

***Vanua* as Environment:
Conservation, Farming, and Development in Waitabu, Fiji**

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2015

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

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This dissertation examines the idea of “environment” in Waitabu, an indigenous Fijian community on Taveuni Island, and how it influences the community’s participation in contemporary development projects. My main argument is that *vanua* (a Fijian concept often translated as “land” but which also encompasses people, community, and custom) is an important framework through which the community negotiates social and biological changes through time. In other words, it is an “environment” in its totality. I also argue that contrary to common understanding, *vanua* is a dynamic entity shaped by historical events rather than a set of rigid customary protocols, thus creating different trajectories of engagement with development projects. Two particular cases are analyzed here: 1) the “Waitabu Marine Park” conservation and ecotourism project; 2) the grassroots cash-cropping schemes and subsistence farming in the village.

This study treats *vanua* as an “entangled environment” that involves historical configurations of indigenous identities and politics, as well as foreign contacts and colonial governance. This historical perspective allows for a more holistic and dynamic view of how rural development projects operate in seemingly simplistic and isolated places today. As projects introduce new ways to manage natural resources, the historical and cultural connotations of the environment are being evoked and realigned in response to these engagements. For example, for

Waitabu villagers, the marine park is seen as not just a conservation project, but a way to recapture their marginalized identity. In the grassroots cash-cropping schemes, *vanua* plays a crucial role in keeping the community together in the face of challenges from globalization, while individual farmers are able to pursue their own export business opportunities.

With a focus on *vanua* as an environmental framework, this dissertation links anthropological theories of environment with the emergent literature of “entanglement.” The “environment” is seen as an open-ended site where interactions between different ideas and agencies are constantly taking place. While many studies highlight the dimensions of conflict and collision, here I argue that different values and events have long been intertwined in an “entangled environment” that provides the capacity for flexible arrangements and negotiations in response to contemporary development issues.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the first page of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Bronislaw Malinowski dedicated his magnum opus to “My friend and teacher professor C. G. Seligman.” The same can be said to my advisers Dr. Richard Scaglion and Dr. Andrew J. Strathern, without whose patience, encouragement, and guidance, both academically and personally, this dissertation could not have been completed. But ultimately, I have to dedicate this dissertation to the four mothers in my life: My dear wife Yu-Yun Huang, the mother of our son Nash, who has been with me throughout the highs and lows of my research and writing process; My mother Wendy Ting-Shu Wen and mother-in-law Yen-Li Huang, who came to lend timely helping hands in the most critical moments of my writing; and finally my Fijian mother Teresia Senimili, who fully embodied the Fijian ethos of love and hospitality, accepting me into her household and providing me with food, comfort, and valuable insights to the Fijian way of life. *Nana, vina‘a va‘alevu sara. Au sa nanumi i‘o yani!*

The fieldwork of this dissertation is funded by the 2009, 2010 World Austronesian Studies Fieldwork Grant for Ph.D. Students, and the 2012 World Austronesian Studies Archival Fieldwork Research Grant, commissioned by the Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Affairs, Ministry of Education, Taiwan. Part of the writing period is supported by the 2011 Academia Sinica Fellowships for Doctoral Candidates in the Humanities and Social

Sciences. All the interviews in this dissertation are conducted and translated by the author. All the photos are taken by the author during the fieldwork period. All the maps are either created by the author through the open source database provided by Esri, or by persons who have granted the use of the figures and whose names are thereby acknowledged. All the names appeared in this dissertation are real except in parts of chapter 3, 5, and 6 where sensitive issues are involved and pseudonyms, initials, or numbers are thus used.

In Fiji, I cannot express enough gratitude to the entire village of Waitabu. To me, it is home in every sense of the word, and even though it has been more than two years since I was there the last time, I shall always return, just as expressed in the “Song of Waitabu”: *Na noqu koro era gadreva e vei gauna era taleva*. If I could name every person in Waitabu I would, whose daily acts, conversations, and stories are the foundation of this dissertation. However, due to the limitation of space here I could only mention a few of my dearest Fijian friends and families: My *Tata* Mikaele Waqa, *Tata levu* Petero Sikeli, and brother Ian Ropate, who are my closest companions and teachers of the socio-natural environment of Waitabu. I want to thank my families in the *i-Tokatoka* Nasolo: *Tata* Sio, *Nana* Lena, *Nana* Neta and her husband Fa, Lagi, Salote, and *Nana* Vela, as well as other Waitabu villagers who had provided their friendship and help to me and my research: *Kuku* Elia, *Kuku* Vili, *Kuku* Dito, *Kuku* Silio, *Nana* Ma, *Tata* Tino, *Tata* Kobo, *Tata* Jo, *Tata* Mika, *Nana* Pe, Eta, Lasa, Rusa, Pita, Jo, Benedito, and Tiko. In the region of Bouma, I want to thank *Kuku* Sake of Vidawa, *Kuku* Fabi and *Tata* Sepo of Korovou. For the Bouma National Heritage Park, I want to thank project managers Sipi, Pio, Kalara, Akanisa, and my American Peace Corps volunteer friends Grace Yueng, Geoff Matlock, and Stewart Lowery. Elsewhere on Taveuni, I want to thank Fr. John Crispin, Fr. Michael McVerry, Peter Kjaer, Lilian Ekbom, Claude-Michel Prevost, Rohit Lal of the Agricultural Department,

and Lani's Digital Services. In Savusavu, I want to thank Joji Vakawaletabua of the Fisheries Department. In Suva, I want to thank assistant librarian Asena Dame of the National Archives of Fiji, Sr. Wati Koroiciri of the Roman Catholic Archives of Fiji, and Ratu Sela Rayawa of the library of Fiji Museum for assisting my archival research. I want to thank Dr. Paul Geraghty of the University of the South Pacific for sponsoring my dissertation research and giving me my first formal Fijian language lesson. Finally, I want to thank Helen Sykes of Resort Support, whose passion and generosity have greatly contributed to this research project.

In Taiwan, I want to acknowledge the late Professor Pin-Hsiung Liu, who first introduced me to the world of Oceania ethnographic materials more than ten years ago. I want to thank Dr. Pei-Yi Guo whom I shared many personal ties with and who has always been a great friend and comrade in the small circle of Pacific Studies in Taiwan. I want to also thank Dr. Yuan-Chao Tung, my undergraduate adviser at the National Taiwan University, whom I had numerous interesting conversations with and who has inspired me to pursue a career in anthropology and Pacific Studies.

In the United States, at the University of Pittsburgh I want to thank my dissertation committee members Dr. Kathleen Musante and Dr. Andrew Weintraub for their suggestions in shaping the final version of this dissertation. The writing of this dissertation could not have been finished were it not for my cohorts Michael Roman, Chelsea Wentworth, Gregory de St. Maurice, and Jo Recht, who have given me the most critical feedback and the strongest support in my moments of distress and lonesomeness. I want to also thank Dr. Gabby Yearwood for his friendship and understanding during my most vulnerable time of attempting to balance family and academic life, as well as Dr. Pamela J. Stewart for her long interest in my research studies. In Florida, I was extremely fortunate to meet a Fijian lady Koleta Vakadranu Reodica, who

assisted me with Fijian translations. Scholars elsewhere had also given valuable input to this dissertation: Dr. Apo Aporosa, Dr. Jennifer Cattermole, Dr. Robert Dixon, Dr. Peter Brosius, and Dr. Sarah Besky.

Finally, to my father Linden Tsai-Chueh Lin and sister Rachel Hao-Ning Lin, I did not forget about you. This dissertation is for you as pioneers of a collective dream of this family.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: THE FIELD, FIELDWORK, AND RESEARCH METHODS IN WAITABU AND BEYOND

The kava has risen, my brother,
drink this cup of the soul and the sweat of our people,
and pass me three more mushrooms which grew in Mururoa
on the shit of the cows Captain Cook brought
from the Kings of England and France!

“Blood in the Kava Bowl” – Epli Hau‘ofa (2008[1976]:181)

This dissertation examines the relationship between contemporary development projects and the Fijian idea *vanua* which is commonly translated as “land” but entails meanings of people, community, and custom. Often treated as a rigid cosmological entity with its own cultural order, in this dissertation I argue that when viewed as an environmental framework in which historical actors and ideas are constantly moving in and out, *vanua* is actually flexible, open-ended, and has the capacity to interact and collaborate with contemporary development projects such as environmental conservation and commercial farming. This capacity is built from the entanglement of diverse historical forces (e.g. indigenous politics, pre-colonial capitalism, colonial policies) which still resonate in the environment today, and is able to affect the realization of the universal values (e.g. environmentalism, development) intended to be introduced. Here I use a small coastal village called Waitabu located on Taveuni Island as the ethnographic setting to demonstrate how these processes are played out. Two particular

development projects in Waitabu will be examined here: 1) the “Waitabu Marine Park” conservation and ecotourism project, one of the first Community-Based Marine Protected Areas (CBMPA) in Fiji; and 2) grassroots cash-cropping schemes and subsistence farming practices with a focus on taro (*Colocasia esculenta*, Fijian *dalo*) and kava (*Piper methysticum*, Fijian *yaqona*). I will show that through the historical elements already entangled inside the environment, Waitabu villagers were able to understand and engage with these projects in a flexible and creative manner. Not only were the introduced universal values realized through divergent trajectories, the villagers also aspired to re-establish their indigenous identity and be resilient to the sweeping effects of globalization and development. This certainly is not a smooth process, as conflicts and transformations do happen along the way. However, thinking through the broader framework of *vanua* as environment allows us to imagine the possibilities of how new knowledge could be negotiated and new pathways could be formed.

1.1 THE ENCOUNTER

My first encounter with Waitabu was in early July 2006. The same as the average 462,000-some international visitors who traveled to Fiji annually for holiday in the past 5 years,¹ I came with my family as tourists, with a tepid intention to find a field site for future research. Towards the end of our vacation we flew on a small twin otter to Taveuni Island for the popular Bouma National Heritage Park (BNHP) and its eco-tourism programs. By then the only things I knew

¹ “Visitor Arrivals: Numbers by Purpose of Visit: 2008-2012,” March 2013, Fiji Bureau of Statistics. <<http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/index.php/migration-a-tourism/10-migration-statistics/migration-a-tourism/115-visitor-arrivals-statistics>>.

about Taveuni from my brief readings were that it is known as the “Garden Island” with the 180° meridian crossing through; it has a historical Catholic Church named “Holy Cross”; and the coastal walk and waterfall sightseeing ventures offered by Lavena village is the best in the business. Upon landing at Matei Airport, which consisted of only a waiting shed, a small office, and a runway, we were greeted by our taxi driver, an elderly but spirited Fijian called Sikeli who was hired by our accommodation to drive us around the island. We soon became close through the journeys riding together and on the last day of our trip he mentioned the Waitabu Marine Park. To his slight disappointment we replied that we had not heard anything about it. “Waitabu is my village. Would you be interested in visiting it?” he asked. With our consent he quickly made a detour and took us on a rocky and rugged track descending and curling towards the eastern coastline. As we finally reached the bottom, the village green emerged before our eyes. With the expectation of a “Marine Park,” I was anticipating seeing a community with its smiling members standing in front of tourist establishments greeting us. Instead, it was small and genuine, without any visible sign indicating the presence of a tourist spot. Colorful cordylines, Ti plants, and plantains were planted around the village compound, serving as boundary markers for the houses, of which several were made of concrete blocks while most were simply covered by corrugated metal plates. There were also cooking sheds, communal water pipes, and clothes lines. Everything was quiet. We only saw several school girls in their uniforms passing by, silently acknowledging us. The largest building in the village, as Sikeli immediately showed us, was the Catholic Church located at the southern corner. We briefly strolled between the houses but did not meet any other villagers. We soon left without even visiting the beautiful sandy beach for which Waitabu was known, but I was already intrigued enough to determine that this was a place I would return to.



Figure 1. The St. Paulo Church in Waitabu. The photo was taken on July 3rd, 2006. The next year both wings of the church were extended and the interior was redesigned. It was then formally re-opened on July 18th, 2009, becoming the largest Catholic Church in the region.

The next year in May I went back to Taveuni to conduct my first preliminary fieldwork. I stayed with Sikeli at his small rental near Matei Airport for a few days and one evening he finally drove me down to Waitabu and arranged me to stay with his younger brother Mika and Mika's wife Sia who unlike him were permanently living in the village. Contrary to the last time I was there, this time the village was crowded and alive, for an elderly man had recently passed away and his funeral was going to take place the following day. Mika and Sia naturally took me in as their son and I referred them as my *Tata* (father) and *Nana* (mother) from the moment I stepped in their house. Consequently, Sikeli became my *Tata levu* (eldest paternal uncle). I was soon known as the son of this household and from this relationship I began to build rapport with the community and get to know my fictive kin folks.

The next morning accompanied by Mika, I was taken to the village chief's residence located at the center of Waitabu. After performing the entry to the village ritual (*i-sevusevu*), the

chief Tui Nasau, the late Iosefa Cokanacagi whom I was told to call *Kuku* (grandpa) Sepo, granted my stay and with perfect English kindly asked about my research project. By then I was not sure about my research topic. The only thing that I knew about Waitabu was the Marine Park, which I still had not even seen yet. I was initially interested in the indigenous operation of environmental conservation and ecotourism project and how it would affect customary marine tenure system. From my first preliminary fieldwork and subsequent interviews, however, I had the impression of a contradictory picture: even though a pride of the village, the Marine Park was not the main concern for most community members. It certainly is a successful marine conservation project and has brought international tourists and cash income to the community, but most of the time it was treated passively, even in a nonchalant way. It gradually became clear to me that the Marine Park is only one piece of a very dynamic Waitabu environment in which different agencies, ambitions, and imaginations are also at work. More importantly, while often treated as a “modern” project based on scientific surveys and business model, the Marine Park as well as the coastal environment and societies were shaped by different historical forces and entangled with lingering cosmological concerns. Issues like identity and cultural integrity, therefore, are as important as the scientific measurement of the marine ecosystem. In March 2010, the beginning of my dissertation fieldwork, a vigorous enthusiasm for cash-cropping initiated by the village farmers after Cyclone Tomas hit the island prompted me to expand my scope from coastal fishing grounds to inland farm sites, and pay attention to local farming practices and the agricultural landscape. Through these observations I was then able to see how customs and identities were constantly negotiated through landmarks, non-human life forms, and subsistence activities.

At the same time, I also began to hear villagers refer to *vanua* when commenting on the conditions of their bio-social environment. For example, from late January to early March 2011 a series of fund-raising events called *gunu sede* (literally means “drinking cash,” cf. Toren 1989) were held in Waitabu every Friday and Saturday nights for individual households to accumulate money for their children’s secondary school fees, or for village organizations to acquire funding. The host would prepare basins of kava drinks, snacks, and music to dance to for the attending villagers and people from neighboring communities. Adolescents of both sexes are also encouraged to participate. One would first give an entry fee (*i-curucuru*) of F\$ 1 and pay from 20 cents to as many as 20 dollars to the host to challenge other attendants, especially affines and cross cousins, to drink bowls of kava. The person being challenged would more often than not counter the offer by paying the same amount for the challenger to drink as well, which is called *vodo vata* (ride together).² The mood is relaxed and jubilant, and minor scuffles could happen. One night at the *gunu sede* for Q’s household, some youngsters got drunk from consuming alcohol before attending and were shouting loudly, which is forbidden according to Fijian village etiquette. At the end of the event, Q asked his cousin T to give a speech of gratitude (*vosa ni vakavinavinaka*) but no one was paying attention. He then asked the senior leader of his patrilineal descent group (*mataqali*) to give the speech. I thought for sure that he was going to criticize these behaviors but instead he said, “I see some youngsters drinking and having fun, which are fine, because these are all for a good cause. Education is very important. It is the key to uplift the *vanua* (*vakatorocaketaka na vanua*).”

² From my field data, the hosting household or organization could make an average of F\$ 386 from a *gunu sede*. This did not account for the cost that a host put into the preparation, which could be over F\$ 100. These data were easy to collect because the total amount of money earned would always be announced publically at the end of the event. The person who contributed the most (usually between F\$ 40 and 60) would also win a prize such as a cake or a basket of biscuits.

Another example is that in December 2010 Mika's cousin Maria who resides in the capital Suva brought her family to Waitabu for the first time to spend Christmas and the New Year in the village. Upon their departure, Mika's descent group prepared bundles of taro and brooms (*sasa*) made of coconut leaf midribs for them to bring back home. I asked about it and Mike told me that when they arrived in the village, they immediately gave a whale's tooth valuable (*tabua*) as Tui Nasau Kuku Sepo's funeral gift (*i-reguregu*), who passed away earlier that year. "When you give something to the *vanua*, you can take something from the *vanua* (*solia ga, tara na vanua*)," he concluded. Through these comments, *vanua* struck me as a flexible, dynamic, and open-ended environmental framework with things moving in and out and its state affected by people's actions, rather than a rigid indigenous cultural entity that is often portrayed by colonial narratives and indigenous Fijians themselves. With this understanding, I began to investigate how this framework interacts with contemporary development projects that are having more profound impacts to their lives and environment.

1.2 THE FIELD

Taveuni is the third largest island of the Fiji archipelago with an area of 433 km². It is a relatively young island, formed by a series of volcanic eruptions from the Holocene which produced large amount of lava flows that eventually transformed into fertile soils (Cronin and Neall 2001). Facing high volumes of annual rainfall, especially on the central ridge and the windward eastern coast, Taveuni has one of the most heavily covered forest areas in Fiji, most of which had barely been touched during the British colonial era (1874-1970) (Twyford and Wright

1965:403). This environment has thus become a natural habitat for many endemic species, which include the famous *tagimoucia* flower (*Medinilla waterhousei*), Bouma palm (*Hydirastele boumae*), and the red-breasted musk-parrot (*Prosopiea tabuensis*, Fijian *koki*) and collared lory (*Phigys solitaires*, Fijian *kula*) of which the scarlet feathers were historically coveted by Tongans as ornamental objects (Cartmail 1997:83; Kirch 1989[1984]:240; Seemann 1862:19). The fertile volcanic soils also gave rise to booming cash-cropping export business operations including copra, taro, and kava which along with tourism are the backbone of the island economy. Recently it has been alerted that the growing development sectors have threatened the biodiversity on the island. As a result, Taveuni has become the focus of various environmental NGOs. For example, NatureFiji is currently running a project of creating a “Taveuni National Park” which would provide a sounder framework to protect the wildlife and landscape of Taveuni.



Figure 2. Map of the Fiji Islands.

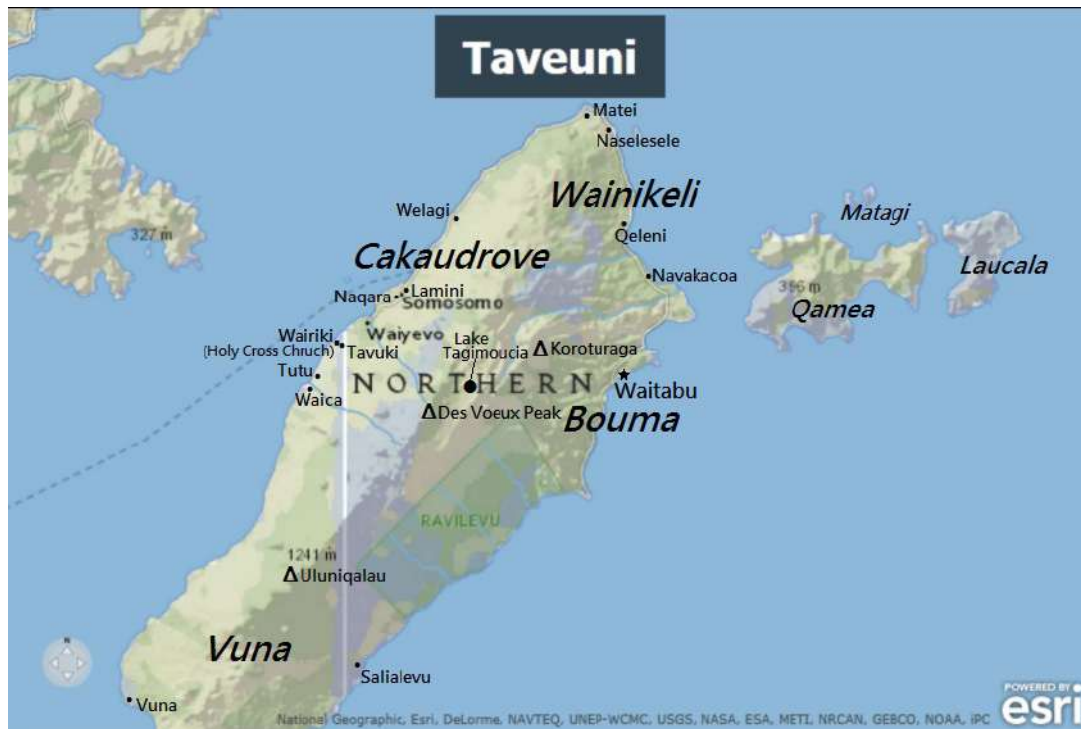


Figure 3. Map of Taveuni Island.

