the Fiji Military Forces," *Transactions and Proceedings of the Fiji Society* 9, no. 1 (1961–1962): 73–75; [Ian Thorpe and Aquila Savu], *Defending Fiji: Defence White Paper, 1997* (Suva: Parliament of Fiji, Parliamentary Paper No. 3 of 1997), 10–11.

2. My sophomore "Theory and Method of History" course in 1994 and 1995 involved a major oral history project for each student in the course, one of whom interviewed her uncle on his soldiering experiences in Malaya. We contacted the army for further information and were told, quite rightly, that material relating to *Ai Matai* could only be made available after publication.

3. *Fiji Times,* 20 January 1996, 3.

4. Ibid.; *Volasiga,* 22–28 January 1996, 1; *Nai Lalakai,* 20 November 1996, 4. The *Daily Post* (Suva) did not cover the book launch.

5. *Fiji Times,* 9 May 1995, 4; 11 May 1995, 7. Ganilau's role in the Malaya campaign is recounted in Daryl Tarte, *Turaga: The Life and Times and Chiefly Authority of Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., K.B.E., D.S.O., K.St.J., E.D. in Fiji* (Suva: Fiji Times, 1993), 46–50.

6. This diary was the unit "War Diary." These were compiled by all unit commanders on active service and were sent home month by month in chapter form. The Fiji Military Forces headquarters has numerous Middle East "Commander's Diaries" (*not* "War Diaries"). The name was changed because although the later peacekeeping activities can be operationally dangerous, for a "war" one needs an "enemy."

7. Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974; Ringwood: Penguin, 1975). The value of oral testimony in reaching the heart of the soldier's experience is promoted by Glynn Harper, "Penetrating the Fog of War: The Use of Oral History in Military Research History," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 15 (1993): 38–46; Peter H. Liddle and Matthew J. Richardson, "Voices from the Past: An Evaluation of Oral History as a Source for Research into the Western Front Experience of the British Soldier, 1914–18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 4 (1996): 651–674. Another view is presented in Peter Edwards, "Time Distorts Memories," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 6 July 1993, 46.

8. Hank Nelson, *P.O.W., Prisoners of War: Australians under Nippon* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985). The book is based on an Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio program of the same name, which was produced by Tim Bowden. Reminiscences of Australian POW experiences continue to be published. See the *Weekend Australian Magazine,* 25–26 April 1987, 3–4.

9. John Barrett, *We Were There: Australian Soldiers of World War II Tell Their Stories* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987), esp. 16–34.

10. For example, the incomparable personal account of the New Guinea campaign by Peter Ryan, *Fear Drive My Feet* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969; paperback edition issued by Melbourne University Press, 1970); and the reminiscences of a New Zealand soldier whose tours of duty included the Malaya campaign: Frank Rennie, *Regular Soldier* (Auckland: Endeavour Press, 1986).

11. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976; paperback reprint, Pimlico, 1991), 55. In Australia, to give just one example, the history of war is an appreciable academic industry. Lloyd Robson, "Behold a Pale Horse: Australian War Studies," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 90 (1988): 115–126; Glen St. J. Barclay, "Australian Historians and the Study of War, 1975–88," in *Historical Disciplines in Australasia: Themes, Problems and Debates,* ed. John A. Moses, special issue of the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 41 (1995): 240–253.

12. Asesela Ravuvu, *Fijians at War, 1939–1945* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1974); Neville K. Robinson, *Villagers at War: Some Papua New*

Guinea Experiences in World War II (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981); Hugh Laracy and Geoffrey White, eds., *Taem Blong Faet: World War II in Melanesia,* special issue of *O'o: A Journal of Solomon Islands Studies* 4 (1988); Geoffrey M. White, David W. Gegeo, David Atkin, and Karen Watson-Gegeo, eds., *Bikfala Faet: Olketa Solomon Aelanda Rimembarem Wol Wo Tu/The Big Death: Solomon Islanders Remember World War II* (Honiara/Suva: Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1988); Geoffrey White and Lamont Lindstrom, eds., *The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989)—see the review article by Hank Nelson, "Turning the Talk of War into History," *Journal of Pacific History* 25, no. 2 (1990): 260–276; Hugh Laracy, "World War II," in *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century,* ed. K. R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste, and Brij V. Lal (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 149–169; Peter MacQuarrie, *Strategic Atolls: Tuvalu and the Second World War* (Christchurch/Suva: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1994); Leo Scheps, "Chimbu Participation in the Pacific War," *Journal of Pacific History* 30, no. 1 (1995): 76–86. As a by-product of the *Ai Matai* research, Captain Nawadra wrote a pamphlet on the Fijian soldier in the Solomon Islands campaign who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Tevita R. Nawadra, *Cabobula Nei Kovula Sefanaia Sukanaivalu, V.C., Mawaraka, Bukanivili, 23 June 1944* (Suva: Tabana ni i Tukutuku ni Veigauna Mataivalu ni Viti, 1990). The most recent contributions are Stewart Firth, "The War in the Pacific," in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders,* ed. Donald Denoon with Stewart Firth, Jocelyn Linnekin, Malama Meleisea, and Karen Nero (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 291–323; and John Garrett, *Where Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War II* (Suva/Geneva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with World Council of Churches, 1997), 1–147.

