KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO WACC SYMPOSIUM

Purpose of Symposium:

To develop a series of core messages for use by Fiji's Faith based community which will demonstrate a collective call for peaceful transition towards parliamentary democracy. To communicate a message that will inspire a process of democratization.

The purpose of this symposium is to inspire faith leaders in developing a collective call for parliamentary democracy. The symposium assumes that there is no democracy in Fiji. In other words, there is a form of power in Fiji that we cannot define to be democratic.

What is the dominant form of power in Fiji? Defining this form of power will crystallize our message for democratization.

Outline

1. What is democracy?
2. Defining the dominant form of power in Fiji
3. The way towards democratization.
4. The key message

A Short Definition of Democracy

U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) defined democracy as:

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people."

The *term democracy* comes from the Greek language and means "rule by the (simple) people". The so-called "democracies" in classical antiquity (Athens and Rome) represent precursors of modern democracies. Like modern democracy, they were created as a reaction to a concentration and abuse of power by the rulers. Yet the theory of modern democracy was not formulated until the Age of Enlightment (17th/18th centuries), when philosophers defined the essential elements of democracy: separation of powers, basic civil rights / human rights, religious liberty and separation of church and state.

Often *democracy* is defined opposite to other types of government:

Monarchy Government by a single ruler (king/queen, emperor)
Aristocracy Government by noblemen (hereditary)
Oligarchy Government by few persons
Theocracy "Government by God" (in reality this means government by religious leaders)
Dictatorship Government by people, that have seized power by force (often: military dictatorship)

Democracy - Key Elements

In order to deserve the label *modern democracy*, a country needs to fulfill some basic requirements - and they need not only be written down in it's constitution but must be kept up in everyday life by politicians and authorities:

- Guarantee of basic Human Rights to every individual person vis-à-vis the state and its authorities as well as vis-à-vis any social groups (especially religious institutions) and vis-à-vis other persons.

- Separation of Powers between the institutions of the state:

  Government [Executive Power],

  Parliament [Legislative Power] and

  Courts of Law [Judicative Power]

- Freedom of opinion, speech, press and mass media

- Religious liberty

- General and equal right to vote (one person, one vote)

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- Good Governance (focus on public interest and absence of corruption)[1]

Defining the dominant form of power in Fiji

What form of power exists in Fiji? What has been the dominant form of power? What is the form of power which gives rise to coups?

History shows that *I Taukeis* featured prominently in Fiji's coups. All the coups except the 2000 coup involved the overthrow of an *I Taukei*-led government by either *I Taukei* militants or the *I Taukei* led military. Two *I Taukei*-dominated institutions, namely the Methodist Church and the RFMF, have played influential roles in the coups and moreover, *I Taukei* political actors and institutions have dominated Fiji's political history. Fiji has been an independent country for forty-three years. Out of these forty-three years, *I Taukei* political parties have been in power for approximately thirty years. The Fiji Labor-National Federation Coalition Party and the Fiji Labor Party were the only other parties to rule the country. They ruled for less than two years. For the rest, interim governments dominated by *I Taukeis* ruled Fiji.

I Taukei power struggle is the central issue behind Fiji's coup culture. Therefore, to understand how the coup culture emerged we need to be examined it in the broader context of *I Taukei* power. To accomplish this, I conducted a historical analysis of the evolution of *I Taukei* power.

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[1] Democracy Building, http://www.democracy-building.info/definition-democracy.html. Accessed August 27, 2013.