The population of Taveuni itself (excluding nearby islets) is estimated to be around 14,000 people, of which the majority are indigenous Fijians (see table 1.). Most of them live on native reserves and rely on subsistence or semi-commercial farming to provide for their households, while a small number of them have found wage labor opportunities at local hotels, resorts, or government stations. Indo-Fijians in Taveuni live in settlements or on the freehold land that was purchased. They participate in a wide range of commercial activities as commercial farmers, cash-crops middlemen, shop-owners, or taxi drivers. Unlike elsewhere in Fiji where ethnic tensions and sharp cultural boundaries exist between those two ethnic groups, in Taveuni their relationship can be characterized as peaceful and collaborative. It is common to find Indo-Fijians that speak fluent Fijian and have long relationship with indigenous Fijian villages. Taveuni also has a small but significant expatriate community. Aside from the Catholic

clergyman serving on the island, they are mostly either owners of local hotels and resorts, or entrepreneurs in agricultural or aquacultural business operations. A similar category of people are the descendants of the European planters who came to the island and established their plantations in the late 19th century. The most well-known families are the Tartes and the Hennings who still have a strong presence in the regions that their forefathers settled. They also play a major role in regional rural development.

	Population	Percentage
Indigenous Fijians	10,323	77.2%
Indo-Fijians	2,496	18.66%
Rotumans³	24	0.18%
Other	529	3.96%
Total	13,372	100%

Table 1. Population by ethnicity of Taveuni Island (Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007).

Taveuni belongs to the province (*yasana*) of Cakaudrove. The capital and provincial office is in Somosomo, located at the northwestern coast of Taveuni. It is also the chiefly village and the most powerful land of the Cakaudrove Chiefdom where the paramount chief Tui Cakau (literally, the king of reefs) sits. Historically through warfare and ancestral ties, the rule of Tui Cakau extended from the southeastern part of Vanua Levu to nearby islets including Rabi, Kioa, Qamea, and Laucala. Today all these places are still placed under the Cakaudrove province. In Taveuni, the land is further divided into three districts (*tikina*) which reflect the regional

³ Rotumans are the indigenous inhabitants of the Rotuma island group, located north of the Fiji archipelago. It was annexed by the British in 1881 and became part of the Colony of Fiji. Today it is one of the dependencies of the Republic of Fiji.

chiefdoms before the conquests of Tui Cakau. They are Cakaudrove of the northwestern part, Wainikeli of the northeastern part, and Vuna of the south. While Cakaudrove district is ruled outright by Tui Cakau, Wainikeli and Vuna each has its own historical formations and traditional paramount chiefly titles, Tuei and Tui Vuna. The ethnographic setting of the research is mostly based in the region (*vanua*) of Bouma, the southern half of the district of Wainikeli.



Figure 4. The Bouma Region and its major villages.

Vanua Bouma has a population around 1,000 people, consisting almost entirely of indigenous Fijians. This area is the “backcountry” of Taveuni, farthest away from the town centers and even cell phone receptions. It is hilly and wet. Transportation relies on a single muddy road which closes in times of heavy rainfall. At the same time, it is endowed with great natural sceneries including dense forests, magnificent waterfalls, and barrier reefs. This environment certainly has contributed to the shaping of a collective Bouma identity and history.

The inhabitants also speak a unique dialect which although eroded by standard Fijian, is still widely used among the community members (Dixon 1988; Schmidt 1988). There are four major villages in Bouma, all located at the coast along with their associated satellite settlements. From north to south they are Waitabu, Vidawa, Korovou, and Lavena (see figure 4). Lavena is the most remote community and has its own social universe, led by the chief Tui Lavena. Korovou, also known as Bouma, is the capital village of the region and is where the regional chief Vunisa sits. In terms of ritual-political connection, Waitabu is closest to their neighboring village Vidawa. According to legend, the great chief Tui Lekutu (the king of forests) came to settle on Taveuni with his executive chief (*sauturaga*) and their followers. Together they were known as the Forest People (*kai lekutu*) and were said to be the original settlers of the island. While Tui Lekutu is considered the founding ancestor of Vidawa, his *sauturaga* later created the title Tui Nasau and established his own community which is the predecessor of today's Waitabu. The remains of their ancient settlements can still be found in the inland forests of the central mountain.

Waitabu has a population around 126 living in 25 households.⁴ Aside from two families, all of them are devout Catholics and are part of a wider Catholic social network on the island. There is no electricity reaching the village, but it has a reliable piped water supply system. Daily staple food include rice, sugar, flour, canned meat purchased from the store, and taro, breadfruit, cassava, coconut, taro leaves, hibiscus leaves, as well as a wide variety of marine products. The village used to have a series of American Peace Corps volunteers stationed within to assist the ecotourism project, but the last one left in 2010. There are few people that earn regular wages in

⁴ The data were collected from field survey done in 2010.

the village: The *turaga ni koro* (village elected headman) who receives a modest quarter-yearly salary; an elder who is in the Fiji army reserve and gets paid bi-weekly; a young man who works for the Fire Station at Wairiki; and a family that runs a small shop (called “canteen” locally) in the village funded by Fiji Development Bank micro-credit loan. Other than those people, all of the households earn their income primarily through cash cropping. Other types of income include social welfare benefits for 6 families (1 single mother, 5 elders) and two youngsters temporarily hired by the neighboring pearl farm company as watchers. Most of the adult males in Waitabu are categorized as “semi-commercial farmers” under the government survey. They sell a portion of their products, but have irregular harvest schedule and small scale gardens. Some raise livestock for cash but the number is not significant. Most of the adult women are not from Waitabu but came to live with their husbands through marriage. Their primary subsistence activity is net fishing and reef gleaning, though the catches are seldom sold. They are also the main managers of household chores and producers of handicrafts for daily usage or ritual exchanges. When the copra price in Fiji was still very high in the 1950s, Waitabu had established cooperatives to handle all the transactions and made much cash income from their coconut groves. Since then the return from copra has gradually fallen and in the early 90s village farmers had almost completely transitioned to planting root crops. The Waitabu Marine Park ecotourism business officially begun in 2001 had also brought profit to the village but it mostly contributed to children school fees and the organization of village functions. The revenue was never shared directly among households.

The Waitabu people belong to *Yavusa* (roughly “tribe” or “clan”) Naisaqai. Under this division are three *mataqali* (patrilineal descent group), of which two are located within Waitabu (Vunivesi and Waisoki) and one is in a nearby settlement called Wai (Veiniu). Each *mataqali*

has a leader, the *turaga ni mataqali*, and would meet together to decide on important village affairs. *Mataqali* Vunivesi is the chiefly bloodline in which the title Tui Nasau is passed down. Vunivesi is further divided into two *i-tokatoka* (sub-descent group), Vunivesi and Nasolo. Historically *Mataqali* Waisoki also had a few *i-tokatoka* but they had either moved out or dissolved. The land tenure of Waitabu is divided between these *i-tokatoka* and *mataqali* but acts of borrowing and flexibility are fairly common.

1.3 FIELDWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

This dissertation stems from several field trips. The first one began from March 2010 to July 2010; the second one followed from November 2010 to March 2011; and the final one was concluded from October 2012 to January 2013. Preliminary field trips include May-June 2007, July-August 2008, and a Fijian language tutorial program at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, in June 2009. For every field trip to Waitabu I always resided in the Mika household and used the Bouma dialect as much as I could to interact with my host family and fellow villagers. Much of the data in this dissertation was gathered from daily conversations or activities engaged with different community members, whether it was a Sunday church service, a walk to the farm sites in the forest, an organized group fishing trip, an annual reef-check survey with NGO workers, or casual night time kava-drinking sessions. I was also eager to participate in the rituals performs in the village such as *i-sevusevu*, *ta nuqa* (catching the juvenile spinefoot rabbitfish *Siganus spinus*), and the rise of *balolo* sea worms (*Eunice viridis*). I was intrigued by not just the processes and purposes of the rituals, but the speeches and comments uttered in situ and

afterwards. It eventually became clear to me that all of these seemingly separated domains revealed much about Fijians' connection to a larger "environment" and their concerns of the *vanua* on which their customs and identities are grounded.

Another source of my ethnographic data came from *bose* (Fijian meetings). Upon entering Waitabu, I soon befriended with the projects manager of the Waitabu Marine Park, as well as managers of the other projects in Bouma. Through them I was able to attend many project meetings that gathered managers from all four communities of the BNHP. As the leader of *i-Tokatoka* Nasolo, Mika would also take me to important customary meetings including the monthly village meeting, the *mataqali* meeting, and the Bouma regional meeting at Korovou which saw all the important traditional leaders in Bouma present at the meeting hall. All of these meetings provided valuable information about Fijian ideas of hierarchy which is firmly anchored in the framework of *vanua*, as well as the decision-making processes regarding customary and contemporary issues.

Beyond Waitabu and Bouma, I had traveled to neighboring estates and interviewed the current landowners or residents: the Hennings family of Colocolo, a French-Canadian businessman operating a pearl farm project at Sere ni Wai, and a Danish couple working for the Pacific Produce Ltd. at Vunivasa. These lands were considered part of the traditional territory of Waitabu, but alienated by Tui Cakau in the 1860s. Today the relationships between the current occupiers and the indigenous people were by no means one-dimensional. They were not of conflict or bitterness, but were generally based on collaboration and partnerships while customary expectations were still present. The complexity of their interactions reflects the dynamic nature of *vanua* and its capacity to deal with outsiders and changes. I had also gone to Wairiki and Tutu at the other side of the island and interviewed the Catholic clergymen stationed

over there. They had shed much light on the dialectical relationship between Christianity and *vanua* in the local cultural context. Other crucial interviewees include the agricultural officer at the government station in Waiyevo, officials of the Fisheries Department in Savusavu, NGO workers assisting the conservation project, and the Peace Corps volunteer posted in the village. Their input provided a picture of the struggle and aspiration to development of a small rural community.

Finally, archival research at the National Archives, Library of the Fiji Museum, and the Catholic Church Archdiocese at Nicholas House in Suva had yielded much information about Taveuni in pre-colonial and colonial times. I am interested in not only how foreign agencies including Christianity, Europeans planters, and the colonial governance entered Taveuni and transformed the indigenous environment through their establishments, but also the ethnohistory of the Bouma people who are hidden in the narratives of the more dominant Cakaudrove or Wainikeli chiefdoms. While the Methodist missionaries were the first foreigners to produce documentations of the native societies on Taveuni in the 1840s, particularly *The Journal of Thomas Williams, Missionary in Fiji, 1840-1853* compiled by Henderson (1931), it was the Catholic Church that has the longest presence on the island and has formed long term relationships with the communities, including remote areas like Bouma, through its mission station in Wairiki established in the 1860s. I wanted to find traces of Bouma, or more specifically Waitabu, in these Methodist missionary journals and Roman Catholic Archives of Fiji (RCAF) to reconstruct the early movements and settlement locations in the region. These data were complemented by hand-written manuscripts by and semi-structured interviews with the most knowledgeable storytellers in the Bouma region on the topics of migration, social

organization, and cultural heroes. These legends are essentially Bouma's historical narrative on the formation of its *vanua*, which also reveal the "micro-identities" embedded within.

The colonial documents on the other hand are much more complicated. In October 2012 I dedicated my time in the National Archives searching for topics on "forest reserves," "nature reserves," "fisheries" and "land" in Taveuni. As suggested by the librarian, initially I sought out Land Claims Commission reports, colonial Annual Reports, and Legislative Council Papers of the years between 1875 and 1915 which were the crucial times when the land tenure system and environmental conservation programs were taking shape on the island. However, Taveuni was seldom a stand-alone category in these documents and the endeavor thus produced limited results. Fruitless searches went on for days until one morning at the National Archives I met a fellow Ph.D. student Evadne Kelly from York University, Canada, who was in Fiji doing research on the Fijian traditional dance *meke*. I saw her reading folder after folder of documents that I had not seen before, and asked her where she requested them. She then told me about the classification scheme of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO) Correspondence Files "F" Series 1931 – 1958, which was kept at the librarian's desk, rather than on the open shelf. This classification scheme has a wide range of categories, including "Cakaudrove," "Forestry," and "Fisheries." One can make a request for a category and will be provided with an index book with more detailed topics under the category, each linked to a specific folder. For example, I requested the category "Forestry" (F32) and on the index book I found topics such as "General Report on Forests" (F32-8), "Forest Taveuni" (F32-18), and "Nature & Scenic Reserve" (F32-135), etc. In these folders there are reports, surveys, diaries, and correspondences between colonial government officials, all related to the topic. It was through these folders that I was able to understand the decision-making processes regarding the management of Taveuni's

environment, particularly the ongoing “Taveuni Forest Reserve” and “Ravilevu Nature Reserve” of which the origins are obscure and never clearly discussed in various NGO reports (Watling 2012).

To summarize the different methods and data mentioned above, here I will clarify them in accordance with the progression of this dissertation. To understand and explain the Fijian idea of *vanua* in Waitabu and its connection to the environment, I first investigate Waitabu’s and Bouma’s identities, social formations, and histories. These data came from unstructured and semi-structured interviews with village elders about the origins of the village kinship organizations, the remembered past events, and the legends and stories of the region, as well as historical documents that had captured the people of Waitabu and Bouma who are generally invisible in the written documents. Once the framework of *vanua* as a social environment that has multiple origins is established, I move on to the historical period when Taveuni encountered massive changes brought by planters, missionaries, and colonialism. These data were collected primarily from archival research with a focus on the spatial transformations on the island. I then explore the two main case studies in this dissertation: conservation and farming in Waitabu. The data of these two domains were gathered mainly through everyday participant-observations and unstructured and semi-structured interviews with villagers and related personnel. Following the main argument that *vanua* has the capacity for flexible arrangements, these ethnographic data were to demonstrate how the sense *vanua* was negotiated differently as Waitabu villagers engage in these contemporary development projects.

1.4 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

The following chapters of this dissertation can be roughly divided into two halves. In the first half (chapters 2-4), the situated-ness of “environment” in this dissertation is examined. I will talk about the material and social relations, as well as the diverse agencies and histories entangled and moving within different domains of Waitabu, Bouma, and Taveuni. Rather than being the geographical background of this study or a static site that simply “hosts” different events, the condition of “environment” is crucial to understand *vanua* regarding its particular formation and capacity that allows the interaction between Waitabu and the foreign elements continually introduced. In the second half (chapters 5-7), the two environmental case studies of this dissertation are discussed in the framework of “*vanua* as environment.” They are the Waitabu Marine Park conservation and ecotourism project and the grassroots cash-cropping and subsistence farming schemes. As projects of development, they have direct impact to the physical environment, but they did not enter into an empty land void of meanings. Each project has its own unique trajectory of interaction within the *vanua* in which different existing or emergent categories and ideas are realigned and revalued. These diverse pathways challenged us to rethink the nature of development and indigenous responses.

In chapter 2 “*Vanua*, A Multivalent Fijian Environmental Concept,” I will describe the theoretical position of “*vanua* as environment.” I first analyze the Fijian concept of “*vanua*” by tracing back to its Austronesian linguistic roots. Austronesian is a language family consists of people who dispersed from the region of Taiwan and Island Southeast Asia to Madagascar and the Pacific with a common cultural, material, and linguistic heritage. As they encountered different habitats and people during their journeys of discovery, variations of environmental

concepts were formed, which are now manifested in Austronesian words such as *vanua*. By showing the complex meanings of these environmental concepts in the Austronesian world, I argue that “environment” is a dynamic and multivalent entity to different Austronesian-speaking groups. I then go into the literature of “entanglement” and “environment” respectively, tracing their intellectual genealogies and theorizing what they mean to *vanua* as these two notions are woven together. I emphasize that this perspective, the “entangled environment,” provides an opportunity to examine the flexibility, movements, and possibilities within seemingly rigid bio-social categories, and that *vanua* should be treated under the same light.

The dynamic aspects of “environment” are elaborated in chapter 3 “Indigenous Identities and Histories within the Environment of Waitabu, Bouma Region, and Taveuni.” It is argued that Fijian as a collective cultural category was gradually created by multiple waves of migration from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands as well as Polynesian influences from Tonga and Samoa. Cultural borrowings and exchanges were common in this process, which had created new social and physical environments. The same condition is also observed in different places in Fiji in which the local/regional *vanua* were flexibly configured to accommodate divergent social groups and mobility. In Taveuni, the supremacy of the Cakaudrove chiefdom was achieved through a series of historical events. The people of the Bouma region nevertheless have a different vision of history. They see themselves as the true autochthons of Taveuni and their unique regional identity is rooted in the rugged hilly terrain in which they reside. Their *vanua* is built by different migrants and cultural heroes, and the landscape serves as an important aspect of the environment that acknowledges these multiple origins, while a singular Bouma identity is actively constructed at the same time. Similarly, a small locale like Waitabu also has a multi-

origin past that involves migration and population movements. Rituals and kinship ideologies thus become important ways of rebuilding their identity to secure its contemporary status.

In chapter 4 “Remaking the Environment in Pre-colonial and Colonial Taveuni” the legacies of pre-colonial and colonial influence to the environment are examined. Europeans first established their presence at Taveuni in 1838 during a time when the island was largely cut out from the expanding global capitalist expansion in the Fiji Islands. After 1862, thanks to Tui Cakau, large scales of land were sold to foreigners to establish plantations. The physical and social landscape of Taveuni was then greatly transformed. It has changed Taveuni from one of the most secluded places in Fiji to a “Garden Island” where almost half of the land became freehold. The region of Bouma, however, was marginalized in this process and remained relatively under-developed. This was largely due to the large uncultivable mountain forest areas around Bouma which later became the target of colonial environmental management schemes. Moreover, from colonial documents, we can see how British naturalists and government officials constantly weighed the options of development or conservation regarding these areas. This demonstrates that the “pristine nature” tourists see today in Taveuni was already part of the colonial authority’s environmental planning as well as indigenous politics on the island.

Entering the second half, in chapter 5 “Environmental Case Study I: Conflicts and Collaborations of the Waitabu Marine Park” I begin with an incident of conflict regarding fishing right and Marine Protected Area that led to the killing of a Waitabu community leader. On the surface it seemed like a classic case of dominant imposing environmental institutions causing local conflicts. I would however situate this event in the framework of entangled environment exemplified by previous chapters and argue that *vanua* actually has the capacity for collaborations between scientific knowledge and indigenous aspirations for development. By

recounting the history of the Waitabu Marine Park through the perspectives of both the community and the international NGO workers, it is not surprising that both parties saw the environment and project differently and had different expectations of the operation. For example, initially when Waitabu villagers requested for a project to be implemented in their community, they were not thinking about conservation but rather desiring development to come to their land immediately. In the eyes of the NGO experts, the condition of the environment was so poor that conservation measures should be initiated for the recovery of biodiversity. Interestingly after over 15 years of conservation efforts, the biological results of marine revitalization managed almost entirely by the Waitabu villagers themselves were phenomenal, but the business aspect was stagnant and inefficient in the eyes of the NGO workers. Through interviews with local elders, it was evident that the degeneration of the marine ecosystem reflected the loss of custom and ownership of a once powerful local polity. The conservation project that revived the fishes and corals essentially recaptures their marginalized *vanua* identity which also has significant implications to the state of their community. This empowerment was echoed by environmental rituals and payments they received for the usage of their customary marine territory by outsiders, which reaffirmed their indigenous ownership of the coastal area. The Waitabu Marine Park project and the community therefore created unexpected pathways of collaboration to realize universal values introduced to them.