13. Some earlier books were more attuned to the Pacific Islanders' experience than others. The superb account of coast-watching activities in the Pacific theater by the man in charge tends to screen out the islanders' role, because the author is writing from the vantage point of the head office in Sydney. Eric A. Feldt, *The Coast Watchers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946; New York: Bantam Books, 1979). A comparable book was written by a coast watcher himself, and being closer to the action, he is unavoidably more aware of the islanders' contribution. D. C. Norton, *Fire over the Islands: The Coast Watchers of the Solomons* (Wellington: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1970; London: Lee Cooper, 1975). A New Zealand soldier, who commanded Fijian troops in the Pacific campaign, places similar emphasis on their contribution. See T. E. Dorman, *The Green War* (Christchurch: Claxton Press, 1997). Then there is Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of a Landmark Battle* (New York: Random House, 1990; reprinted Penguin Books, 1992), which, despite its subtitle, barely recognizes the islanders' role. It is almost as if the local populations did not exist.

14. R. A. Howlett, *The History of the Royal Military Forces, 1939–1945* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1948). A follow-up effort was Bruce Adams (photographs) and Robert Howlett (text), *Battlefield South Pacific* (Sydney: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1970).

15. The volumes specifically referred to are F. L. W. Wood, *The New Zealand People at War: Political and External Affairs* (Wellington: War History Branch of the Department of External Affairs, 1958; reprinted Wellington: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1971); Nancy M.

Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, 2 vols. (Wellington: Historical Publications Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, 1986).

16. Bean wrote six of the ten volumes of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918,* and Morison wrote all fifteen volumes of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II.* Much admired in his lifetime, Bean was the object of posthumous criticism. John Barrett, "No Straw Man: C. E. W. Bean and His Critics," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 90 (1988): 102–114.

17. Monty Soutar, "28 Maori Battalion Oral History Project," audiovisual presentation at the To Live Is to Learn conference, organized by the National Oral History Association of New Zealand and the University of Waikato, 31 May–1 June 1997. A separate effort on the same subject is Wira Gardiner, *Te Mura o te Ahi: The Story of the Maori Battalion* (Auckland: Reed, 1992).

18. Alan D. Gilbert, John Robertson, and Roslyn Russell, "Computing Military History: A Research Report on the First AIF Project," *War and Society* 7, no. 1 (1989): 106–113.

19. *Fiji Times,* 9 May 1995, 4.

20. This figure is incorrect; and this particular newspaper account (*Fiji Times,* 9 May 1995, 4) contains other inaccuracies. It was reported that 50,000 copies of the book would be printed at a cost of F$61,000 (a unit cost of just over $1!), when in fact the print run was 3,000 and the actual printing costs were F$47,000 (a unit cost of just over $15). I dislike writing about the Fiji print media in this fashion, given the need for an independent press in Third World countries. But its reporting of *Ai Matai* leaves a great deal to be desired.

21. *Fiji Times,* 12 May 1995, 7. The *Daily Post* did not cover the fund-raising, and neither, surprisingly, did the Fiji-language newspapers.

22. Captain Nawadra provided these figures, and the army confirmed their accuracy.

23. See Niko Besnier, *Literacy, Emotion, and Authority: Reading and Writing on a Polynesian Atoll* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170–171.

24. Stanley B. Brown, *From Fiji to the Balkans: The History of the Fiji Police Force* (Suva: Fiji Police Force, forthcoming). Taiwan is funding the Lebanon volume to the tune of F$108,000 (*Fiji Times,* 11 October 1996, 3; 18 November 1996, 2).

25. Other official histories of the Malaya Emergency include David Lee, *Eastward: A History of the Royal Navy in the Far East, 1945–1972* (London: HMSO, 1984); Malcolm Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960* (London: HMSO, 1992); Colin Bannister, *An Inch of Bravery: 3 RAR in the Malayan Emergency, 1957–59* (Canberra: Directorate of Army Public Affairs, 1994); Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1950–1966* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1996). Chris Pugsley is writing the official New Zealand volume. A soldier's textbook is *The Conduct of Terrorist Operations in Malaya,* 2d ed. (Kuala Lumpur: HQ Malaya

Command, 1954). Nonofficial accounts include Oliver Crawford, *The Door Marked Malaya* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958); Brigadier Richard Clutterback, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya, 1948–60* (London: Cassell, 1966; New York: Praeger, 1966); Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960* (London: Lieutenant-Colonel Osprey, 1982); E. D. Smith, *Counter-Insurgency Operations,* vol. 1: *Malaya and Borneo* (London: Ian Ward, 1985); Brigadier Neil C. Smith, *Mostly Unsung: Australia and the Commonwealth in the Malaya Emergency, 1948–1960* (Melbourne: N. C. Smith, 1989).