A Summary of the Historical Analysis of *I Taukei* Power

I identify four key stages in the evolution of *I Taukei* power. The first stage represents the pre-colonial era - the era of political diversity. During this era, the *I Taukeis* lived in relatively small autonomous tribal communities, each with its own customs, traditions, and social and political structures. In other words there was no homogeneous *I Taukei* cultural and social structure. The primitive *I Taukei* society was politically and culturally diverse.[2]

The second stage features the establishment of a homogeneous socio-political structure by the British Colonial Administration. Stephanie Lawson called this the 'myth of cultural homogeneity.'[3] In this era, the colonial government prescribed that the *I Taukei* consisted of a three-tiered social structure consisting of the *yasana* (clan), *mataqali* (sub-clan), and *tokatoka* (extended family). The Colonial government established the Fijian Administration to govern *I Taukeis* through the *yasana, mataqali, and tokatoka* infrastructure. This colonial-invented socio-political structure provided the framework for native rule and later became the base of *I Taukei* power and politics.[4]

Stage three marks the emergence of alternative *I Taukei* voices, movements, and political parties in the early colonial era. These included the Navosavakadua and the Tuka Movement, Apolosi Nawai's Viti Company, Butadroka's Fijian Nationalist Party and other alternative *I Taukei* parties. This stage witnessed the gradual disintegration of the colonial-invented homogeneous political system and the emergence of political diversity.

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[2] Robertson and Sutherland, 51.

[3] Lawson, 93-104.

[4] Durutalo, 73.

The fourth stage, the Bainimarama era represents the disintegration of the mainstream *I Taukei* political bloc. Bainimarama is the key figure in this stage. He executed the 2006 coup and later suspended all the *Bose Vakaturaga* (Council of Chiefs) meetings. He restricted the chiefs' involvement to their traditional and cultural roles. He also suspended the Methodist Church's annual conference and other meetings. The *Bose Vakaturaga* and the Methodist Church were influential institutions for the *I Taukei* political bloc's political base. Hence the absence of the overarching *Bose Vakaturaga* introduced a new era of *I Taukei* power and politics.

The historical analysis presents some key characteristics of *I Taukei* power. First, pre-colonial era *I Taukei* socio-political was characterized by plurality and diversity. Second, colonialism introduced the *I Taukei* homogenous social, cultural, and political consciousness or the "myth of cultural homogeneity." Despite the colonist's attempts to create this homogeneous consciousness, the *I Taukeis* have consistently showed that *I Taukei* political and cultural consciousness was never a homogeneous phenomenon.

Third, the colonial homogenous social, cultural, and political consciousness gave birth to the *I Taukei* paramountcy ideology. The perpetrators of the 1987 and 2000 coups used the *I Taukei* paramountcy ideology to justify their actions. This indicates that the colonial government's myth of cultural homogeneity played an influential role in the 1987 and 2000 coups. The *I Taukei* power that manifested itself during the 1987 and 2000 coups represents a form of power and leadership that perpetuated the colonial homogeneous political system.

How is the evolution of *I Taukei* power related to the coup culture? The perpetrators of the 1987 and 2000 argued that the coups were carried out to protect *I*

Taukei interests. They were supported by the mainstream *I Taukei* political bloc (Chiefs, the *Bose Vakaturaga*, and the *I Taukei* political bloc). The mainstream *I Taukei* political bloc is a product of British colonial rule and the myth of cultural homogeneity. In other words they inherited the myth of cultural homogeneity from the colonial government. They represent a political view that is not *I Taukei* but rather British. We can further argue that although Fiji is an independent nation, it is yet to be decolonized and democratized. The myth of cultural homogeneity therefore offers a hermeneutical key to the understanding Fiji's coup culture.

The analysis also raises important questions regarding the future of *I Taukei* power. Will the *I Taukeis* embrace political diversity as a Fijian political reality? Will the Bainimarama political bloc allow for political diversity and freedom for political expression? What are the processes needed to de-colonize and democratize power in Fiji?

I Taukei Power as Patron-Client Politics

In the built up to the 2006 coup, change and development was Bainimarama's key rhetoric. He argued that Fiji needs to move beyond the politics of the past. What is the politics of the past? To be more precise, what is the form of power? We can only know where to move to if we first understand the form of power that dominated Fijian politics.