Chapter 6 “Environmental Case Study II: Mobility and Resilience of the Waitabu Farming Landscape” explores the cash-cropping and subsistence farming schemes of Waitabu which are founded on a strong belief in the power of *vanua* that provides everlasting fertility to the crops and nurtures development for the community. As I would demonstrate in this chapter, the power of the *vanua* comes from a “messy” landscape that is able to accommodate human

mobility, preserve crop diversity, and be resilient to the sweeping neoliberal agricultural influences that have entered the island. This *vanua* is constantly experienced through the embodied movements of walking within the landscape by the village farmers, which have also helped keep the diverse local farming practices and projects together in the community. More importantly, although this “messiness” may be a result of the hilly topography that prohibited the formation of large plantations, it actually reflects a flexible local land tenure system, as well as neglected spaces of secondary forests and village outskirts that are crucial to the food and biodiversity management in rural societies.

Finally, the concluding chapter 7 “How Could Entangled Thinking Benefit Development Projects?” offers a practical reflection on *vanua* in the context of development and how the framework of “entangled environment” proposed in this dissertation could contribute to the implementation and understanding of development projects in rural communities. Here, the “tradition” of these communities, as appears in conceptual entities such as *vanua*, should not be treated as means to an end of economic progress, or an isolated rigid indigenous value system. It is part of the “environment” because it could be seen, shaped, and experienced. It is entangled because it is open to different actors, both moving and rooted. It is dynamic because these old and new ideas and things will grow in diverse trajectories, depending how they are further perceived and enacted. With this line of thinking, it is important to recognize that the subject matter of any development project is not a present, well-delineated category (e.g. the reef, forest, or farming), but the interaction of a multitude of historical agencies that had led to the current configuration of such a category. As a result, we should not neglect the seemingly mundane actions carried out by the communities, which may be relevant to their imagination, and therefore execution, of development.

2.0 VANUA, A MULTIVALENT FIJIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPT

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us (Darwin 1861[1859]:425).

At Noon the Boat return'd when the Master informed me that there was no soundings without the reef, through which was a Channel of no more than Six feet water, entering by this Channel he pull'd in for the Shore thinking to speak with the people not more than 20 in number who were Arm'd with Clubs and Spears, but the moment he set his foot on Shore they retired, he left ashore some Medals, Nails and a Knife which they undoubted would get as some of them some time after appeared again on the Shore near the place (Cook in Beaglehole 1961:452).

The second quotation above was from the Journal of Captain James Cook during his second voyage. The date was Sunday, July 3rd, 1774 on the isle of Vatoa, located at present-day southern Lau Group, Fiji (Reid 1977). This was the first recorded encounter between Europeans and the natives on any of the Fiji Islands, while other more eventful interactions wouldn't happen until more than 20 years after. It is fitting that this encounter took place on the shore. Using beaches as a metaphor, Pacific historian Greg Denning proposed to see them as “cultural boundaries” where contacts occurred between the European strangers traveling from the sea and the Island natives who had established themselves as the people of the land. The significance of this metaphor is that islands are often perceived as isolated, surrounded by massive seawater that poses as barrier. The setting of beaches on the other hand provides a platform, a “liminal space,”

for exchanges and communications. Beaches are meant to be crossed, through which new objects and life forms are constantly introduced, and new worlds and possibilities are created. More importantly, the crossing cannot be traced back solely to European visitors. Islanders themselves also had to pass through the beaches to establish their indigeneity and identity. As Denning put it, “Every living thing on an island has been a traveler ... In crossing the beach every voyager has brought something old and made something new” (Denning 1980:31).

Denning’s insight was drawn from his ethno-historical study on the Marquesas Islands and how the collective islands that the natives call *te henua* were transformed and eventually rendered silent by the processes of colonialism. He particularly acknowledged both the natives (*enata*) and the Westerners (*aoe*) as active agents in shaping the land (*te henua*). The term *henua* is one of the many derivatives (called “reflexes” by linguists) of an archaic term **panua* used by the hypothetical common ancestors of the Polynesian people who settled in the Bismarck Archipelago, northeast of Papua New Guinea, around four thousand years ago before they further migrated into the vast Pacific Ocean. The languages that these people spoke originated from the region of Taiwan and Island Southeast Asia where a similar archaic term **banua* was able to be reconstructed (Blust 1987). Together, they belong to a language family called Austronesian of which the speakers were first active in Taiwan and other parts of Island Southeast Asia and began to disperse to Madagascar and the Pacific as early as five thousand years ago, sharing a similar cultural, material, linguistic, and genetic heritage (Bellwood 2007[1997]:119).

Linguists that reconstructed the term **panua* were able to categorize its meanings into: (i) “inhabited area or territory”; (ii) “community together with its land and things on it”; (iii) “land, not sea”; (iv) “the visible world, land and sky” (Pawley 1985, quoted in Osmond, Pawley and

Ross 2007[2003]:40). Its complex nature will be fully explored later and for now it would be simply put as an environmental concept that involves people, community, and identity. In this chapter, I focus on another one of those reflexes, *vanua*, which is widely spoken and used by indigenous Fijians in different historical and social contexts, and investigate the possibilities and dynamism that *vanua* can bring out. Here I treat *vanua* as an environmental framework that is historically entangled with different elements and is open-ended and incorporative. The “environment,” as understood by Fijians, is therefore essentially *vanua* writ large. As contemporary development projects of conservation and farming were brought into Fijian communities and established their presence in the physical environment, they also directly entered their *vanua* and interacted with the elements already embedded within. Due to the transformative nature of *vanua*, the new ideas and values introduced by these projects were able to be realized and negotiated through different trajectories of engagements.

In one of the earliest discussions of *vanua* in Fiji, Methodist missionary David Hazlewood first and foremost defined it as “a land, or region,” but added that it can also denote the “inhabitants of a land” (Hazlewood 1850:168). This is a common theme throughout the reflexes of **panua*, which stresses the linkage between communities and the physical land. Going through the British colonial period, the notion of *vanua* was gradually seen as the epitome of the indigenous Fijian custom and a type of social/kinship unit of the tribal society. In the earliest in-depth scholarly study regarding *vanua*, Fijian anthropologist Ravuvu added more dimensions to this framework. He categorized the meanings of *vanua* into three categories: the physical, the social, and the cultural aspects (Ravuvu 1983:70-84). These include the soil on which vegetation grows, bush gardens in the forest, fishing grounds along the coast, ancestral sites and sacred places in the mountains, as well as social units that group together kinsmen and

define hierarchy. A set of customary protocols and cultural ideals also serve as guidance for the people on a *vanua*. These include *veivukei* (helping and sharing), *veinanumi* (being considerate), and *veilomani* (loving one another). More importantly, *vanua* is not a mere container of these human and nonhuman things. What Ravuvu stressed was the spiritual connection between people and the land. *Vanua* is the source of fulfillment and identity. It is where the ancestral beings reside and have the power to affect people living on the land. As Ravuvu famously concluded, “To most Fijians, the idea of parting with one’s *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one’s life” (Ravuvu 1983:70).

But how did this notion of spiritual connection between people and land come to be? Attempting to explain the driving force behind the rapid and intentional Austronesian expansion, Bellwood introduced the idea of “founder-focused ideology,” in which the founding clan of a place and its senior descendants are ranked higher than the junior lines and later arrivers (Bellwood 2006[1996]). As a general rule, founders not only have more social power, they also hold rights to lands with better agricultural or fishing locations and free access to all the natural resources. They are also able to mark down their names and etch their memories in the landscapes to commemorate their pasts. It is these benefits, both material and symbolic, that motivated junior lines to constantly explore new territories and establish themselves as founders, while maintaining ties to their origins. But as more descending lines branched out and more waves of migrants arrived in, these multiple origins and social groups needed to be organized. The land, expressed in different reflexes of **banua* and **panua*, became the immediate basis to structure these emergent relationships. Land and marine tenures were thus assigned to different categories of people, and in more complex societies like ancient Hawai‘i polities they were incorporated into a regional tributary system (Kolb 1997; Kirch 2010). It is worthy to note that

in some places, particularly in Southeast Asia, the reflexes of **banua* have the meaning of “house.” These Austronesian houses also serve as a structuring force to organize a multitude of symbolic orders and ancestral origins (Fox 2006b[1993]).

Therefore, to the Austronesian settlers the “land” is where societies are made, where identities are rooted, and where the pasts can be remembered. It cannot be understood separately as natural environment outside the human realm passively waiting to be occupied and utilized. Instead, it is active and encompassing with a life of its own. As Daniel de Coppet famously recorded in his interview with the ‘Are‘are paramount chief Eerehau, “land owns people” (De Coppet 1985). He then elaborated that, “Land is clearly not simply soil, but rather an entity always fused with the ancestors, under whose joint authority the living are placed. This is land considered as *hanua*, that is, ‘land as a sacred being’ invested with a definite power over all deeds of both men and women” (pp.81-82). However, many scholars who quoted the famous passage “land owns people” have simply stopped without going further to Eerehau’s next assertion, “people own land: 1. because your *Tree* is there! 2. because your *Afterbirth* is there! 3. because your *Funeral Site* is there! 4. because your *Apical Ancestor* is there!” (p.84). Land owns people because it provides order and nourishes their development and growth, but people can own land because it still needs to be made and authenticated through cultivations and rituals. This gives certain flexibility for outsiders to establish themselves on the land. With the continuous execution of these activities, people are able to be part of the land as they enter a place through proper rituals, put their labor into the soil and as their bodies are buried underground. This not only echoes the mutual involvement of community and land that **panua* implicates, but also reflects that this involvement can be achieved through flexible practices. Although what de Coppet emphasized here was a hierarchical order of values in which the

dominant (the land) could encompass contradictions, this view certainly put the land in a more dynamic framework. For the Austronesian travelers, land can be thus seen as an environment in its totality that involves the constant movements and activities of objects and beings beyond a given boundary. It is accustomed to migrants, strangers, and cross-cultural exchanges, even before the times of Western colonialism. As they established relationships with the indigenous groups and the land, they are also structured into a cosmological order but in this process a new environment is also created. Changes and transformations are no foreign concepts to the Austronesian explorers as they often had to travel long-distance journeys, encounter diverse language-speaking groups, and settled on a multitude of island ecologies. The notions of **banua* and **panua* thus became their guiding framework to orient themselves in the new social and physical environment and to mediate these changes.

Nevertheless “the land,” as in *vanua* in Fiji, has too often been treated as a set of static and ahistorical cultural values and essentialized as an integral part of the indigenous identity, especially in the current political climate in Fiji which is shadowed by ethnic tensions. This essentialist view greatly hindered a holistic analysis of the current scenes of rural Fijian communities where villagers are experiencing great environmental changes and an influx of development projects. The actors involved here are also beyond a small geographic locale, which include local government officials, global NGO workers, international aid agencies, or even tourists, scientists and American Peace Corps volunteers. With a longer presence in the Fiji Islands since the early 19th century, the Christian Church also has their projects and training programs that changed how Fijians interact with the environment. Here, the “Fijian way of life” is constantly under scrutiny. Its communal ethos and traditional social organization are seen as obstacles to the efficient execution of development projects and *vanua* becomes the key symbol

of this eternal Fijian-ness. This attitude is clear in a series of rural studies led by scholars like O. H. K. Spate in the 1950s, who concluded that “the future for the Fijians lies in a turn from communalism towards individualism” (Spate 1959:97).

While the impact of colonialism and the invention of various indigenous Fijian categories have long been addressed (Clammer 1973; France 1969; Ward 2007), and the dynamic articulation of *vanua*, modernity and Christianity has been explored (Brison 2007; Ryle 2010), the complex engagement between *vanua* and development projects within the environment has yet to be fully discussed. In this dissertation I propose to see *vanua* as an “entangled environment” and investigate how this environmental framework affects the operation of contemporary development projects. The term “entangled” is borrowed from Nicholas Thomas’s theorization of “entangled objects” (Thomas 1991), in which he argues against an essentialist view of treating non-Western tribal economic activities as an separate and stable domain with an alternative cultural order (i.e. gift economies). Rather, he is interested in how a mutual entanglement of foreign and indigenous objects, of capitalist trades and exchanges, had contributed to creative ways of appropriation of material objects in different contexts. While I disagree with the complete rejection of the explanatory power of indigenous cultural logic which was not Thomas’s intention either, it should be recognized that *vanua* has always been historical, dynamic, and constantly facing and integrating foreign elements, just as the environment of Pacific islands is open to new travelers, plants, and animals. Therefore, to treat *vanua* as an entangled environment is to recognize the complex histories of the formation of a Fijian environment from “both sides of the beach” (Denning 2002) which acknowledges agencies and events from diverse sources.

2.1 VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF “ENVIRONMENT”

Late 18th and early 19th century travelers and philologists had already identified the significance and similarity among the reflexes of **banua* and **panua* found in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The earliest Western documentation of such words can be traced back to the first voyage of Captain James Cook in 1769 when his crew visited Tahiti where they had close interactions with the natives and local nobilities. On June 24th and 25th, Cook put down this entry:

We embark'd and proceed along shore by the direction of our pilots and landed in one of the first *whennuas* or districts in the enimies [sic] country called Annwhe, the chief's name Marie Tata (Cook in Beaglehole 1955:107, italic mine).

Later in July he further explained:

I have mentioned that this island is divided into two districts or kingdoms which are frequent at war with each other as happened about twelve months ago, and each of these is again divided into smaller districts, *whennuas* as they call them, over each of the kingdom is an Eare Dehi or head whom we call a king and in the *whannuas* are Eares or chiefs (p.133, italic mine).

Here the Tahitian term *whenua/whannua* (today *fenua*) was recognized in a political sense which is tied with regional hierarchies.

In 1812, William Marsden, an Irish linguist who had spent time in Sumatra working for the East India Company in the late 18th century and went on to study vocabularies collected by naval officers and traders in the South Seas, published a pioneering work on the Malayan language. In this volume he became the first scholar to propose that the Malay term *benua* signifying “country, region, land,” (previously thought to be borrowed from the Arabic word *beni* “sons or tribe”) is connected to *whenua* and *fenua* of the Polynesian languages (Marsden 1812:vi). Here *benua* was not only understood as the physical land, but analyzed with the phrase

orang benua (the people of the land) and given the implication of indigeneity, as opposed to foreign settlers and invaders.

Building from his earlier work on the Polynesian languages, American ethnologist William Churchill gave the first in-depth comparative analysis on a wide range of reflexes under the umbrella term *fanua*. He was able to compare different variations of this term from the easternmost islands of Rapa Nui, Hawai'i, to Melanesia, southern Philippines, Malay, and Indonesia. The definitions collected include the whole earth, country, ground, mold, soil, village, town, and house (Churchill 1911:342). Looking at the geographical distribution of these meanings, Churchill noticed that those that are “specific and minutely particular” (e.g. village, town, and house) are centered in Southeast Asia and Melanesia, whereas in Polynesia there is an ultimate sense of the universe building from the ground up (e.g. mold and soil). He concluded that to the language speakers in Southeast Asia and Melanesia, “the world is a thing of the eye.” On the other hand in Polynesia, it “is a thing of the mind, an intellectual conception resting upon a grander thought of the greatness of the cosmos” (Churchill 1913:114). His observation certainly was an over-generalized one, but he had identified that *fanua* is not just a term for concrete referents, but a kind of world-view or cosmological thinking.

Thanks to the continual scholarly research efforts, now that we know that these terms are part of a large Austronesian language family which links together these diverse geographical areas. Blust (1987) was able to reconstruct the earliest predecessor of these terms, **banua*, first used by Austronesian speakers outside Taiwan, who spoke a hypothetical ancestral language called Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP). Focusing on **banua* and four other PMP terms that at least partially have the meaning of some sort of house structure, he was interested in the semantic histories of these terms and how they came to acquire diverse but related senses. After

identifying seven distinct definitions of **banua* (1. house, 2. village, 3. land, 4. place, 5. country, 6. weather and 7. night) by reviewing its reflexes in different daughter languages, he concluded that **banua* may have a single complex meaning that refers to “an inhabited territory which included the village and its population together with everything that contributed to the life-support system of that community” (Blust 1987:100). The distinct definitions appeared in the daughter languages were thus the result of semantic fragmentation broken down from this single complex which has no equivalent English word. He also noted that this complex concept is in contrast to uninhabited territories external to it (i.e. the forest area). Using **panua* as an example, which was used by a later migrant group of Austronesian-speaking people speaking a hypothetical ancestral language called Proto-Oceanic (POc), Pawley (2005) argued that rather than breaking down from a single central complex, the different definitions of the reflexes of **panua* form a network of well-differentiated lexical units with multiple semantic centers. What happened historically was a process of “reduction in membership of a family of lexical units as a result of *sense transfer* (or *sense relabeling*) rather than the *splitting of a single complex sense*” (Pawley 2005:219). What both Blust and Pawley agreed upon was the transformative nature of **banua* and **panua* and that the study of these archaic terms should be put in a historical and ethnographical perspective. For example, what can these terms tell us about the patterns of land tenure and land use? What about the relationship between different groups of people interacting in the environment? Echoing this view was the study of Green and Pawley (1999) which looked at early Oceanic architecture and settlement through the reconstruction of related words. They noticed that contacts between Austronesian speakers and the Papuan-speaking communities may have led to local variation and change in the architectural forms and settlement patterns of POc speakers or their immediate descendants, which also impacted the terminologies that they used.

While there has already been much literature mentioning the similar forms of the reflexes of **banua* and **panua* across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, most of them are only talking about a casual linkage or simply a tongue-in-cheek comparison. In the following I will use ethnographic materials to perform an in-depth comparative analysis on how these terms are understood and put into practice in different cultural contexts. Although the order of the geographical areas discussed generally follows the routes of the Austronesian expansion, it does not reflect the time depth of each term because there were much complex regional exchanges taking place in different time frames.

2.1.1 As “Port” in the Northern Philippines

The indigenous Tao (previously known as Yami) people on the Orchid Island speak the only non-Formosan language among the aboriginal Austronesian language groups of Taiwan. While they did have close prehistoric ties with the Neolithic cultures of the southeastern coast of Taiwan, current ethnographic and linguistic evidence suggest that they have more similarities with the Ivatan people on the Batanes Islands of the northern Philippines (Bellwood and Dizon 2005; 楊政賢 2012; 臧振華 2005), among which are the seasonal capture of flying fish and the terms *vanoa/vanua* associated with these activities. For the Tao people, *vanoa* means port or beach, but a sense of territorial and communal ownership is tied with its meaning. For example, local people would not venture into other villages’ *vanoa* to fish (Kao 2012:75). Another variation of the term is *mivanoa*, which means performing flying fish festival. To be more specific, it is the fish-summoning ceremony which is performed at the members’ respective

vanoa and mark the beginning of the big-boat and small-boat fishing seasons in spring. Sacrifices of piglets are given and *makanio* (ancestral taboo) are reaffirmed (p.110).