26. R. A. Howlett, *Na Kedra Tukutuku Veimataivalu ni Viti, 1939–1945* (Suva: Government of Fiji, 1953).

27. W. David McIntyre, *New Zealand Journal of History* 28, no. 1 (1994): 102. The experience of the New Zealand volumes on the Korea War indicates how difficult it can be to predict accurately the sales potential of a book. Five hundred copies for volume 1, which concerned diplomacy and strategy, seemed reasonable, but as soon as the book was shortlisted in the New Zealand Book Awards, it immediately sold out. The book was out of print before the academic reviews appeared, which meant that potential sales were lost, especially to libraries. Volume 1 was reprinted in 1996, and over half the copies had sold by the end of the year. The print run of volume 2, on combat operations, was 1,250, of which 741 had been presold by the book launch in October 1996. Given that there are about 5,000 veterans, the print run again seems a bit low—but only time will tell. Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War,* 2 vols. (Auckland: Oxford University Press in association with the History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1992 and 1996).

28. Richard Broom, Tony Dingle, and Susan Priestly, "The History of Victoria Project: Looking Back," *Historical Studies* 21, no. 84 (1985): 413–414. See also John Murphy, "The New Official History," *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 102 (1994): 119–124.

29. The reburial in the military cemetery at Reservoir Road took place amidst a blaze of publicity. *Fiji Times,* 9, 10, 11, 12 November 1993 (all front-page reports); *Daily Post,* 12 November 1993, 1, 4–5; *Volasiga,* 13 November 1993, 13.

30. As in the case of the Australian official histories of the two world wars. See Robert O'Neill, "Australia in the Second World War," *Historical Studies* 16, no. 64 (1975): 456. Whether this ethic still prevails has recently been disputed. *Weekend Australian,* 2–3 May 1992, 25; 9–10 May 1992, 14. The same liberality applied to Britain's official *History of the Second World War,* but there were restrictions of an editorial nature. In the "Home Series," reference to personalities and the way in which individual decisions led to various solutions were disallowed—to the regret of at least one of the authors. M. J. Tucker, "Joel Hurstfield: Historian for All Seasons," in *Recent Historians of Great Britain: Essays on the Post-1945 Generation,* ed. Walter L. Arnstein (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 39.

31. The *Fiji Times,* 20 January 1996, 3, reported that the book took eighteen months to complete. What the reporter meant to say was that the vetting committee under Colonel Mate's chairmanship took eighteen months to do its work.

32. For a different view, see generally Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays* (London: Unwin, 1984), and specifically Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), vii–ix.

33. [Thorpe and Savu], *Defending Fiji,* 10. For contrasting views, see Lal, *Broken Waves,* 120–125; Ravuvu, *Fijians at War,* 8–10.

34. In New Zealand, for example, F. L. W. Wood had the benefit of very capable research assistance from five of his former graduate students when researching the *Political and External Affairs* volume during the 1950s (see preface and p. 385). The manuscripts that one of them wrote for Wood's use were later published as books in their own right. M. P. Lissington, *New Zealand and the United States, 1840–1944* and *New Zealand and Japan* (both published Wellington: Government Printer, 1972). Captain Nawadra asked for an assistant of recent-graduate standing, partly to take some of the pressure off himself and partly to develop that person's skills, but without success.

35. Jock Phillips, "Our History, Our Selves: The Historian and National Identity," *New Zealand Journal of History* 30, no. 2 (1996): 107.

36. Deryck Scarr, *Ratu Sukuna: Soldier, Statesman, Man of Two Worlds* (London: Macmillan Educational, 1980); Scarr, ed., *Fiji: The Three Legged Stool: Selected Writings of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna* (London: Macmillan Educational, 1983). Both volumes were published in association with the Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Biography Committee and were almost entirely funded by public subscription.

37. Kamasese Mara, *The Pacific Way: A Memoir* (Honolulu: Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i; Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center; University of Hawai'i Press), xv. It is a delightful irony that mainland China provided financial backing for Ratu Mara's memoirs while Taiwan is sponsoring the Lebanon peacekeeping volume. I have always believed in taking the devil's money to do the Lord's work.

38. Doug Munro, "The Isolation of Pacific History," in *Reflections on Pacific Islands Historiography,* special issue of *Journal of Pacific Studies* 20 (1996): 58.

39. The breakdown and discussion of the costs of a major historical project are provided by Broom, Dingle, and Priestly, "The History of Victoria Project," 419–420.