A key characteristic of *I Taukei* power is ethnic politics. Fiji's previous constitutions, elections, and parliament were ethnically defined. Ethnic politics and its corollary, the patron-client politics, is a global phenomenon. James Scott observed that patron-client politics was commonly used in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa, and

in less developed parts of Europe.[5] In the Pacific Islands, patron-client politics is

engrained in the traditional hierarchical socio-political structures and in party politics. Jon

Fraenkel, David Hegarty, and Hank Nelson's presentation at the *Executive Power and the*

Battle for Parliamentary Confidence in the Pacific Islands Conference reported that

patron-client politics is one of the main causes for the political malaise in the Pacific.

They said that the *AusAID's Pacific 2020* Report identified clientelism as an important

contributing factor for both the democratic and economic weakness in the Pacific.[6]

Alumita Durutalo argued that the mainstream *I Taukei* political parties extensively used

patron-client politics.[7] Therefore, to understand *I Taukei* power and politics in Fiji, one

needs to understand the dynamics of patron-client politics.

What is Patron Client Politics?

Patron-ethnic politics is the term that refers to the manner in which ethnic politics,

or how politicization of ethnicity, is carried out. James Scott defines the patron-client

politics as

> …An exchange relationship between roles—may be defined as a special case of
> dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an
> individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and re-
> sources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status

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[5] James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *JSTOR*, The American Political Science Review, March 1972, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1958280 (accessed September 27, 2011), 91.

[6] David Hegarty and Hank Nelson Jon Fraenkel, "Patrons without clients: Towards a soiciology of political power in the Pacific," University of the South Pacific (Suva, 2007), 2.

[7] See Alumita Durutalo, "Elections and Dilemma of Indigenous Fijian Political Unity," in *Fiji Before the Storm*, ed. Brij V. Lal (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2000) and alsoSimione Durutalo, *The Paramountcy of Fijian Interest and the Politicization of Ethnicity* (Suva: South Pacific Forum, 1986).

(client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.[8]

Patron-Client Politics in Fiji

Richard Sandbrook's observation of patron-client politics in Africa clearly

reflects the practice of patron-client politics in Fiji:

> The strongman needs and demands veneration and obedience. He surrounds himself with followers who constantly reaffirm their faith in his exceptional wisdom and generosity. All or the bulk of strategic positions in the political bureaucratic, police and military hierarchies are filled with personally loyal individuals. These include relatives especially close ones, such as brothers, sons, daughters, cousins, friends and classmates, kinsmen and tribesmen.[9]

Proponents of Patron-Client Politics in Fiji

Ratu Sukuna

Ratu Sukuna, as a chief and head of the Fijian Administration, was a powerful

advocate of patron-client politics in the colonial era. He strongly believed that the chiefs

play an essential role in the success of the Fijian Administration and therefore they need

to be educated.[10] Government schools like Queen Victoria School, Ratu Kadavulevu

School and Adi Cakobau School groomed candidates who later join the Fijian

Administration. Alumita Durutalo gives a brief summary of how patron-client politics

was practised in Fiji in the colonial era.

> The colonial state, through the entrenchment of indirect rule, created and maintained a patron-client relationship as a means of reaching grassroots

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[8] Scott, *Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia*, 92.

[9] Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 90-91.

[10] "Annual Report of the Secretary of Fijian Affairs," (1946), 1.

people…the creation of the Fijian Administration in colonial Fiji served other important purposes other than 'protecting' the Fijians; they were a direct link, through clientelism to the grassroots people. Those who controlled the colonial state needed political support…and confidence from indigenous Fijians.[11]

Ratu Mara

Ratu Mara and the Alliance Party's patronage sought to serve the interests of both the *I Taukei* and multiracial community but as history would show it was the *I Taukei* interests that received more attention.[12] Alumita Durutalo argued that the Alliance Party's political base was funded by patron-client politics. The Alliance Party used the traditional chiefly allegiance to secure political power.[13] The early independence era was a situation whereby the "Big Men" (patrons) like Ratu Kamisese Mara provided their clients with government positions and resources in return for political support and allegiance. These clients became second tier-patrons and were expected to patronize their constituents, provinces, or districts to support the Alliance Party. Simione Durutalo observed that during the Alliance government's term, sixteen people from the same village occupied the senior posts in the permanent secretary or director level of colonial governmental institutions. He added it was also common that top political and administrative positions

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[11] Alumita Durutalo, "Contributors," in *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-coup Writings from Fiji*, ed. Arleen Griffin (Christmas Club, 1997). 50.