Similarly for the Ivatan people, *vanua* signifies port. A *vanua* is the safe places where boats are able to be launched and landed in the rocky coastlines of the Batan Island. These places are named and have stories of the activities of the ancestral fishermen. But most importantly, the *vanua* does not simply exist at the shore. It needs to be ritually constructed through a ceremony called *mayvanuvanua* (making of the *vanua*), in which pigs are also killed and shared. This ritual marks the beginning of the summer fishing season and organizes the local fishers into a cooperating unit with leadership and customary fishing regulations (Mangahas 2010). Through ritual participation, outsiders are also able to be temporarily incorporated into a *vanua* (Mangahas 2008). After the season ends, the *vanua* is then “dismantled” or “broken up.”

2.1.2 As Part of Nature in the Central and Southern Philippines

In the central and southern Philippines, we can see the reflexes of **banua* start to take on diverse meanings which include home, community, leadership, and natural territories. For the Kapampangan speakers of central Luzon, *banua* means “sky, heavens” but also “anything inside a dwelling house” as opposed to *sulip* which means “downstairs and below” (Mallari 2006). In the pre-Muslim Sulu archipelago, *banua* signifies those men who were known not only for their age but also for their wisdom and wealth. They gradually assumed a more dominant role and carried on specialized tasks (Tan 2012). Similarly, for Manobo people on Mindanao, *banua* denotes a kind of village of community government in which three or more *datu* (chiefs) govern and specialize in different matters. This multiple authority system is operated on the principle of

coequality (Tan 2008:38). For Hiligaynon speakers in the western Visayas, the archaic meaning of *banwa* include the notions of mountain, countryside, terrain, climate, homeland and every island from sea to sea, but now it simply means town (Roces 2001:274). In Cebuano, the term *banwa* means country or land outside populated places, encompassing mountain forest or grassland (Mojares 1999).

2.1.3 As Territoriality in Borneo

The definitions of *benua* in Malay compiled by a British colonial administrator Richard James Wilkinson in the early 1900's have been widely cited by scholars, which included "large expanse of land; empire; continent; mainland in contrary to island" (Wilkinson 1957:122). It should be noted that Malay, one of the most widely spoken Austronesian languages, was heavily influenced by Sanskrit and later on the Islamic culture, and was used as a trade language in the 15th century. Therefore it is not surprising that *benua* has taken on meanings with such a large scope.

For the non-Muslim indigenous Dayak people in Borneo who have largely remained autonomous until the Dutch penetration into the inlands the mid-19th century, the term *banua* (used by most Land Dayak-speaking groups like Bataki') has a strong focus on communal territorial rights. This idea was influenced by the concept of local customary law (*adat*) introduced by the Dutch colonizers (Noszlopy 2005; Spyer 1996) which now governs the ways of natural resource management within a *banua* (Soetarto et al. 2001:36). It was further strengthened in response to the new settlers and timber and mining companies brought by the Indonesian state (Szczepanski 2002). For example, a local NGO called *Lambaga Bela Banua*

Talino (LBBT, which means Institute for Community Legal Resources Empowerment) was established by Dayak leaders to protect the rights to their customary territories.

For the Iban, previously known as the Sea Dayaks, the term *menoa* is also associated with territorial rights. Their settlement typically centers on a longhouse which consists of a series of household units (*bilik*) that engage in separate subsistence activities (Freeman 1970). The family members of these households have customary rights to a well-defined longhouse territory (*menoa rumah*) under a regional leader (*tuai menoa*), within which are farms, gardens, cemeteries, fruit trees, streams, and forests. Households gain their rights to a territory through clearing primary forests, which are then passed down bilaterally. If all the forests in the region are felled, they have to establish their rights to a place through tracing back to ancestral pioneering activities. While there certainly is the possibility for territorial disputes, the Iban people stress the state of harmony among community members within a *menoa*, as well as between the living and the dead (Cramb 2007:62). A series of ritual acts, including the installation of the hearths, bind separate families together into a single *adat* community and *menoa* (Sather 2006[1993]:73). It is said that the *menoa* should be maintained in a “state of grace in which all parts of the universe remain healthy, tranquil and cool” and if the *adat* is disturbed, the *menoa* will become “heated feverish or infected, angst” (Jensen 1974:139).

2.1.4 As Political-Religious Domains in Java and Highland Bali

In their study of the emergence of centralized power in Hindu Java, van Naerssen and de Jongh (1977:37-42) were able to identify an ancient Javanese term *wanua* which denotes the smallest territorial unit in pre-Hindu Java. It is an autonomous, self-sufficient, and paternalistic land-

based social group governed by a board of elders with egalitarian principles under which the inhabitants are called “children of the *wanua*” (*anak wanua*). With the development of rice cultivation on irrigated fields, a regional cooperative organization was in need to be formed to mediate water supplies. This gave rise to an authoritative figure called *raka* that ruled over several *wanua* and had the right to mobilize labor and natural resources. In the early Hindu-Javanese period with the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism, these *raka* were given high sounding Sanskrit titles and gradually a centralized kingship emerged.

In a similar vein, in highland Bali where the indigenous Balinese reside, the term *banua* indicates a kind of “ritual domain” which centers on a sacred site or temple complex and consists of a network of locally autonomous villages. These villages are ranked in an order of precedence established by ancestral origin myths, and those that are considered the descendants of later immigrants are under the ritual authority of the domain-founding villages. As noted by Reuter (2002), this hierarchical association is actually flexible and at times contested and those who find little success are able to withdraw their cooperation from a *banua*. Nonetheless, local people would “discount the voluntary and negotiable character of their alliance by characterizing their joint ritual practices as the fulfillment of ancient and collective religious obligations” (Reuter 2002:27). In fact, to be connected with a *banua* is so important that those who withdraw from a network would need to find another one immediately. This is because that they believe that the fertility of all agricultural land and the prosperity of the people depend on the spiritual state of a *banua* which is maintained by regular ceremonies and offerings to the temple and ancestral deities. As Reuter concluded, *banua* may need to be recognized as products of historical processes which are constantly produced and reproduced, changed and maintained (p.33).

2.1.5 As “House” for Toraja in Sulawesi

For the Toraja people of South Sulawesi where massive high-rising decorated houses called *tongkonan* can be found, the term *banua* generally refers to the small dwelling houses where families reside (Bigalke 2005:10). The *tongkonan* are considered seats of ancestral founders who watch over their living descendants. It is also the center of life-cycle ceremonies where different parts of the house are utilized and given specific symbolic meanings (Nooy-Palm 1988:34). All the Toraja people can trace back bilaterally to multiple *tongkonan* which are ranked according to founding myths. Some are even considered founded by ancestral figures descending from heaven and came to dominate the existing local social groups (Buijs 2006:11). On the other hand, residential *banua* houses lack these ancestral and genealogical significances and are reserved for everyday activities like cooking.

Recently scholars have highlighted the dynamic relationship between *tongkonan* and *banua*. For example, it is said that an ordinary *banua* can be transformed into a *tongkonan* if proper rituals are performed. And in everyday life, the terms *banua* and *tongkonan* can be used interchangeably (Adams 2006:217). In another study, the growing presence of *tongkonan*-like residential *banua* houses among middle-class Toraja is analyzed. It is argued that the significance of rice production and consumption associated with *banua* made these seemingly powerless social units remain autonomic and resilient to social changes (Santos and Donzelli 2007).

2.1.6 As Site of Linkages in Island Melanesia

For the Kwaio people of Malaita, *fanua* are territories of several hundred acres in which tiny settlements are scattered. The settlements consist of persons who have ritual ties to the shrine of an ancestral founder of the *fanua*. They are grouped into a single descent group based on agnatic principles. The *fanua* is therefore the spatial locus of this descent group which gives its members the primary rights to garden for profit and participate in certain rituals (Keesing 1970). However, this grouping can be very flexible. A man can not only gain access to his mother's *fanua*, but also have secondary rights to live and garden in any *fanua* from which he has a remembered ancestor (Keesing 1967).

In the Marovo lagoon, *vanua* is house. The term that carries rich territorial meanings like the Kwaio *fanua* is *puava*, which denotes a large communal territory stretching from the mountain forests, gardens, coastal village, all the way into the fringing reefs and lagoon. Nevertheless, "the connotations of rootedness, spatial focus and life-giving are still carried by *vanua*" (Hviding 1996:390). For example in Marovo, "village" is called *pala-vanua*. *Pala* here means adrift, as in adrift on the lagoon like a canoe. This implies the fluidity and flexibility of sociality in Marovo and how it can be organized and managed into a regional entity.

For the Arosi people of the Makira Island, *henua* (land) is a term rarely used by itself. Instead, it is understood in the compound word *auhenua* which literally means "things of the land." They use this word to refer to any living things, objects, or qualities of their environment, including rocks, animals, spirits, ethical norms, and the matrilineages. To be *auhenua* is to be irrevocably indigenous to the island. Researching on the concept of *auhenua*, Scott (2007) argued that there are two distinct visions of past and indigeneity for the Arosi. The first one,

which he termed “utopic primordiality,” is about the absolute, static lineage origin stories in different regions on the island linked with mythical animals or objects. In this sense of indigeneity, time is not specified and communities are not yet formed. The second one, “topogonic primordiality,” is the account of how ancestors established relationships with the land and other matrilineages. Here ancestral shrines were built and lineage boundaries began to be fixed. The connection between lineage and land was thus firmly anchored and could not be erased. However, in some places lineages would become extinct and lands run the risk to become “empty.” In this situation, as observed by Scott, rather than placing these lands in an indefinite limbo and controversy, the more ambiguous “utopic primordiality” mode of indigeneity is able to provide a capacity for multiple guest matrilineages to claim to be *auhenua* of the place without necessarily coming into conflict.

The capacity to form alliances is echoed by Taylor’s research (2008) with the Raga speakers of North Pentecost, Vanuatu. Over there *vanua*, translated by Taylor as “place,” refers to the hundreds of individually named pieces of land that divide the whole region. With the existence of old grave sites, some of these places have more sacred meanings as “ancestral places” (*bwatun vanua*) which are the origins of specific descent groups and thus controlled by them (p.13). However, notions of mobility are vested in these *vanua* as well. It is believed that the “place-substance” of a descent group should travel in a circular fashion and eventually return to its source, representing the ancestral regeneration. This circularity is achieved through the flow of women in marriage between hamlets, and ultimately the *vanua*. These marriages are therefore understood as forming an interconnected network of roads (*hala*) that crisscross the whole island landscape, establishing linkages among different *vanua* (Taylor 2005).

2.1.7 As Land with Spirituality in Polynesia

In Polynesian societies, the reflexes of **panua* begin to acquire the meaning of “placenta, afterbirth,” which reflect the practice of burying the placenta in the ancestral land after an infant member of the lineage is born. Such a practice is also common for Austronesian societies elsewhere but only in Polynesia do we see a direct connection to the reflexes of **panua*. In one of the earliest anthropological attempt to analyze this connection between people and the physical land in Polynesian societies, Firth (1959) observed that Maori people have a “deep-rooted affection” for their land (*whenua*). He therefore argued that their land tenure system could not be simply understood as the fulfillment of social obligations, but involves the “appreciation of the landscape, association of the names of natural features with the memories of bygone years, with home and family, the linkage with tribal fights, sacred places, the burial of ancestors – in fact all the interests generated by the play of the aesthetic emotions and social sympathies as well as the weight of traditional teaching [combined] to create the sentiment for the land” (Firth 1959: 372).

Firth’s mention of “aesthetics” as well as his analysis of Maori historical laments as evidence of people’s ties to the land is significant. Calling for a new focus on the Tongan way of recounting history called *tala-ē-fonua*, Tongan scholar Māhina (1993) noted that *fonua* in this context is a composite of land and people. Like Firth, he used several indigenous literary genres to demonstrate a kind of historicity that stresses both the material and non-material aspect of life in which human events are intrinsically tied with ecology (e.g. specific locations, the sun, and the ocean). Building from this perspective, Francis (2006) further explored how the notion of *fonua* has changed after the implementation of a new land policy in the late 19th century. While

losing its meaning in terms of local land ownership, *fonua* was then elevated to the national level that signified a unified people and place of Tonga. On the other hand in Samoa, the Samoan equivalent *fanua* retains the meaning of communal land at the local level, to which *āiga* (kin groups) are genealogically connected. It should be noted that it is by no means a static entity, but involves the blood and sweat that ancestors and families had shed in the soil through cultivation, as well as *malaga* (mobility) which is also considered a way of caring the land by the flow of gifts and the building of reciprocal relationships between places (Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2009).

We have briefly talked about *fenua* in 18th century Tahiti (documented as *whenua* by Cook). In Kahn's research (2011) on modern day Tahiti caught between exotic images of tourism and aftermaths of nuclear testing by the French colonial governance, *fenua* (land, country) serves as a point of reference for the native Tahitians to renegotiate their self and identity and reclaim their space. As the name "Tahiti" is essentially a European misappropriation, they would prefer to use "*te fenua ma'ohi*" (native land) to call their homeland. *Fenua* is the source of identity and provides nourishment to their livelihood. This is a powerful notion in the anti-nuclear testing movements as they would say their *fenua* is now poisoned (Kahn 2011:73). In other contexts *fenua* is represented in songs and food as a way to counter the dominant French hegemony.

In native Hawai'ian language, *honua* stands for the physical land and earth, in contrast to the vast ocean and sky (Handy, Handy, and Pukui 1972:44). However, this certainly does not mean that land and sea are entirely separate entities in the Hawai'ian view of the environment. In his detailed study of native Hawai'ian epistemology and values, Kanahale (1986:191) talked about the *ahupua'a* which is a large division of land in old Hawai'i, extending from the central mountains to the coast and beyond. This is in sharp contrast to the modern legal definition of

land which stops at the high water mark on the beach. Such a view of land-sea continuum is very common throughout the Pacific (cf. *puava* in Marovo, Hviding 1996:137-141) because as a whole it sustains the entire native livelihood on the island. But more importantly, *ahupua'a* reflects a regional socioeconomic organization which consists of extended families of commoners that provide resources, goods, and services to the nobilities and high chiefs who are considered "trustees" of the land under the nature gods of Lono and Kane (Handy, Handy, and Pukui 1972:41). These commoner-planters may live in the same place and cultivate the same land for generations for their chiefs. As argued by Kanahele (1986:181), this lasting effort has contributed to the rootedness of identity in the environment. This idea of hierarchy embedded in the environment was evident in the Hawai'ian *kapu* system in which the sacred spaces of chiefs should be avoided by commoners. This also extends to the bodily etiquettes of personal spaces that are practiced in everyday life.

Studying historical property relations and forms of hierarchy in the Marquesas Islands, Thomas (1985) provided a different take on the relationship between people and land and demonstrated how regional hierarchical systems could crumble. In the Marquesas Islands, as noted earlier, *henua* means land, but the land holders are not necessarily chiefs. People who were born into the chiefly lines but were junior siblings could even become landless and had to work as servants for other land holders. There were also cases of people being disposed from their own land through force. In other words, land was not inalienable and chiefs were not the centrality of the society. Thomas concluded that this was the result of competitive feastings coupled with environmental degradations on the islands that ultimately weakened the chiefly hierarchy and transformed people's relationship with the land.

2.2 THE MAKING OF VANUA IN FIJI

What can these reflexes of **banua* and **panua* tell us about *vanua* in Fiji in general? From the above review we are able to conclude that as physical or ideological spaces, they are 1) sources of autochthonous identity, especially in response to dominant colonial or nationalistic projects, but can also have the capacity to absorb outsiders; 2) communal territories with natural resources and management activities, within which the social organization could be flexible; 3) ritually constructed, made into a stable and harmonious entity with customary rules; 4) linked with leadership and hierarchy, but in some places are the subordinate category in the society. These diverse qualities and arrangements inform us that *vanua* in Fiji should be put under multiple scopes to be examined. It should also be noted that the indigenous people in the Fijian Islands are far from a homogeneous group and *vanua* is played out differently in different regional contexts.

2.2.1 *Vanua* in Historical Perspective

As noted earlier, it was the British Wesleyan Methodist Society (WMS) missionaries who first encountered and studied the ideas of *vanua* in Fiji. With the assistance from the Tongans, David Cargill and William Cross arrived at Lakeba in the Lau group of eastern Fiji, on October 12th, 1835, thus formally began the Methodist presence in Fiji.⁵ Later in December 1838, three other WMS missionaries John Hunt, James Calvert, and Thomas Jaggar joined them and began to

⁵ In 1830, a group of Tahitian teachers reached Lakeba and in 1832 moved south to Oneata and established the first place of regular Christian worship on Fijian soil (Garret 1982:102).

expand their missionary effort to other places in Fiji (Henderson 1931a:101). While stationed in Fiji in the first half of the 19th century, these missionaries were largely associated with eastern coastal chiefdoms and their view of Fijian society was constructed through the perspective of these regional hierarchical authorities. Even the Fijian dialect with which they chose to translate the Bible was based on Bauan, the language spoken by the most influential chiefdom at the time at eastern Viti Levu. This has great implication to the understanding of *vanua* and how it was later on appropriated by the British colonial government. To illustrate my point, in one of the earliest Fijian translations of the New Testament in 1853, Hunt translated the following verses “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom” (New American Standard, Revelation 17:12) as “*Ia na kaukamea e tini ko sa raica e ra sa turaga levu e le tini, a ra sa sega ga ni vakavanua edaidai.*” In his Fijian translation the term *vakavanua* is the adjective form of *vanua* which was later understood as “affairs of the land” (Pritchard 1866:311) or simply “customary” by scholars and colonial officials. Here however it was used as the synonym of kingdom in the sense of a polity. From July 1839 to August 1842, John Hunt was stationed in Somosomo, Taveuni with his colleague Richard Lyth. Somosomo is the seat of the paramount chief Tui Cakau who rules the confederation Cakaudrove controlling the majority of Taveuni and other northern islets and territories. It is ruled by an ideology of divine kingship passed down through the bloodline of the *i-Sokula* lineage which rose to prominence in the southeastern end of Vanua Levu and moved into Taveuni in the early 19th century (Routledge 1985; Sayes 1984). While residing in Somosomo and having observed warfare, ceremonial feasts, and other ritual activities, both Hunt and Lyth no doubt had found a strong correlation between *vanua* and the hegemony of chiefly power. In their diaries, they had documented large quantities of resources from both land and sea like pigs, fishes, taros, and yams offered to Tui

Cakau as tributes in Somosomo. Human bodies of enemies were also part of the things being consumed and redistributed to affiliated villages (Crosby 1994:65; Sahlins 1983:76). Such feasting reflected not only the constant conflicts of regional polities in Fiji in the 19th century where the demonstration of allegiance became an important ritual and political event, but also the paramountcy of chiefs in his sphere of influence, namely, *vanua*.

The relationship between the chief and *vanua* had long been a debated topic in Fiji, and it had resonated in the discussion of native land tenure system. Although various parts of Fiji had been in close contact with European traders in early 19th century, it wasn't until the mid-1840's that foreign visitors began to acquire permanent titles of significant pieces of land for missionary stations, trade stores, or as agricultural plantations starting from the 1860s (Ward 1969). In most cases, firearms were given to regional high chiefs in exchange for land. In some of the others it was sold by the chiefs to pay off their debts. When the Fiji Islands were ceded to the British Crown on October 10th, 1874, the first Governor Sir Arthur Gordon decided to investigate the native land tenure issue and whether the transactions made between the chiefs and foreigners were legitimate. There were generally three schools of thought regarding Fiji's land tenure situation at the time. The first one can be traced back to the first British Consul of Fiji, William Thomas Pritchard, who had dealt with a fair share of land disputes when holding office on the island of Levuka from 1859 to 1863. He was often quoted with this assertion: "Every inch of land in Fiji has an owner. Every parcel or tract of land has a name, and the boundaries are defined and well known. The proprietorship rests in families, the *heads of families* being the representatives of the title" (Pritchard 1866:242). Under this view, every piece of land in Fiji is accounted for by a community, which is a collection of land-owning families. The chief is the senior leader of the community but only holds rights to the land of his own family. Moreover,

the land is not inalienable from the people. Land can be sold, only under the consent of the whole community. It can even be given as a gift, as noted by Pritchard in regards to the lands given to Methodist missionaries. The second one was that of a colonial official John Bates Thurston who served as the Governor of Fiji from 1888 to 1897. Beginning as a planter and land purchaser in Fiji himself, he argued that the land tenure in Fiji is similar to a feudal system. The ruling chief controls the lands in his territory and releases them to commoners in exchange for their services and tributes. They are essentially tenants on the chief's territory, and the chief holds the right to remove them from the land should he desire to have the land sold (Thurston in Pritchard 1882:9). This view certainly justified the majority of the land transactions accomplished in Fiji before 1874. Finally, there was the Australian anthropologist Rev. Lorimer Fison who gave a famous public lecture on "Land Tenure in Fiji" in April 1880. Similar to the Methodist missionaries before him, his observation was primarily based on the powerful chiefdom of Bau. He (1881) considered a patrilineal decent group called *mataqali* as the basic land-owning unit. In his model, a village or community consists of a chief and several related *mataqali* in which all the members are *i-taukei ni vanua* (land-owners). The chief, who is considered the earthly representative of the ancestral gods, does not have exclusive right to the land. More importantly, to Fison the land is inalienable. While he did recognize cases of land transferred in times of conquest, he argued that what was surrendered was the usufruct right to the resources on the land. The title to the land can never be relinquished.

Fison's theory of Fijian land tenure was then adopted by the British colonial government which followed a paternalistic, indirect-rule policy formulated by Arthur Gordon. Accordingly, native Fijian tribes should be protected from the influence of European commercialism and be governed by their own customary laws. In their tribal territories, lands were considered

communally owned and inalienable, boundaries were well-defined, titles were passed down through generations without much change, and the tribe was a finely operated hierarchical structure in which the chiefly authority was fully recognized and respected by its members (France 1969:127). This was further strengthened by the establishment of Survey Department with licensed land surveyors in 1877 (Dutt and Volavola 1977), and the Native Lands Commission (NLC) in 1880 which began to codify native land ownership titles and register tribal land-owners in the *Ai Vola Ni Kawa* (literally, the book of descendants). Based on the evidence collected in the process of native land codification, in 1913 the Chairman of the NLC G. V. Maxwell proposed a pyramid-like model to better understand the tribal divisions of Fijian society. *Vanua* was defined as a confederation that emerged during times of warfare when several *yavusa* (tribes or clans) decided to be united together for mutual protection under a selected chief. A *yavusa* consists of the direct agnate descendants of a *kalou-vu* (ancestral-god), who were later organized into different patrilineal descent groups (*mataqali*) and their subdivisions (*i-tokatoka*). The *yavusa* therefore is of “common blood and common worship.”⁶ Maxwell’s model became the orthodox view of a homogenized Fijian society, even though it was clear that it had many inconsistencies when applied to different places in Fiji (Clammer 1973).

The notion of *vakavanua* also took a different turn compared to when it was first understood by the missionaries. It gathered the meaning of “according to the custom of the tribe/land” in the context of self-governance, as opposed to *vakalawa* (things according to the colonial law) (Walter 1978b:99). It is the epitome of everything that is not European or Indian,

⁶ Legislative Council Paper No.27, 1914, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

who were brought to Fiji as indenture laborers from 1879. In colonial documents we begin to see terms like “*vakavanua* meetings” or “*vakavanua* matters” that were managed and reported by native authorities.⁷ In other contexts, it was equated with the term *vaka Viti* (according to the custom of Fiji). In other words, it represents a *sui generis* Fijian-ness, and in this ideological formation, the *vanua* is passive and void of the disturbance from foreign elements.

2.2.2 Anthropological Studies of *Vanua*

Even though constructed as a static and timeless entity, *vanua* was still recognized for its complexity and mobility in early scholarly works in Fiji. In Fison’s theorem of land tenure, he acknowledged the existence of emigrants living as tenants on the land. They were landowners elsewhere but were driven away by conflicts and forced to settle as strangers on other tribal territories. In his study in the Lau group of eastern Fiji, Hocart also noted the common presence of *vulagi* (stranger or guest) from other places who worked as laborers on the land (Hocart 1929:32). There were even Tongans attached to local Fijian kin groups and received usufruct rights to the land (p.13,98). His most important contribution to the understanding of Fijian society, however, was the identification of “dual organization” and its implication to environmental settings (Hocart 1915b, 1919). He discovered that throughout the Lau Group, Lomaiviti Group, and eastern Vanua Levu, communities are constituted of two exogamous moieties. One is associated with “the land,” the other “the noble.” “The land” side is considered commoners, while “the noble” side is where the chief sits. This dual structure is also reflected in

⁷ For example, the Regulation No.6 of Native Regulation Board passed in 1881 was directly addressing “*vakavanua* matters.”

spatial arrangements. For example, the side of the house towards the sea is called the noble side, while the other end is the common or land. The whole village and island also follow the same orientation (Hocart 1929:126). This division of land and sea becomes more salient in the ideas of chieftainship. On Oneata, a small island in Lau, Hocart was informed that “[chiefs] came from overseas: it is so in all countries of Fiji” (p.27). He also recorded speeches delivered in an installation ceremony of Tui Nayau in Lakeba that stressed the chief should be kind to “the people of the land,” make them feel at home and keep them fed. The ethnographic evidences suggested that the logic of Fijian society is a union of foreign chiefs and autochthonous land owners.

Elaborating on Hocart’s insights, Sahlins (1976,1981,1983) provided his theoretical input on the structure and transformation of land and sea in Fiji. While the chief and the people of the land may seem to be in an asymmetrical relationship in which the latter are required to give tributes to the former, their union is actually based on balanced exchanges between two complementary categories. As noted by Sahlins, it is believed that the fertility of the land is guaranteed by the agency of the chief, which is masculine and potent. On the other hand, the chiefly power needs to be mediated through the produce from the land, representing feminine fertility (Sahlins 1976:25). Later on Sahlins (1983) expanded this exchange to the explanation of cannibalism in Fiji. Equating the distribution of cannibal victims to the offering of *tabua* (whale’s tooth valuables) to the father of the prospective bride, he argued that the cultural logic of cannibal sacrifices is for the ruling chiefs to exchange “cooked men” for “raw women” given to them as wives by their subjects, the people of the land. His thesis on the “stranger-king” (1981), that is, the acceptance of power of a foreign origin by the indigenous polity, is another example of this exchange. He gave an in-depth analysis on the process of chiefly installation in

the Lau Group in which the foreign chief is symbolically poisoned by drinking kava (an agricultural produce of the land) presented by the people of the land, and then domesticated as the local deity. More importantly, after the ceremony the land is composed of the chief and people, and together they encounter higher order of foreign imposing categories such as *matanitu* (government). What Sahlins demonstrated was the dynamism of *vanua* and how static contrasts can be put into motion and produce cultural totalities. Here *vanua* needs to be constantly made and reproduced as it incorporates and domesticates foreign elements.

The dualistic ideas in *vanua* were again explored in Toren's research studies on Fijian hierarchy. Based on ethnographic data gathered from Gau, an island in the Lomaiviti Group of central Fiji, she argued that hierarchy in Fiji is not vertically fixed, but is always confronted by another prevailing value in Fijian society: competitive equality. According to Toren (1999:149), the interplay between these two values creates a "creative tension" that opens up possibilities for the development of relationships in different social domains. For example, *veilomani* (mutual compassion) constitutes the basis of hierarchy in ideal Fijian marriages, but is also supported by *veidomoni* (mutual desire) between equals that allows a marriage to prosper. Similarly, chiefly authority also requires the acknowledgement from the people of the land and balanced reciprocity within a community to legitimately function and bring prosperity to the community. It is only in rituals that a fixed hierarchy is temporarily established, but the idea that all fertility and affection are based in balanced, reciprocal relationships makes hierarchy unable to be an all-encompassing value (p.161). Toren further analyzed that it is because of this logic that Christianity is able to slip into *vanua* and be seen as an inherent Fijian value. The Christian God may have replaced and suppressed the local ancestral gods and posed as a hierarchical figure, but he also enters into the balanced reciprocal relationship of the Fijian communal life and becomes

a part of the *vanua*. From another angle, Fijian theologian Tuwere (2002) also argued that through the works of early missionaries, *lotu* (Christianity) empowered the chiefs and brought unity and new identities to the *vanua*. Today, it is viewed as an integral part of being Fijian.

The “creative tensions” mentioned above are also embedded in the Fijian landscapes. Chiefs are the ruler of a territory: Resources of the land and sea were presented to them as tributes. They even had the power to proclaim a place as *tabu* (forbidden) where the taking of fruits and animals were prohibited. However, this hierarchy ultimately encountered the relations of balanced exchange of goods and services across households in which the chiefs also need to participate. Chiefs were also not the only figures who held power in the *vanua*. *Yavu* (foundations of old houses) and old village sites are visible markers of the activities of ancestors. They provide strong attachments between people and the land and nourish their well-beings, but can also bring harm to the people if protocols were not followed. With the advent of Christianity and the development projects that followed through, the landscape was both spiritually and physically transformed. In some cases *yavu* were even uprooted to give way to development, which for some is an ultimate destruction to the ancestral land. However, as observed by Toren, since the commoditized products of the land can never truly leave the kinship nexus, the wealth brought by development projects is viewed as benefitting the well-being of the community, which is also empowered by Christianity (Toren 1995). A more radical example can be found in Kaplan’s study (1990) in northern Viti Levu, where the local communities saw their landscapes as the ones mentioned in the Bible and their ancestors already Christians, predating the arrival of European missionaries. For them, Christianity is essential *vakavanua*, always part of the *vanua*. Kaplan argued that, by domesticating this “stranger-king” Jehovah, the locals whose forefathers were categorized as hill tribe rebels in the British colonial times were able to counter the

authority of the coastal chiefdoms and foreign power, and exercise their regional autonomy which was considered more legitimate and closer to the autochthonous land.

Both Toren's and Kaplan's studies captured the transformative nature and internal tension within the *vanua*, but also the possibilities and creativity that this cultural logic can bring out. The constant presence of foreign agency and its integration (even though momentarily) and interaction with the land is also stressed. A key point is that however foreign the projects that local Fijians are engaging with may seem, their operations could be still considered following the way of the land, or even inherently Fijian. In his investigation on why *masi* (barkcloth) production and commercialism continued to flourish on Vatulele Island in southwestern Fiji, Ewins (2009) asserted that the popular view that growing tourist market saved this indigenous industry was not valid. Rather, as he argued, although *masi* is a significant part of Fijian ritual activities, it was also a historically prominent item in non-ritual trading involving both indigenous and non-indigenous markets. Therefore, "what is often read as a radical change to commercialisation is for Valtuleleans actually an evolution of traditional ways of thinking and acting" (p.8). In a similar vein, Brison (2007) showed how Fijian women were able to navigate between "tradition" and "modernity," between "communalism" and "individualism," and strategically blurred these two categories and position themselves when facing obligations from the community. Particularly, in the life story narrative of a woman from a high-ranking family, it was suggested that modernity was part of the Fijian *vanua*, and the European ways of doing things (e.g. education, self-development) were the expression of chieflikeness which was a matter of looking after the community and being close to God (Brison 2007:107).

It should equally be stressed that these projects of involving and re-imaging foreign elements into the *vanua* is not a smooth process, nor an end product of the Fijian cultural logic.

In his research on Methodism in Kadavu Island, southern Fiji, Tomlinson (2009) stated that a sense of loss or powerless was prevalent in indigenous discourses and religious narratives. The *vanua* was seen as both threatened and threatening. It was threatened because of the current state of indigenous affairs which saw the decline of chiefly power and loss of customs. It was threatening because the ancestral curses and malicious powers never went away and were embedded in the soil. In this context Christianity was both the cause of such a decline but also the countermeasure for this cultural anxiety (in the form of chain prayers, for example). This tension between *lotu* and *vanua* constantly informed Fijians of their social formations and decisions. In a more recent study that can be seen as a reassessment to Toren's idea of "creative tension," Tomlinson (2014) discussed a creative argument that kava can substitute wine in holy communions, and why it is not actually practiced. Kava, known in Fijian as *yaqona*, is a beverage made of kava roots. It is a strong manifestation of the land and is used in chiefly installation ceremonies (as mentioned by Sahlins above), as well as everyday social functions. Whether they are formal or casual, a ritualistic structure is always strictly followed. Proposing a model of seeing *vanua* as "still land and moving people," Tomlinson argued that by literally consuming the land into the body, the moving people become fixed into the *vanua*. It is precisely because of this powerful implication that kava could not be used in holy communions, because the church should transcend the *vanua*, not be part of it (Tomlinson 2014:71).

If the work by anthropologists demonstrated how *vanua* is internally dynamic, flexible, but filled with conflict and tension, then the contributions from geographers had identified how historical forces of different sources physically altered the environment and contributed to population movements which transformed the relationship between people and *vanua*. To begin with, the environment where Fijians live and work is by no means a natural one. In Ward's

(1965) in-depth study of land use patterns in different regions in the Fiji Islands, it is clear that colonial land tenure policies and the division of freehold and native lands are as much a factor to rural development as the distribution of soil types and natural resources. This observation was echoed by Watters who saw the lack of economic progress of Fijian communities stemming from the persistence of traditionalism which was itself a colonial creation (Watters 1969:262). In the few successful case studies that Watters observed, he learned that there were more individual security of land tenure and relative freedom from communal obligations. This is interesting because according to a reconstruction of pre-colonial land ownership in Fiji, Ward (1995) discovered that there was more mobility of people in a territory, and the land was actually alienable and transferrable. Brookfield (1972) on the other hand traced this dynamism to an earlier period of time before the advent of British colonialism in the early 19th century, in which trading goods of whale oil, coconuts, sandalwood, and reef-products had brought Fijians to a new macrocosm of relationships with European missionaries, traders, and nearby islanders (particularly Tongans). In a more detailed study, Ward (1972) examined the impact of sandalwood trade in Fiji from 1804 to 1809 and *bêche-de-mer* trade between 1822 and its decline in 1850. Not only were local political structures influenced by the trade, foreign goods like axes, adzes, knives, cloth, etc. and particularly muskets became circulated in Fijian societies. Islanders from remote places, like Maoris or Tahitians, were also brought in by trading vessels. But the flow of goods actually went both ways. The Fijians were active and willing trade partners who not only offered their services to cut down coconut palms to build driers for those traders, but also sold local food products such as yams and taros to them. This latter activity was so significant that European traders even introduced their own foodways such as pineapples and pumpkins for them to cultivate. The environmental impact was even more profound. As the

processing of *bêche-de-mer* relied on boiling and drying, large quantities of firewood were taken down in coastal areas in the period 1827-1835 and a second boom in the 1840s. These data prompted Ward to conclude that “the missionaries and the observers of the middle of the nineteenth century and the administrators of the last quarter of the century, were viewing a people whose life and land had already been profoundly changed by the ‘invasion’ of visiting European and New England mariners” (Ward 1972:118).

2.2.3 Comparisons from the Non-Austronesian-Speaking World

We have so far discussed various theorizations of the Fijian concept *vanua*. On the one hand, as a total environment that supports the community, it is intrinsically linked to how indigeneity came to be (i.e. ancestors), how society is organized (i.e. hierarchy), and how things are regulated (i.e. custom). On the other hand, it is heavily influenced by historical interactions with foreign agencies and policies of colonial governance, as well as processes of the formation of its social cosmos. *Vanua*, as both land and community, is therefore very fluid, filled with movements and tensions that needed to be reconciled. It is important to recognize that such a dynamic notion of society and environment is not unique to the Austronesian-speaking world, but could be found in many indigenous communities that are negotiating between their identities, knowledge, and land rights tied to their environment, and everyday practical issues of development, transactions, and subsistence activities intensified by the power of state and capitalism. For example, scholars have demonstrated that the “traditional environmental knowledge” of the Sami people in northern Finland is not simply rooted in the land and passed down through generations, as imagined by the state and its legal experts, but rather an ongoing

construction by the mobility of people to different locales, seasonality that involves anticipation and surprise, and old and new tasks that they perform every day. In other words, it has undergone “continual generation and regeneration within the contexts of people’s practical engagement with significant components of the environment” (Ingold and Kurttila 2000:192), which is open-ended with things constantly adding in and fading out. Similarly, Shipton (2009) observed that for the Luo people of western Kenya, conflicts from land sales and mortgages often arose due to the spiritual attachment between people and land, which made foreclosure and eviction a complicated issue. This sense of belonging, however, was partly reinforced by policies of colonial authority that restricted regional movements, as well as the later introduction of new cash crops that sharpened land competition. What emerged was not only the hardening of clan and lineage groups, but also increasing acts of marking ancestral graves which became an earthly anchorage of social identity for living persons and groups. Their relationship with the land therefore reflects “a rich and ingenious mix of homegrown, borrowed, and adapted ideas about humans, ancestors, and divinity” (p.7).

This picture of seemingly sedentary land-owning communities with complex histories of transformation and mobility can also be seen in many South American indigenous societies. The Northern Kayapó people of the Amazon, for instance, had been affected by foreign trade and diseases introduced indirectly long before their first face-to-face contact with Europeans. The result was large groups splitting into small, dispersed villages, which had significant consequences to their ritual life, agricultural practices, and plant utilization. Therefore, assumptions that observations made at first contact reflected societies unaffected by European influence were simply not true (Posey 2002:31). Local cosmology could also reveal much about society and environment. As Wright (2013) illustrated, shamans among the Baniwa people of

Northwest Amazon have the power to transform into different beings like harpy eagle, jaguar, or serpent, in order to enter the “Other World” to guide the community in times of disorder, or attack enemy tribes. It is therefore necessary “to open a small hole” in the cosmos, so that beings are able to move in and out, which could be seen as a metaphor for the subtle changes of the environment (pp.74-76). The strongest parallel to *vanua* in South America is the Andean concept *ayllu* which is often translated as “clan” or “community.” *Ayllu* is generally a named land-holding descent corporate group whose membership is reckoned by reference to an actual or fictive common ancestor. However, different *ayllus* in the Andes region are organized differently. In Sonqo, for example, it refers to the community as a whole and not as a kin group, and the formation is based on common residence in a locale, rather than by blood or marriage. This relationship to place is compared to that of parents and children, in which the members are nurtured by the *ayllu* (Allen 1981). Similarly, for the Qollahuayas, *ayllus* are different locations in the mountains, on which communities and networks of resource exchange are built (Bastien 1978). Outsiders could also be recruited into an *ayllu*. In Jukumanis of Bolivia, a group of landless peasants are considered part of its *ayllu* for having worked the land and served as servants (Godoy 1985). Other scholars have noted the influence from outside forces regarding the different scalar formations and ritual practices of *ayllu*, such as the Inca and Spanish colonization (Wernke 2007) and the modern neoliberal state (Orta 2013; Rasnake 1986). These studies demonstrated that like *vanua*, even though having a strong connection to the environment, *ayllu* is actually a flexible and dynamic entity with complex histories of regional movement and interaction.