[12] Robertson and Sutherland, *Government by the Gun: The Unfinished Business of Fiji's 2000 Coup*, 74.

[13] Alumita L. Durutalo, "Fiji: Party Politics in the Post Independence Period," in *Political Parties in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Luke Hambly and Michael G. Morgan (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2006), 171.

in government were held by people who were related to each other either through blood or marriage. [14]

I Taukei Era

The *I Taukei* patronage era was an era of intensive ethnic politics, coups, and constitutional changes. During this era the *I Taukei* political parties, namely the SVT and SDL Parties openly campaigned to protect the *I Taukei* interests. It was an era of contradictions as *I Taukei* parties failed to serve the interests of the *I Taukei* and the country as a whole. Key proponents were Sitiveni Rabuka and Laisenia Qarase (Affirmative Action projects).

Era of Bainimarama's Patronage (2006-2012)

Bainimarama used the patron-client political strategy to gain support, particularly with the grassroots *I Taukei*. He consolidated power by replacing public servants and heads of governmental departments with military officers. These included key institutions like the Department of Prison, The Royal Fiji Police Force, the Immigration Department, the judiciary, and the Fisheries Department. Some officers were given diplomatic appointments while others were drawn into various departments of the civil service. [15] Militarization even extended into rugby, the most popular sport in Fiji, with the

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[14] Durutalo, *The Paramountcy of Fijian Interest and the Politicization of Ethnicity*, 43-44. See also Alumita Durutalo, "Contributors," in *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-coup Writings from Fiji*, ed. Arleen Griffin (Christmas Club, 1997), 171.

[15] Stewart Firth and Jon Fraenkel, "The Fiji Military and ethno-nationalism: Analyzing the paradox," in *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?*, ed. Stewart Firth and Brij V. Lal Jon Fraenkel (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 128-129.

appointment of a senior military officer as Chairman of the Fiji Rugby Union and two other officers as national rugby coaches.[16] The military council became the high consultative body advising the prime minister-military commander in almost all aspects of the nation.[17]

Bainimarama promised change and development. He succeeded merely to change people in leadership but failed to change the form of power. Despite claiming to clean the government of corruption and racism as well as to bring about change and development, Bainimarama has not made much change in terms of power. Bainimarama may have removed a corrupted and racist Qarase government but he has maintained the old *I Taukei* patron-client politics. He has merely replaced the traditional chiefs with his military chiefs. In place of the old political rhetoric of the *I Taukei* paramountcy, he campaigned on bringing about change and development. Fraenkel and Firth show that in the Bainimarama patronage, loyalty to the chiefs and *vanua* had shifted to the RFMF. The military had become the institution of patronage.[18] In other words, the form of power, namely patron-client politics exercised by former Fijian governments has not changed. The only recognizable change in Bainimarama's regime was the change in personnel. Instead of chiefs dominating the system, military officers now headed the important governmental institutions.

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[16] Lavenia Vuadreu, *Tikoitoga is new Fiji Rugby chairman*, May 07, 2011, www.fijilive.com/sports/rugby/news/2011/05/07/21039.Fijilive (ac cessed November 15, 2011).

[17] Firth and Fraenkel, "The Fiji Military and ethno-nationalism: Analyzing the paradox," in *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?,*128-129.

[18] Ibid., 132

The social consequences of the patron-client politics

4.1 Patron-client politics hinders class-consciousness: Patron-client politics lead
peasants and workers to view economic and political problems along ethnic
lines and through short-term benefits rather than on class lines. It develops a
syndrome of dependency as they depend heavily on government assistance for
their economic development. Patron-client politics stifles the kind of
consciousness and competitiveness that are essential ingredients for
democracy.[19]

4.2 Patron-client politics neglects national development: patron-client political
strategies were limited to the short-term gains and interests of patrons and
clients and therefore national developments could not receive the primary
focus and commitment they deserve.