2.3 ENTANGLEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

With a thorough review of the different reflexes of **banua* and **panua* from the northern Philippines to eastern Polynesia, as well as a diachronic examination of the transformative meanings of *vanua* and *vakavanua* in Fiji, we can see how these concepts of land, people, and society are enacted in different historical and cultural contexts, and most importantly how they are produced and reshaped via diverse passages. It is clear that, as demonstrated by numerous studies with different Austronesian-speaking groups, humans, ancestral beings, land, sea, crops, and forests are all part of an ontologically holistic environment. What I want to stress in the beginning of this dissertation is that rather than situating these senses and knowledge in an entirely isolated and stable domain, we should shift to a more open-ended and dynamic “entangled environment” in which the inside of the beach is inextricably connected to the outside, and the integration is filled with both tension and flexibility. The term “entanglement” to me is about movements and possibilities. It is like constantly squeezing and loosening a bundle of straws (or “a bundle of very diverse lines,” cf. Deleuze and Guattari 2005[1987]:202, 312). In this process, an image of assimilation may temporarily appear but there is also a tremendous amount of tension within, which may even cause a few straws to break or fall out. Then the bundle is loosened up and new straws would be added in and together they are squeezed again and new formations are able to emerge. The “entangled environment” is this twisted bundle, but instead of straws it is a wide array of actors and ideas that are put into motion. It is precisely because of this multiplicity that creates a capacity to take in new things and withstand the forces of squeezing. This emphasis on movement is extremely important. “Landscapes refuse to be disciplined,” concluded archaeologist Barbara Bender in her review of

different theories of landscape (Bender 2006:304), which is the result of the elusive and mobile nature of the environment. However, she also argued that “movements” may also create “turbulent landscapes” in which unfamiliar movements of people, labor, and capital are engaged in the most familiar places and acts of exclusion and marginalization may also appear (p.309). Similarly, going back to the bundle of straws, once an added element is too rough or the structure of straws itself is too thin, the whole bundle may fall apart and what we have are environmental and social crises.

Vanua, as well as other reflexes of **banua* and **panua*, is such an entangled environment. They may be developed as a spatial framework for the Austronesian explorers to orient and establish themselves within a new ecological setting, but the entanglement is always there. It began long before the moment they discovered new islands because they carried the memories and names from their original homeland which they turned into houses, landmarks, and other indigenous art forms. It did not stop after they settled on the land because migrant groups and travelers were regularly visiting, with whom they formed new relationships. Given this complex nature, active efforts like rituals or performances are required to establish temporary order which is manifested in ideas of chieftainship, ownership, and boundaries in the environment. But once this momentary structure is loosened, new possibilities and problems would again emerge.

2.3.1 Theories of “Entanglement”

In the discipline of anthropology, the metaphor of “entanglement” has been widely discussed. Although many have credited Thomas’s work on the “entangled objects” (1991) as the inspiration for such usage, it was actually archaeologists who first utilized this term as an

analytical tool (Jordan 2009). Drawing on a phrase coined by Darwin to describe the co-evolution of species more than a century ago, Terrell (1988) proposed to see Pacific history as an “entangled bank” which is a “playing field” where people had traveled different distances, from different directions to play a similar game. They each brought their own ideas and skills and collectively created a set of rules for the environment in which they settled. This perspective was against a view that saw the Pacific Islands as natural laboratories suitable for observing isolated undisturbed social evolution (Kirch 1989[1984]:ix), as well as the hypothesis that the sea-fearing, pottery-making Lapita people, the precursors of ancestral Polynesians who first emerged in the Bismarck Archipelago as early as 3,470 B.P. (Denham, Ramsey, and Specht 2012), were spread through an “express train” without much interaction with the local hunting-gathering Papuan-speaking communities (Diamond 1988). Now it is accepted by most scholars that there were complex pre-historical cultural and biological exchanges involving humans, plants, animals, ideas, and objects from different origins meeting at the coasts of New Guinea and Island Southeast Asia, which gave rise to the Lapita cultural complex and other innovative cultural institutions. For example, Denham (2004, 2011) argued for a mosaic agriculture and arboriculture picture in the New Guinea region during the Holocene, in which crops from diverse sources were domesticated and cultivated, even before the arrival of the Austronesian-speaking people. In her analysis of the complex dentate-stamp decorative styles on Lapita potteries, Chiu (2012) echoed previous view that the Lapita cultural complex was by no means a closed system. Judging from a rather limited set of established major motif themes (less than 20) and a wide range of unique face motifs (201 out of 209 only occurred once) throughout the Lapita sites, she argued that this reflected the intention of immigrants attempting to fit in local communities by masking their homelands and adopting the existing set of symbols, while

retaining subtle variations to state who they were. Lansing et al. (2011) on the other hand gave a compelling model to explain the male-female ancestral genetic disparity and non-existence of non-Austronesian linguistic enclaves in Island Southeast Asia. They proposed that as the Austronesian-speaking people expanded southwards into the region, the matrilineal house societies were also introduced which were flexible and open to forming alliances. In Eastern Indonesia for instance, local hunting-gathering Papuan-speaking males began to take Austronesian-speaking women as wives and were accepted into the house societies, a practice that is still taking place today. As a consequence of matrilineal residence, the children of such alliance inherited their father's Papuan Y chromosome, their mother's Asian mitochondrial DNA, and speak her Austronesian language. Later on with the development of large-scale irrigated agriculture and population growth, these house societies were replaced by endogamous rice-growing villages with reduced mobility. However, traces of house societies' cosmologies and practices can still be found. It is also interesting to note that this is where most of the reflexes of **banua* retain the meaning of "house" and in Java, one of the earliest places where irrigated agriculture was introduced, the meaning of *wanua* was transformed.

We could also find similar entanglements in remote Oceania where Fiji is located. Generally considered a meeting point between Melanesia and Polynesia or the homeland of Ancestral Polynesian society (Kirch and Green 2001:242), the Fiji Islands have demonstrated a complex picture of phenotypical features, material culture, social organizations, and linguistic diversity (Burley 2013; Geraghty 1983). Prehistoric borrowings and exchanges with Tongans and Samoans were notable (Geraghty 2004; Kaeppler 1978). Even the name "Fiji" itself reflects such an entanglement, which was an English standardization of the Tongan word *fisi*, first documented by Captain Cook as "Fidgee" in Tonga on July 5th 1777 (Cook in Beaglehole

1967:144), and other variations by his crew members such as “Feejee” (Anderson in Beaglehole 1967:949), “Fidgi” (Clerke in Beaglehole 1967:1311), or “Feegee” (King in Beaglehole 1967:1363). The Tongan word *fisi* came from *viti*, a name that Fijians used to refer to their islands long before the 18th century. Different renditions of the term *viti* can actually be found in distant places in Polynesia, for example, *whiti* in Maori, *hiki* in Hawai‘i, and *hiti* in Tahiti, which all have the meaning of “east or sunrise” (Makemson 1938). Various theories were given to explain this phenomenon (for example, Hale 1846:178; Hocart 1919; Whatahoro 2011[1915]:22), but it is clear that Fiji is part of a wider Polynesian cosmology and network of interaction. Its environment and the histories and agencies embedded within therefore should also be put in such a dynamic framework.

While archaeologists were able to use “entanglement” to understand complex pre-historical interactions, it was cultural anthropologists who provided the theoretical depth to this term. It is not simply a state of messiness or random association, but has its logic and capacity to shape and create social actions and knowledge in a dynamic structure. There are generally two different ways to talk about “entanglement,” which are not entirely mutually exclusive. The first one is a view that sees the co-constitution and commutability of human, non-human life forms and objects. Although not using “entanglement” directly, such a perspective can be traced back to Gregory Bateson’s model of the constant flow of feedbacks between human, animals, and plants which produces an ecological network. Based on studies on a wide range of topics including ritual performances, mental illness, and environmental sustainability, he recognized that not all feedbacks are benign and could come in the forms of threats, competition, and contradiction, but in the long run they are generally able to be balanced out thus resulting in a flexible and adaptable system of communication, that is, a “complicated, living, struggling,

cooperating *tangle* like what you'll find on any mountainside with trees, various plants and animals and live there – in fact, an ecology” (Bateson 1991:265, *italic mine*).

Later on, more detailed ethnographic studies began to focus on the mutual entanglement and interdependence between human and things that made such a multi-subject communication possible. Human rely on things to express identities, create relationships and reproduce selves. Things also depend on human action to flow and would take on life of their own to grow, transform, and affect people (Hodder 2011). Non-human organisms are also an active part of a de-centered, post-human network of interaction that creates different imaginations and socio-political meanings (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Odgen et al. 2013; Tsing 2010). These entanglements can open up new possibilities and strategies in the bio-social world. For example, in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the idea that certain wealth items (e.g. pearl shells, pigs) have symbolic equivalence and exchangeability with human life is vital to the tribal peace-making processes (Strathern and Stewart 2012:190). In the Everglades of Florida, local hunters and alligators collectively created a mobile landscape that refused to be subjugated by national and global political economy (Odgen 2011). Finally, this idea of entanglement also serves as a critical key to understand health and environment. As noted by Nading (2013), public health policies tend to see disease as located in a bounded stable domain and needed to be removed to keep the environment healthy. In other words, health is the result of a disentanglement of people, things, vectors, and pathogens. However, such a view is different from the local female health workers searching for mosquitos breeding spots in a low-income neighborhood in Nicaragua. Although their objective was to prevent the outbreak of dengue, they recognized the entanglement of insects, people, houses, dogs, and fruits in an urban landscape as they navigated through the “dirty” neighborhoods. They developed such an appreciation of this ecology of

beings that they saw mosquitos as “single mothers” sharing a space with them and that they could only be managed, not eliminated. In this realization, they freed themselves from the disciplining constraints of bio-governance. As concluded by Nading, “To live a healthful life was not to order the world, but to be entangled well within it” (Nading 2012:585).

The second view of “entanglement” examines the complexity of power, discourses, and histories embedded under the façade of stable clear-cut domains, like “indigeneity,” “resistance,” or “modernity.” One of the better known examples given by Nicholas Thomas to illustrate his idea of “entangled objects” was the indigenous valuable *tabua* (whale’s tooth) in Fiji. Widely used in traditional ceremonial exchanges, *tabua* nevertheless reached its culmination during early 19th century when Fiji was contacted by white whalers and traders who brought large quantities of *tabua* to deal with local chiefs. The intensive interactions with the Tongans from the 18th century also contributed to the production and development of its value (Thomas 1991:80). Thomas’s main goal was not simply to destabilize “a timeless indigenous customary order,” nor was he completely rejecting the credibility of indigenous cultural logic. Rather, he was stressing the remarkable capacity of a “Fijian system of exchange” that could actively absorb trading relations and imports and convert a wide range of services, valuables, and people into an open-ended circulation (pp.118-119). This significance of movement within entanglement is meaningful. Using a similar metaphor “interwoven paths,” Ryle (2010:72) explored the dynamic engagements between *vanua* and Christianity in Fiji. *Sala* (social path) in Fijian is an important image which suggests that social value is sustained through the connection of different groups. Here Ryle used *na sala ni ibe* “path of mats,” a style of mat-weaving, to describe a “point of convergence” of past, present, and future social relations (p.84). She observed that in different ritual settings, this convergence is worked out differently. For example,

in Methodist village funerals, the concerns of *vanua* and material exchanges seem to be the strongest focus, while in Catholic healing masses, although similar to Fijian traditional reconciliation rites, the relationship between individuals and God is firmly anchored.

As we can see, it is due to the mobility and open-endedness within entanglement that allows different possibilities and articulations to be created. “Entanglement” thus can be employed as a strategy or imagination for a community to position themselves in the face of imposing powers and ideologies. In her study on the Aruese islanders of Eastern Indonesia, Spyer (2000) argued that the involvement with global mercantile trade in the 19th century had created a sense of entangled and ambiguous past that made them question any stable categories of “inside” and “outside,” “here” and “there,” “us” and “them,” as they encountered the projects of modernity set forth by Dutch colonialism and intensified by the Indonesian state. Similarly, in his research of the West Papua independence movement, Kirksey (2012) situated “entanglement” as a creative strategy, but also a state of stalemate. Using the image of banyan trees, a powerful Indonesian symbol, he explained how a charismatic West Papuan leader of independence was able to rise to prominence while keeping close ties with the Indonesian government. His strategy was like a banyan, encircling host trees yet maintaining definitive roots and structures. Nonetheless, while new possibilities and connections were able to emerge, the independence movement was stuck in a knotted entanglement at the same time. This image reflects how the West Papuans were caught in an entanglement with the Indonesian reform movement, government security forces, and global capitalists, in which opportunities for collaboration and mutual exploitation exist simultaneously (Kirksey 2012:90). Both studies had pointed out the inadequateness of using “resistance” to categorize the complex interactions between indigenous movements and the more powerful political entities, as well as the

ambiguity, contradiction, and emergent possibilities that would appear once entanglement is set in motion.

2.3.2 Towards an “Entangled Environment”

We have discussed at length about the different theorizations of “entanglement,” but what can they inform us about the “entangled environment” proposed in this dissertation? Interestingly, it should be noted that the term “entanglement” was first used in an entirely unrelated field, quantum physics. To put a complex phenomenon in short, in quantum physics “entanglement” describes a curious state in which the properties of two entities (particles or photons) are intrinsically linked together after they enter into a temporary physical interaction. The state of one entity thus becomes dependent on the other, no matter how spatially separated they are afterwards. For example, when a pair of electrons is emitted from the same source and then moved to separate distant locations, as one is observed demonstrating a spin-up movement, the other would instantly settle into the opposite state (spin-down). In her pioneering work reflecting on entanglement and quantum physics, feminist theorist Karen Barad (2007) argued that things are inherently entangled and it is the act of scientific observation that makes a “cut” and creates the illusion of independent entities. She rejected the idea that “the world is composed of individuals and that each individuals has its own roster of nonrelational properties” (Barad 2007:333). Rather, things must emerge from the state of entanglement through a process she coined “intra-action” (as opposed to “interaction” which presupposes the existence of separate subjects and agencies at work) which makes the boundaries and properties of its components become determinate and meaningful. Moreover, in each intra-action the entanglement also

changes, thereby rejecting the absolute sense of any concept or category. Barad's main point was that there are no preconceived, stable entities of "human," "culture," or "nature." They are co-produced from the ongoing, open-ended entanglements and their subsequent break-downs (Barad 2007:168; cf. Casey 1996:36).

Barad's insight echoed my positioning of *vanua* as an "entangled environment with motion" in which domains of "inside," "outside," "foreign," and "indigenous" are not pre-determined, but continually being remade through each ritual practice, each act of inclusion or exclusion. In Tim Ingold's intellectual quest for a better understanding of "environment" that is able to hold all life forms accountable, he introduced the idea of "fluid space" (Ingold 2011:86). He explained that in a fluid space, there are no well-defined objects or entities, but rather substances that flow, mix, and mutate, sometimes congealing into more or less ephemeral forms that can nevertheless dissolve or re-form without breach of continuity. Using the metaphor of "lines," he stressed the growth of things through the unbounded lines of flight. It is precisely due to their ability to grow, move, and expand that they are able to create a domain of entanglement where things are always "becoming," rather than simply "being" in the world. But what makes this an "environment," rather than "messiness" or "chaos"? This is where ritual or other cultural/material practices like cultivation come into play. These are attempts to establish any sense of order, however temporary it may be. At the same time, they also set the entanglement in motion and create new entanglements, new possibilities, and redefined categories.

To illustrate my point, allow me to provide a fieldwork anecdote. In my most recent fieldtrip in November 2012 as I entered Waitabu, I did not perform the *i-sevusevu* ceremony as I had in each and every time before. This ceremony is a customary requirement for visitors to present a bundle of dried kava roots, known as *i-sevusevu*, to the chief to seek permission to

proceed to the community. However, here the chief is representing the *vanua* which is where the kava is actually directed to (see analysis in chapter 3). In essence, the *i-sevusevu* is a request for the *vanua*'s approval and protection (Katz 1993:47). The reason I did not perform this ritual was because no one from the village asked me to do so upon my arrival, which I assumed was due to my long term relationship with Waitabu and that I was no longer considered an "outsider." In the middle of my stay I caught the flu and became very ill. It lasted quite a while and I was not fully recovered towards my departure. The day before I left, my Fijian father Mika grabbed me aside and told me in a serious tone, "If you still feel ill when you're back in the U.S., give us a call and we will do the *i-sevusevu* here for you." I suddenly had a revelation about two things: First, even though never expressed, my family was well aware that I did not perform the *i-sevusevu* to the *vanua* and it was believed that this was the source of my illness. Second, it was surprising to know that an *i-sevusevu* can be performed without the person physically being in the *vanua*, and that it can affect the state of that person from afar. In other words, Waitabu and I were entangled like the two electrons mentioned earlier whose linkage remained active beyond spatial boundaries. My own category in the *vanua* was also growing and changing with no specific direction and being remade and redefined through ritual moments.

Similar to my fluid presence in Waitabu, development projects and the package of knowledge, technology, personnel, and values brought with them were also entangled with Waitabu as they gained a foothold in the environment (cf. Croll and Parkin 1992:31). The domains they occupied were never fixed, but shifting and evolving as they encountered other integral parts of the *vanua*: the ancestral landscape, the local cosmology, the regional political-economic histories, and the colonial legacies. They could be indigenous and foreign, old and new at the same time, while rootedness and mobility were also perpetually negotiated. These

conflictive aspects in the environment are not necessarily contradictions, but could be viewed as creative collaborations in the face of imposing projects of modernity. For example, in Tanna Island, Vanuatu, the identity of local communities is founded on two seemingly opposing concepts: man as tree that stays fixed to a place; community as canoe that moves in a world of sea. Through a historical investigation of the sacred landscape of Tanna, cultural geographer Bonnemaïson (1994) demonstrated that these two metaphorical images create a flexible spatial network that is able to accommodate the survival and reproduction of Tannese identity and reorient itself in the midst of the nation-building project of Vanuatu. As emphasized by the studies of entanglement, these strategies blurred the line between resistance and assimilation while keeping the dignity of the local community.

The positioning of this framework is to bridge together two anthropological theoretical camps of the environment. The first one can be generally called “sentient ecology” which stresses the emotions, senses, and knowledge that humans are able to perceive in their embodied interactions with the landscape and the animals, plants, even spirits dwelling within (Ingold 2000:25). In other words, the environment is able to “speak back.” Collectively this conversation constructs a “place” that is felt, imagined, remembered, and contested in different meaningful ways by the human agents (Feld and Basso 1996). The second one is the long-established “political ecology” line of thoughts which treats the place as a site of symbolic and material power struggle in which “nature” is constantly produced and reshaped, and the human-environment relationship is altered (Biersack 2006:4-5). Both of these positions are in contrast to a conventional epistemological tradition developed from Europe that separates environment and human (Morphy and Flint 2000:4), as well as a common scheme that turns the environment into an abstract nature that transcends particular places (Carrier 2004:5-6). The latter is especially

salient in discourses of environmentalism or global capitalist expansion which gazes the environment as a space that needs to be protected, managed, or appropriated, while notions of “biodiversity” and “sustainable development” are created along the way. Opposing these strategies of abstraction and universalization, both “sentient ecology” and “political ecology” emphasize on the complex and diverse engagements taking place in different environmental settings, no matter how minute, quiet, or pristine they may appear (e.g. water, lawn, flower, etc., cf. Hornborg, Clark, and Hermele 2012).

However, as Carrier warned (2004:25), the focus on attacking the global may run the risk of constructing an abstract “local.” It should be recognized that locality is always situated in broader contexts and is also multi-faceted. This criticism is often directed towards both theoretical camps, which generally goes like this: “Sentient ecology” fails to deal with change, exclusion, and unequal power relations, while “political ecology” misses the resilience of local agencies and cultural particularities. Both camps nevertheless have come a long way and have repositioned themselves in response to such critiques. For example, as a precursor of the anthropological study of place, Rodman (1992) had already proposed a focus on the multilocality and multivocality of place which allowed her to consider the impacts of capitalism when analyzing the spirits and ancestors lingering in the land and the confrontations during funeral exchanges. In the edited volume *Senses of Place*, while establishing a theoretical orientation of how place can be perceived by a wide range of phenomenological senses, notions of marginality (Stewart 2006) and contestation (Kahn 2006) expressed in the landscape are also addressed. Even Roy Rappaport’s equilibrium view of the environment which is regulated by rituals and explained in religious terms by the locals could provide clues to discuss the unequal access to resources in the community (Lees 2001). On the other hand for political ecology, it is

argued that concepts of personhood or cosmology can provide much analytical power to the issues of environmental change and development (Biersack 1999; Hornborg 1998; Kirsch 2006; Robbins 2006; West 2005). A paradigm of such can be found in the study of the Duna mythical and ritual complex in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea by Stewart and Strathern (2002). In the view of the local people, the Duna landscape is infused with various kinds of male and female, human and non-human spirits who are able to cause sickness, lack of growth and fertility, and other signs of degeneration. Ritual sacrifices called *rindi kiniya* (literally, straightening the ground) are required to bring order to the environment and rid of threats. This structure of cosmos is not static, but has always been subject to challenge in response to pre-colonial contacts, introduction of Christianity, and policies of the colonial government. In the late 1990s when facing a series of environmental crises such as drought, forest fires, oil drilling, and river pollution by mining companies, the Duna people were observed to be relying on mythical narratives of the environment and revitalizing rituals to cope with their current situation. For example, the oil drawn out was equated to the “grease” of the dead which was believed to affect the land’s fertility. This reimagination of the landscape was not only directed to the outside forces (e.g. the mining company), but also an attempt to find their own self-worth and self-identity in a damaged world. It is interesting to note that in these indigenous efforts of creative resilience, categories of inside and outside were also intertwined: Desires for monetary compensation merged with a reawakened interest in the ritual significance of places, while the reassertion of cultural values came along with influxes of money, alcohol consumption, and sexual conflicts (Stewart and Strathern 2002:148-149).

When describing the Duna ritual system as “*open-ended* and *patchy*, allowing for continuous accretions and displacements without any specific choices to definitively abandon

one set of practices or stories in favor of another” (p.175, *italic mine*), Stewart and Strathern may as well be talking about the framework of “entangled environment” positioned in this dissertation. Like the Duna people, Fijians also understand society, selves, changes, and histories through their environment, which they called *vanua*. As remarked by Toren, the Fijian ideas of the world are “as much visceral as intellectual,” which are “directly derived from seeing, hearing, touching, and smelling the land and consuming its products” (Toren 1995:164). Various studies have shown how indigenous Fijians engage in different sensory practices with the landscape and among themselves, and how a wide range of senses are able to be perceived, including direction, empowerment, as well as fear, hope, love, and curse (Beer 2007:191; Gregory 2011:189; Kuhlken 1999; Miyazaki 2004; Ryle 2010:86; Tomlinson 2002, 2004; Toren 2003:719). Again, like the cosmological environment of Duna, the *vanua* is also permeated by different historical/mythical human and non-human agencies, as well as divergent socio-political and biological processes. Therefore, the Fijian sentient environment is not of a singular unchanging cultural order, but is as exposed as the physical environment to agencies from diverse sources. For example, the theological discourses of Methodism and the dispossession of land have both contributed to the Fijian re-imagination of the environment and give form to particular emotions and experiences. On the other hand, since the environment is their most immediate and intimate schema to assess the world and their current situation, any introduced idea cannot be enacted without being mediated through this framework. For instance, as I will elaborate later in this dissertation, Waitabu villagers assess the righteousness and success of a project by reading signs of the environment, rather than solely on scientific reports. These complex entanglements have made the environment dynamic and meaningful yet at times messy and dangerous, requiring the regular practice of ritualistic activities to provide a sense of order. Using another metaphor

applied by Ingold, the stability that ensued does not create a bounded environment, but an entity that always “leaks” (Ingold 2011:86). Leakages imply movements and possibilities as ideas and actors flow in and out through multiple pathways. This is similar to the image given earlier of twisting a bundle of straws through which parts of the content are being molded, broken, or fallen out, without specific direction.

The framework of “entangled environment” therefore acknowledges both the particular sensuous qualities in a place stressed by “sentient ecology” and the discursive practices of nature-making and resource-grabbing focused by “political ecology.” At the same time it recognizes the *a priori* condition of entanglement in the space which has the potential to generate new meanings and categories. This ontological positioning is significant because it avoids making the intellectual endeavors of “sentient ecology” and “political ecology” as a chicken-and-egg question, that is, whether the outside forces of capitalism or colonialism are always mediated through a pre-existing indigenous view of environment, or this indigenous system was already shaped by pre-capitalist and pre-colonial agencies of change. As mentioned earlier, the domains of inside and outside, indigenous and foreign are fluid and the dialectical relationship of the two opposing categories is expressed differently in each re-formation of the environment. In this dissertation, by analyzing two cases of seemingly “foreign” projects: marine conservation and cash-cropping, as well as the knowledge and ideologies that they intend to introduce to Waitabu, I will show that their enactments in the *vanua* have evoked various sets of categories already entangled in the social and physical landscape and further created diverse pathways of fulfillment in which different parts of the whole are negotiated, emphasized, or excluded. Moreover, movements and ritualistic practices are important in these engagements for they set the environment in motion which allows these developments to be played out. The

environment of Waitabu is thus not reduced to random biological processes, nor a static indigenous value system, but constituted of growing and interacting domains, both indigenous and foreign, of which the articulations have produced new possibilities for Waitabu villagers in this globalized world.

3.0 INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES AND HISTORIES WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF WAITABU, BOUMA, AND TAVEUNI

*Vei vale era mai tuvani vakamatau
E na loma ni vanua vakaturaga ko Nasau
Na mataqali dina e rua e rau veicurumaki
Ko Vunvesi kei Waisoki e rau vei lasamaki*

Houses arranged neatly
On the land sits the chief Nasau
Entered the two lineages
Vunvesi and Waisoki,
leading a pleasant life

*Au vakamoce yani ki Nasau raraba
Na noqu vakayatuyatu me mai tini mada
E loloma tu yani na miramira ni vatuloa
Na i-talanoa ni noqu koro au kerea moni rogoca*

I bid farewell to these fields of Nasau
Leaving with ten lines of my song
My love falls gently on the black stone
Please listen to the story of my village

“*Sere Kei Waitabu*” (Song of Waitabu) – Petero Verekula

There is a small musical band in Waitabu, the most talented in the region of Bouma many have argued. It consists of several adult male members with two guitars and sometimes a three-string ukulele. Other than providing the instrumental background for the Church choir, they usually perform at nighttime kava-drinking sessions with friends and relatives or at village functions for tourists. The genre they sing is called *sigidrigi*, derived from the English words “sing-drink” (Cattermole 2011a, 2011b). Although the tunes are very diverse, including covers of Western songs and original compositions in Fijian, the melody is generally mellow and soothing, reflecting the light mood at the venue. One night in late November 2012 when I was staying in Waitabu, there was a family gathering at the house next door. The house belongs to two

brothers, Tino and Kobo, who are the leaders of the band. I had heard them perform in numerous occasions and was quite familiar with their repertoire. That night one of their brothers living in Vuna came back to the village to visit them. As usual, kava was served and guitars were brought out to entertain the guests. By that time I was lying on my bed ready to sleep, accompanied by blurred voices and sounds emanating from the party. My brother Pate, lying in the room next to me, and by room I mean spaces divided by a cloth, suddenly asked “Are you listening to the lyrics?” My Fijian wasn’t good enough to pick up the exact words coming from afar and I had assumed that they were performing their usual routines, so I asked him back “What are they singing?” “It’s a song about Waitabu, and our ‘identity.’” Pate was 18 and was one of the few youngsters in Waitabu studying in secondary school on the island. We always conversed in English and I had witnessed his vocabulary grow since we first met in 2007, but hearing him drop an academic term like “identity” was something special. Now that he aroused my attention, I began to listen closely to the lyrics. Sadly, the only thing I caught was the very last sentence “*Na i-talanoa ni noqu koro au kerea moni rogoca*” (Please listen to the story of my village) as the song came to an end. The next morning I immediately went to the answer to most of my field questions, my father Mika, who then told me that the song that I heard last night was the new version of an old village tune “Song of Waitabu” composed by Pete, the eldest brother of Tino and Kobo, who is now residing in the capital Suva as a school teacher.

The song consists of four stanzas and was written in the official Bauan Fijian, instead of the local Bouma dialect. Local natural scenery and cultural landscapes were frequently featured, such as coconuts, village houses, and the sacred land of Nasau. One sentence in the song that has particular local significance was “*na miramira ni vatuloa*” (falls gently on the black stone). On the surface it appeared to be a metaphor for the love and affection (*loloma*) towards the

community, but if one had been to Waitabu one would know that *vatuloa* “black stone” is an actual place in the village. Due to the volcanic eruptions that formed the island, Taveuni has many black volcanic scoria rocks spread along the coast. These stones are seen as possessions of the nearby community. In 2008 when the luxurious Laucala Island Resort was being built, the management sent workers to the coast of Vurevure Bay, north of Waitabu, to move some stones back to the resort as decorations. They were immediately stopped by a group of Waitabu villagers who asked them for compensation, to which the management eventually agreed. In Waitabu one can find piles of such stones sitting at a corner of the beach outside of the village. This is the place that villagers call Vatuloa. It has a steel pipe (used to be bamboo in the 80s) drawing water from the inland forest catchments. The water does not “fall gently” but instead splashes forcefully on the black stones of which the top had been turned into a flat surface. Although today there are also pipes connected to inside the village, the water from Vatuloa is always considered the freshest and healthiest. Many daily activities were taken there, including shower, laundry, or a quick clean-up for the fish catches (see figure 5). While there are many streams and rivers providing ample water supply for the communities of Taveuni, the secluded setting and proximity has made Vatuloa a unique locale for Waitabu people. In fact, the name of the band in Waitabu is exactly called “Miramira ni Vatuloa” named after this location (Cattermole 2009).



Figure 5. Vatuloa, the “black stone” of Waitabu.

Another place mentioned in the song is Nasau, which is not just the title of the village chief, but also the place name for a small hill at the roadside of Waitabu. It was where the ancestors of Waitabu, *kai lekutu* (the forest people), used to reside before they moved their settlement to the coast. Other than the old house foundations (*yavu*, see figure 6), the most visible remnant in the bushes on the hill top is the head-smashing stone (*vatu ni bokola*, see figure 7). *Bokola* means “cannibal victim” in Fijian. The captive’s head would be placed on the stone and smashed by a war club. Afterwards, the meat would be consumed (Waterhouse 1866:314). It is obvious that Nasau is a sacred site for Waitabu because of the association with their ancestral past. In the late 80s when the program of Bouma National Heritage Park (BNHP) was being planned, the possibility of having a forest hiking ecotourism project that led tourists to these historical sites was explored and Nasau was briefly surveyed by researchers. Unlike other sacred sites in Fiji where the lands are not walked upon or cultivated (Chapelle 1978:84), here abandoned taro patches scattered around the hill could easily be seen. Still, parents warn their children that the hilltop is cursed, and entering without permission would cause harm and illness.

The last significant activity that directly linked to Nasau recently was the funeral of the last Tui Nasau Iosefa Cokanacagi who passed away in January 2010. Rather than put at the communal burial ground in the village, his tomb was placed on Nasau, decorated with traditional cloth strips that made the whole setting visible down from the road. However, after Cyclone Tomas destroyed it in March 2010, it was never rebuilt.

The main point of this chapter can be explained in a simple logical equation. If we accept the premise of this dissertation that *vanua* is the environmental framework for Fijians, and that the Fijian tribal identities are very much grounded in their *vanua*, then the complexity and processuality of the environment would lead to a dynamic picture of histories and identities, even in a small locale like Waitabu. As I have discussed briefly above, both Vatuloa and Nasau are integral parts of the Waitabu identity but they have also demonstrated diverse sentiments emplaced in the environment. How then would these different biographies of places affect the construction of Waitabu's identity? As I explored deeper into the cultural landscapes of Waitabu, which were not just physically experienced in the daily life, but also featured in the myths and legends, I began to discover more "micro-identities" underneath the locality of Waitabu. The referent frameworks of *vanua* for Waitabu villagers were also constantly shifting depending on different circumstances, and the scales involved could be as small as a single sub-lineage *i-tokatoka*, or as big as the Bouma region or the island of Taveuni. This certainly has presented a different and more dynamic picture than the official stable pyramid-like structure of the indigenous Fijian socialities, which was already challenged by many research studies (Clammer 1973; Nayacakalou 1975; Sahlins 1962; Walter 1978a). In this chapter I base my investigation of identities on the entangled histories of the environment which saw different indigenous agencies and forces entering, moving, and leaving marks on the landscape, creating multiple *vanua*

identities nested within dominant ideologies of the island. On the other hand, the open-endedness of this cultural environment also needs to be mediated and stabilized. This is where landscape and rituals become important to recapture and recreate neo-identities. This complex process of identity-making which is very much rooted in the environment is a significant yet often neglected aspect as contemporary development projects are introduced into the community.



Figure 6. *Yavu*, the old house foundations of the ancient village site Nasau. It is the root for the Fijian social organization term *yavusa* (tribe).



Figure 7. *Vatu ni bokola*, the head-smashing stone in the ancient village site Nasau.

3.1 THE MAKING OF “FIJIAN” IDENTITY

The positioning of the Fijian people in the ethno-scape of the Pacific Islands has long puzzled early philologists and ethnologists traveling across the Pacific Ocean. In terms of physiology, their dark skins and frizzy hair make them closer to the Papuans and Melanesians towards west. On the other hand, their cultural traits such as the divine right of chieftainship align them closer with the Polynesian societies towards east. Their language, on the other hand, appears to be more ambiguous, with some arguing it as a Polynesian dialect, while others asserting a closer affinity with the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages (Morgan 1871:568). In his pioneering work that first brought forth the Melanesia/Polynesia/Micronesian division in 1832, French explorer J. S. C. Dumont d’Urville singled out Fiji in an attempt to explain its unique position:

Amongst the numerous varieties of the Melanesian race, I think that the inhabitants of Viti should rank highest. Indeed, despite their ferocity and their inclination to cannibalism, these natives have laws, arts, and are sometimes organised into nations. Some of them are very handsome. Their language is richer, clearer-toned and more regular than in the western islands, and their seafaring skills equal those of the men of the other race. We found amongst them individuals gifted with a degree of intelligence and judgement that was most remarkable for savages. However, they obviously owe these qualities to the proximity of the Tongan people and to their frequent contacts with the Polynesian race (Dumont d’Urville 2003[1832]:169-170).

Rather than seeing the characteristics of Fijians as simply the result of contact or borrowing from their Polynesian neighbors, the American philologist Horatio Hale who visited Fiji with the United States Exploring Expedition in 1840 proposed that the archipelago was settled by chiefly two waves of migration: First of the Papuan/Melanesian origin and later of Polynesian. Both groups had coexisted at Fiji for a period of time, with the latter eventually departed eastward under the aggression from the former, leaving some traits of mixture behind (Hale 1846:178).

With the data collected during the Percy Sladen Trust Expedition to Melanesia in 1908, W. H. R. Rivers later proposed an even more complex picture of the peopling of Fiji. He argued that Fiji was first occupied by an indigenous population whose society was based on dual organization with matrilineal descent, whom were then met by an immigrant group called the kava-people, and more recently the Polynesian influence. To Rivers, the remnants of matrilineal descent in Fiji put them closer with societies with similar features in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Rivers 1914:253).

Modern archaeological work was initiated in Vuda and Navatu on the western coast of Viti Levu in 1947 by Edward W. Gifford who confirmed that Fiji was first settled by people using a pottery decoration pattern (dentate-stamp) similar to that found in New Britain and in Tonga, which is later termed as the Lapita cultural complex. He also provided the first radiocarbon dating of Fiji which put the earliest human activity to almost 3,000 years ago (Gifford and Curtis 1951). The archaeological evidence from Western Polynesia suggested that most of the islands, if not all, in this region, including the Lau Group of Fiji were quickly occupied by the same cultural complex around the same time and remained in close communication. This region came to be theorized as the cradle of the Ancestral Polynesian Society (or Proto-Polynesians) from which the more culturally and linguistically homogenized Polynesians dispersed to the remaining islands in the Pacific (Irwin 1981; Kirch 1986).

This then begs the question of why Fijians came to be so different phenotypically and linguistically to the Polynesians. The linguistic study on the Fijian languages by Paul Geraghty demonstrated the regional dynamism after the initial landfall of the Lapita people. Arguing against the Proto-Central Pacific hypothesis that broke down into Proto-Polynesian and Proto-Fijian of which the latter went through further divergence in isolation, he proposed that these

Lapita settlers of Fiji spoke a homogenous language, but then a dialect chain developed within Fiji before the voyage to Western Polynesia. The region of Lau and northeastern Vanua Levu (possibly including Taveuni) became a group of communalects called Tokalau Fijian, of which the speakers went on to settle Tonga and other Western Polynesia islands and developed the Proto-Tokalau Polynesian languages. Due to the spatial barrier of open seas between Tonga and Fiji, they gradually became more distinct from the Proto-Tokalau Polynesian remained in eastern Fiji. At the same time, with the rise of the “prestige areas” in coastal southeastern Viti Levu, many linguistic innovations from the region were spread across Fiji (including the region of Tokalau Fijian), recreating a Proto-Fijian dialect chain that developed into the present-day Fijian languages. This was accompanied by a second migration from Island Melanesia into Fiji, causing Western Fijian to share more features with their Melanesian neighbors than Polynesian (Geraghty 1983:381-389). As a result, the vocabulary difference between Eastern and Western Fiji could be seen as diverse as that between English and German (Pawley 2007:17).

Recent archaeological studies had also yielded evidence, including the ceramic record, distribution of kava and obsidian, and introduction of rats, to support a continued post-Lapita interaction between Fiji and northern Vanuatu which might have contributed to the “Melanesianization” of Fijians, but the overall argument remained inconclusive (Addison and Matisoo-Smith 2010; Bedford and Spriggs 2008). Echoing this close tie between Fiji and Melanesia, Burley boldly proposed that the difference between Fijians and Polynesians could be explained by separate founder events in Fiji and Tonga which resulted in different spheres of interaction (Burley 2013). This view is founded on the hypothesis that Tonga was settled by a long-distance voyage directly from the heartland of Lapita cultural complex in Melanesia, which was termed leapfrog colonization (Sheppard 2011). Due to founder effect, the small population

that arrived in Tonga was genetically unrepresentative of the larger group in Melanesia and with continued endogamy and genetic drift they became the Proto-Polynesians. On the other hand, the settlers of Fiji maintained interaction with their homeland to the west, thus countered the founder effect and remained genetically closer to the Melanesians. Elsewhere, scholars argued that rather than focusing on the Melanesian interaction, closer attention should be put on the development of internal diversity inside Fiji due to the variation of environment and island topography (Clark and Anderson 2009).

If the prehistory of Fiji is so complex and diverse, how did the inhabitants on the 100 some islands maintain a collective identity of “Fijian-ness?” It should be noted that unlike other Pacific Island nations e.g. the Solomon Islands or Vanuatu whose sense of togetherness was constructed by colonial or post-colonial nationalistic projects, the Fiji Islands were already referred to as a single entity by the Tongans, as demonstrated by the various renditions of “Viti” documented by Captain James Cook during his sojourn in Tonga in July 1777. It is also clear from the early logs and ship journals, dating from the late 18th Century, that the inhabitants had conceived of themselves as *Kai Viti* (Men of Fiji) back then, as a separate layer of identity from their various *vanua* identities and affiliation with the large confederations (Roderick Ewins, pers. comm., 11/04/2009). In rebutting Thomas’s assertion that the Fijian custom of *kerekere* (begging or borrowing) was an objectification by the British rule after 1874, Sahlins provided evidence showing that as early as 1835, the characteristic phrase *kerekere vakaviti* (begging in the Fijian manner) was documented and transcribed as “Cery Cery Fuckabede” by an American clerk working on a trading vessel visiting southeastern Viti Levu (Sahlins 1993a). It was therefore argued that the “Fijian society” was not merely a colonial or Western substantivization, of which

the processes were analyzed by scholars like Thomas (Thomas 1992), but founded on the people's dynamic historical agency and cultural integrity.