4.3 Patron-client politics exploits and is vulnerable to corruption: The corollary of
patron-client politics is corruption and abuse of office. The discussion of
patron-client patronage in Fiji shows that corruption enters into political
leadership when political leaders operate on patron-client framework. Powell
explains that the patron-client relationship has three basic factors. First,
patron-client relationship is primarily founded on a relationship of unequal
status. Second, the relationship depends on the exchange of goods and
services. In most cases the patron is the one who had the goods, while the
client offers service, allegiance, and political support. Finally the patron-client

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[19] Durutalo, *The Paramountcy of Fijian Interest and the Politicization of Ethnicity*, 37.

is limited to the face-to-face relationship of patron and client. It is a private agreement, unwritten, and highly personal in content. Furthermore, there is neither public scrutiny of the terms of such agreements nor any formal legal arrangements. Under this political relationship clients (peasants) cannot operate outside this dyadic relationship or even question the system.[20] As a result peasants are at the mercy of the patrons and vulnerable to exploitation.[21] The private nature of the patron-client politics opens up to corruption.

4.4 Patron-client politics breeds a culture of silence: One of the features of patron-client politics is the personal relationship entered by patrons and clients. In patron-client relationship clients are indebted to patrons. The clients will focus on maintaining this relationship and therefore they cannot challenge the patron when their needs are not met. Paulo Freire contends that patron-client politics breeds a "culture of silence." Freire defines the "culture of silence" as a situation where people have come to accept their social problems passively. They are not being encouraged to respond creatively to the concrete realities of their world. The culture of silence does not encourage initiative and responsibility.[22]

4.5 Patron-client politics creates divisions: Patron-client politics has caused division in Fiji by favoring particular ethnic communities within society. B.

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[20] Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," 423-424.

[21] Durutalo, *The Paramountcy of Fijian Interest and the Politicization of Ethnicity*, 52.

[22] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, trans. Myra Berman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 30.

Salawu and A.O. Hassan contend that ethnic and patron-client politics

hinderes the democratic processes, wastes human resources, and creates

suspicion and hate amongst ethnic groups.[23] James C. Scott also blames

patron-clients for the division and ethnic tensions that exist in rural areas.[24]

4.6 Consequences of Patron-Client Politics on Political Parties: political parties

tend to be politically inconsistent and lack long term plans. Powell explains

that patron-client politics affected political parties in three ways. First, parties

tend to be based on short-term goals and thus the absence of long-term

development. These parties tend to be very flexible and will easily

accommodate other divergent political ideologies. Such parties will easily

divert from its foundational vision and values.

The Path Towards Democracy

My investigation verified that patron-client politics defines the form of power of

the mainstream *I Taukei* political establishment. I therefore argue that patron-client

politics breeds the "coup culture" and the loss of democracy. Therefore, to resolve Fiji's

coup culture and facilitate the path towards democracy, politicians and political

institutions must go beyond patron-client politics. I contend that without the displacement

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[23] B. Salawu and A.O. Hassan, "Ethnic Politics and its Implication for the Survival of Democracy in Nigeria," Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, 2011 February, http://www.academicjournals.org/jpapr (accessed 2011, 12-October), 32.

[24] James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *JSTOR*, March 1972, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1958280 (accessed September 27, 2011), 110.

of patron-client politics there will be little hope of building a democratic Fiji. The patron-client politics must be eradicated.

How do we move beyond patron-client politics? How does Fiji move beyond patron-client politics? This is the central question that lies beneath Fiji's coup culture. Hence, I posit that for the Church to be faithful to its mission and be relevant to its missionary context, namely Fiji's coup culture, she must respond effectively to this question.

1. Cultural awareness, conscientization, civic education, empowerment from below.

2. Implement Paulo Friere's 'problem-posing' approach (contrast to the baking method of education)[25]

I propose that our key messages must include the removal of patron-client politics and the education and empowerment of peoples so that they can participate responsibily in the political affairs of our country.

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[25] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Continuum, 1970), 87-124.