Dumont D'Urville had offered some clues about how such indigenous agency in Fiji was manifested and operated. On May 25th 1827 during the Pacific voyage of *Astrolabe*, he met a Bauan high chief Ratu Tubuanakoro whose knowledge of the geography of Fiji was very impressed by the French captain. In the following days, Ratu Tubuanakoro provided a list of 63 inhabited islands with estimated populations (from the Yasawa Group of the west to Lau Group in the southeast), and accurately pointed their respective positions on the Krusenstern 1813 map of Fiji that the French was using (Sahlins 2004:52-53). Given that Bau was an established powerful chiefdom at the time, it is not surprising that its leaders would have the scope to comprehend a broad social sphere beyond its traditional territory. It also shows that before the British colonial codification of the Fijian tribal societies, Fijians themselves already had the capacity to conceive a world beyond individual *vanua*, as demonstrated by their knowledge of *tauvu* (same ancestral origin) relationships across different islands and places (Hocart 1913). As I would show later, it is because *vanua* is always open to visitors and movements that allowed Fijians to formulate multiple layers of *vanua* identities, which were in turn marked on their landscape.

3.2 IDENTITIES AND HISTORIES IN TAVEUNI

3.2.1 Prehistorical Movements

Situated east to the two big islands and west to the Lau Group of Fiji, Taveuni was a cultural medium between the Polynesian influences constantly pushing from Tonga, and the intra-archipelago connectivity spanning from the polities on the large islands. According to a common Fijian legend, the original inhabitants of the islands east to Viti Levu where the Lapita people first settled almost 3,000 years ago could be traced back to Verata, the earliest known regional polity of Fiji, located at the eastern coast of Viti Levu. The founders of Verata traveled from the mythical mountain range Nakauvadra in northern Viti Levu. On the journey they installed the first ancient leader of Verata, Rokomautu, and established the foundation of the Fijian tribal social structure which included the herald of the land (*matanivanua*), priests (*bete*), warriors (*bati*), carpenters (*mataisau*), fishermen (*gonedau*), and food preparers (*liga ni magiti*) (Tuwere 2002:23). Verata thus can be seen as an ideal state of Fijian affairs, whose reign was by right derived from the gods, not by might and conquest (Hocart 1952:62). The eldest son of Rokomautu was Buatavatava, who was a figure of cultural hero in many Fijian founding legends. He was expelled by his father for overstepping his authority and led an eastward migration that colonized much of Vanua Levu. Today many documented tribal genealogies acknowledged their ancestors as people who either traveled with Buatavatava or came via other waves of migration out of Verata. These founding narratives can be interpreted as the expansion of Verata's power which was based on a network of tributary relations built upon these migrations (Routledge 1985:38; Sayes 1984).

The autochthonic tribes on Taveuni also associate their ancestors with Verata and Nakauvadra, but as reflected in their founding legends, they were not directly involved in the hegemony of Verata. A pioneering archaeological excavation led by Everett Frost in 1968 on Taveuni estimated that the earliest human activities on the island can be traced back to 2050 ± 150 yrs. B.P. on the Navolivoli cone of the southern tip (Frost 1974:54). In these early sites of Taveuni, Frost excavated many carved paddle-impressed sherds, but no Lapita pottery was found. This paddle-impressing technique was associated with a post-Lapita ceramic phase called Navatu found throughout the Fiji Islands, but mainly in Viti Levu. Some had suggested that the Navatu phase was generated from external migration from Island Melanesia which came into contact with an existing indigenous Fijian Plainware phase that had a closer affinity to the late-Lapita pottery (Burley 2005; Burley and Edinborough 2014), while others argued that this transition reflected internal archipelago social processes (Clark 2009). A later study by Cronin and Neall found a slightly earlier dating of 2180 ± 70 yrs. B.P. in Waidaku, southern Taveuni, which also yielded sherds with similar paddle-impressed motifs. They further suggested that the livelihood of the early inhabitants was disrupted by the volcanic eruptions on the island, which may have caused the island to be completely abandoned between 300 and 1100 A.D. The thick lavas and tephra falls may also have buried the evidence of earlier settlements of the Lapita period, which could explain why the earliest settlement date on Taveuni was 600 years later than nearby islands in Fiji (Cronin and Neall 2000).

The most significant result from Frost's findings was the remains of many hill fortifications scattered on the island. His data suggested that these forts were being built between approximately 1200 and 1400 A.D. More importantly, a new style of ceramics was found with these forts which was marked by incised, applique, tool-impressed and -modeled motifs. This

was followed by a significant decline of the earlier paddle-impressed decorated pottery towards 1800 A.D. Frost concluded that a foreign migrant group using this new style of pottery came into Taveuni around 1100 A.D. and clashed with the indigenous populations, which resulted in the construction of hill fortifications for defensive purposes. Moreover, while ceramic evidence suggested that the indigenous populations were dominated, their traditions were not completely replaced by the invaders. The two may even have coexisted on the island for a long period of time (Frost 1974:120). It should also be noted that by around 1000 A.D. the period of most productive and widespread volcanism during human occupation on Taveuni had ended (Cronin and Neall 2000), which would have created a more inhabitable environment for population movement.

Frost's timeframe for the establishment of these hill fortifications on Taveuni matches what archaeologists working in the Pacific basin termed the "A.D. 1300 Event" which served as a watershed between the Medieval Warm Period (700 – 1250 A.D.) and the Little Ice Age (1350 – 1800 A.D.) (Nunn 2000,2007; Nunn and Britton 2001). Specifically, around the period of 1250 – 1350 A.D. there was a rapid climate-driven sea-level fall of 70-80 cm which created a food crisis for coastal dwellers throughout tropical Pacific Islands and led to conflict and the abandonment of open coastal settlements in favor of those in more defensible locations (Nunn 2012). This period of time thus marked the beginning of wholesale movement of people and widespread warfare in Fiji which continued into the 19th century, well-documented by Western missionaries and other visitors (Nunn et al. 2007). Irrigated agricultural terraces also arose in these remote locations, sustaining this regional isolationism (Kuhlken 1999). Other evidence suggested that between 1600 and 1700 A.D. fortifications began to emerge on the valley floors and along the coast, indicating an increase in interaction and a renewed focus on agriculture

(Kumar et al. 2006). These environmental factors, including the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) related droughts and floods, also contributed to the development of social integration and complexity in Fiji (Field 2004), producing a patchwork picture of Fijian territorial descent groups and land tenure system that confounded the colonial officials in the 19th century (Field 2005).

3.2.2 Early Politics

There was a common misconception regarding the emergence of large kingdoms (*matanitu*) in Fiji that they were aided by the advent of Europeans and the introduced firearms and mercenaries in the beginning of the 19th century (Thomas 1991:114). This view was later challenged by scholarships on early political clashes of Fiji which reconstructed a picture of powerful polities with wide spheres of influence long before Western contact (Routledge 1985; Sahlins 1993b; Sayes 1982, 1984). One of such polities was Cakaudrove which was established by the *i-Sokula* people in southeastern Vanua Levu in the middle of the 18th century. In May 1777 when Captain Cook was in Nomuka, a small isle of the Tongan Islands, his astronomer William Bayly was given a clear description of Taveuni and the name of the paramount chief of Cakaudrove, Tui Cakau, by the Tongans from Vava'u (Kirch 1984:238-239).⁸ If this piece of information is correct, then the Tui Cakau that the Tongans knew should have been either Ro

⁸ Kirch did not provide specific citation for William Bayly's account, which was not included in the Journals of Captain James Cook edited by J. C. Beaglehole. It should be in either "*Discovery: Log kept by William Bayly, astronomer. Surveying and discovery, Pacific Islands, and west coast of North America*" (ADM 55/20, the National Archives, London) or "*Log and Journal of William Bayly*" (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington). Note that Taveuni was known as *Kofoona* by the Tongans, as shown in a list of place names compiled by Captain James Cook in Tonga. *Takounove* (Cakaudrove) was also in the list and was at times used to refer to the whole island of Vanua Levu (Im Thurn and Wharton 1922:20 n.2).

Kevu or Ra Tavo, the first two title holders of Tui Cakau installed by the natives of Cakaudrove around the same time. This also means that by that time the sphere of influence of Cakaudrove had already reached Taveuni and Tonga, even though its center of power did not move to Somosomo, Taveuni until early 19th century (Sayes 1982:94). The link between Taveuni and Tonga on the other hand was supported by the Tongan chief Finau's statement documented by Captain Cook, who mentioned that he was leaving for Vava'u to retrieve "red-feathered caps" (Cook in Beaglehole 1967:117) of which the feathers were presumably from the wild parrots traded from Taveuni (Geraghty 1993:364). When the German-born, British-trained botanist Berthold Seemann visited Taveuni in May 1860, he also noted that the scarlet feathers of the wild parrots on the island were valued highly by the Tongans and Samoans for their ornamental mats (Seemann 1862:19). Aside from the material exchanges, some Tongan immigrants were even internalized as kinship groups in the Fijian socio-political structure for their distinctive skills. As noted by Hocart, one of the *mataqali* of *yavusa* Cakaudrove in Somosomo is called Mataitoga, which literally means Tongan carpenters (Hocart 1952:90). Another *mataqali* Welitoa was founded by Tongan fishermen who were the keepers of the sea turtle stocks for Tui Cakau (Reid 1990). This shows that *vanua* in its structural sense is by no means a tight-knit social entity consists of kinship groups sharing genealogical connections, but a flexible association of different migrant people.

Before the rise of Cakaudrove in the late 18th century, Taveuni and its nearby islands already had several indigenous polities demonstrating different ranges of power configurations. For one there was Laucala, a small island state lying east of Taveuni. Their founders were said to be from a wave of eastward migration out of Verata. According to Hocart, the fame of Laucala was once like Great Britain to the world and even considered the leader of the Lau Group

(Hocart 1952:80). It had commanded lands from northern Lau all the way to southeastern Vanua Levu, but not their immediate neighbor Taveuni. Nevertheless, the Laucalans were much involved in the politics of Taveuni, even when their power waned and became subjugated to the reign of Cakaudrove in the early 19th century. In February 1840 the Methodist missionary John Hunt and Richard Lyth witnessed the outcome of a conflict between Laucala and Cakaudrove. One Somosomo man was allegedly killed by the Laucalans and in response the fourth Tui Cakau Ratu Yavala (reigning 1829-1845) had his warriors raided their village, killing 30 or so people. Some of their dead bodies, including that of their chief, were then dragged back to Somosomo and consumed (Thornley 2000:130). In 1862 the Laucalans through their Methodist connection with the Tongans were again involved in the war between the Tongan chief Ma'afu and Cakaudrove. Their fate took a worse turn as the island was sold to European planters later in the 19th century and the original inhabitants were displaced.

On the island of Taveuni, from his effort of analyzing oral histories in 1912, Hocart determined that the territories were divided between two ancient states: Vuna in the southwest and Wainikeli in the northeast (Hocart 1952:61). Vuna was by far the more dominant of the two. Its fame was so wide spread that in the 18th century Taveuni was known as “*Kofoona*” for the Tongans, a Tonganization of “Vuna” (Geraghty 1994:235). In the earliest documented encounter between Westerners and Taveuni natives which took place in January 1809,⁹ the Scottish captain Alexander Berry also used another rendition of Vuna “*Opuna*” to call the island (Im Thurn and Wharton 1922:lxv). The founding ancestor of Vuna, by the name of Vunivanua, was believed

⁹ In an entry in February 1844, the Methodist missionary Thomas Williams mentioned a conversation with a high chief in Bouma who used to reside in Somosomo about his first encounter with European vessels. He concluded that it should be about 30 years ago judging from the Fijians' acquaintance with tobacco (Williams in Henderson 1931b:237).

to come from Moturiki, an island in central Fiji with ties to Verata and the later powerful chiefdom Bau. The people of Lakeba in southern Lau were said to come from Vuna and through this connection the Vunan influence was able to reach the Lau Group (Hocart 1952:64). In a direct armed conflict Vuna defeated Laucala and eventually replaced its dominance in the region (Reid 1990:70; Sayes 1984). As the Cakaudrove chiefdom marched into Taveuni in the early 19th century, Vuna gradually became one of its subjects under the might of Tui Cakau. Marriage alliances were soon formed as Ratu Vakamino, the third Tui Cakau, married a woman from Vuna who gave birth to his two senior sons (Reid 1990:74). However, Vuna never stopped challenging Cakaudrove's supremacy in Taveuni. In July 1840, Somosomo was alarmed by a ceremonial offering taking place earlier by the Vuna chiefs to Cakobau, the son of the paramount chief of Bau which was a fierce political rival to Cakaudrove. Fearing the effect of this alliance and annoyed by the disobedience of Vuna, Tui Cakau Ratu Yavala told the missionary Richard Lyth that a war with Bau was threatening to happen (Crosby 1994; Thornley 2000:177 n.69). What ensued was nearly two months of minor skirmishes, ambushes, and kidnapping in Vuna from Somosomo warriors and their allies. In mid-October Tui Vuna sent one of his sons, accompanied by the chief of Bouma, to Somosomo to talk about surrender, which was vehemently refused.¹⁰ A full-scale assault of 1,000 some warriors commanded by Tuikilakila, the eldest son of Ratu Yavala, finally took place in late October 1840 which led to a siege of a fortified Vuna village. Tui Vuna was forced to surrender himself with the offering of his own daughter, and the village was plundered and burned down. Between 130 and 150 Vuna people were brought back to Somosomo as prisoners of war, but no cannibal feast was held, thanks to

¹⁰ 19th October 1840, Lyth Journal B533, MS-Lyth-II. In "Archives on Cannibalism (data and controversies)" provided Marshall Sahlins, CREDO (Centre de Recherches et de Documentation sur l'Océanie). <http://www.pacific-credo.fr/index.php?page=cannibalism-archives-en-ligne&hl=fr&action=detail&id_file=16>.

the intervention from the missionaries (Thornley 2000:145). Later in the same year an Englishman who visited Vuna saw the remaining natives and commented how dejected and submissive they seemed after the debacle (Erskine 1853:421-22).

As for Wainikeli, it is said that “[the] people do not come from elsewhere. They always were in Taveuni” (Hocart 1952:69). This statement reflected their indigeneity to Taveuni, while their founding legend still claimed a foreign figure, by the name of Rawaka, who came from the heartland of Cakaudrove in southeastern Vanua Levu. As a result, they were not considered conquered by Cakaudrove’s might, but shared an ancestral tie with them. However, another source stated that it was a powerful chiefdom until Tuikilakila waged a war against them and crushed their warriors (Henderson 1931b:234 n.16). According to a Vuna legend, the paramount chief of Wainikeli titled “Tuei” (or “Tuwei”) was derived from “Tui Wai,” an ancestral figure arriving at Taveuni with Vuna’s founders and went up north with his sons to establish their own settlement (Reid 1990:69; Sayes 1984).

3.3 LANDSCAPE OF IDENTITIES AND HISTORIES IN BOUMA

In the scholarship of Taveuni’s early polities (Hocart 1952; Reid 1990; Sayes 1982, 1984), Bouma was sporadically mentioned and given no particular significance. Sayes remarked that Bouma was “a less powerful land” and had marriage alliance with Somosomo. It also had close ties with Vuna, which was monitored carefully by the Somosomo leadership (Sayes 1982:189-190). In Hocart’s investigation, Bouma was treated as a village, not a region, under Wainikeli’s authority (Hocart 1952:70). When the aforementioned botanist Seemann visited Taveuni in 1860

he noted that Bouma was among the principal towns of Taveuni, along with Somosomo, Vuna, Welagi (a village north to Somosomo), and Wainikeli (Seemann 1862:20). It should be stressed again that Bouma could be used to refer to the whole region including major villages of Waitabu, Vidawa, Korovou, and Lavena, or it could mean singularly the capital village of Bouma region, Korovou, where the paramount chief Vunisa sits.

Bouma nevertheless is not entirely invisible in historical documents. From the journals of the Methodist missionaries John Hunt, Richard Lyth, and Thomas Williams, it is clear that Bouma was rather active in the indigenous politics on the island in the 1840s. Serving as Tuikilakila's "principal fighting men" as noted by Lyth, the Bouma warriors had participated in the massacre of Laucala in February 1840 and the siege of Vuna in October 1840 and were frequently receiving cannibal corpses distributed from Somosomo – a sign that Bouma was the subject of Cakaudrove (Sahlins 1983). Another evidence of such a relationship was that before going to war against Vuna, about 250 Bouma and Wainikeli warriors were seen performing the *bolebole* war dance on the ceremonial ground at Somosomo, after which they presented themselves to Tui Cakau and *tabua* and food were given to them. The *bolebole* is a ceremonial boasting, usually performed by a subject people or allies who have been asked for assistance in war (Tippet 1973:72-73,75). However, their allegiance to Cakaudrove was not unquestionable, and the alliance needs to be constantly reaffirmed. One of the strategies often used was creating *vasu* (sacred maternal nephew) relationship, which is a Fijian custom that gives right to the nephew to utilize the resources of his maternal uncles' land. Such a relationship is achieved through marrying women from a territory that is intended to be controlled. For example, Tui Cakau Ratu Yavala had married three women from Bouma (Sayes 1982:142) and their sons were thus *vasu* to Bouma. At one point when Bouma was leaning towards siding with Vuna in their

revolt, one of these *vasu* by the name Dranidalo was sent to Bouma in July 1840 and successfully dissuaded them.¹¹

During such time Bouma was actually considered controlled by another *vasu* Lewenilovo, who had been using such support to challenge his half-brother Tuikilakila, the heir apparent to the seat of Tui Cakau.¹² He was permanently exiled to Bouma in late 1841 after committing adultery with one of Tuikilakila's wives. Fearing the wrath from Tuikilakila, the people of Bouma made a formal and extravagant ceremonial presentation at their *vanua* in December 1841 to ask for forgiveness on the behalf of Lewenilovo. According to an English journeyman who happened to be at the scene, not only Tui Cakau and Tuikilakila were present, but also people from Bau and the windward islands of Lakeba and Vanua Balavu. The total attendance was estimated to be around 5,000 people, while a great profusion of property including bundles of *masi* (bark-cloth) and *tabua* were given away, which surely had depleted Bouma's resources and Lewenilovo's strength (Erskine 1853:443-444; Reid 1990:84; Sayes 1982:152-153).

As it turned out, this was not the last from Lewenilovo. Perhaps as a strategic move to challenge Somosomo or out of genuine curiosity, in 1842 he repeatedly approached Hunt for conversion to Christianity and in early 1844 a Tongan Wesleyan teacher¹³ was eventually sent to

¹¹ 28th July 1840, Lyth Journal B533, MS-Lyth-II. In "Archives on Cannibalism (data and controversies)" provided Marshall Sahlins, CREDO (Centre de Recherches et de Documentation sur l'Océanie).

<http://www.pacific-credo.fr/index.php?page=cannibalism-archives-en-ligne&hl=fr&action=detail&id_file=16>.

¹² Hunt observed that Lewenilovo "has as much power perhaps at Bouma as the king has at Somosomo" (Sahlins 2004:231 n.31). Elsewhere Williams also noted that "R.L.L. [short for Ratu Lewenilovo] is the greatest chief in the place [Bouma] by far; but Tui Bauma [sic], or Vu ni Sa is nominally so. Vu ni Sa would not venture to act contrary to the mind of R.L.L." (Williams in Henderson 1931b:214 n.107). However, it should also be noted that in a formal kava drinking session observed by Williams, Vunisa, or "Tui Bouma," was seen drinking the first cup before Lewenilovo, indicating his status by right was still recognized (p.242).

¹³ This Tongan teacher is Mosese Kaulamatoa (or Mosisi Kulamatua as appeared in Thomas Williams's journal). The exact location of his station in Bouma is unknown, but it is still remembered in Waitabu today that there once was a Methodist church at a place called Toketoke which is at the bus stop outside of the village. Mosese was evacuated in July 1845 due to rumors of war in Bouma (Thornley 2000:337). Later in 1871 a teacher was sent to

Bouma and stationed there (Thornley 2000:162,262). However, his sincerity and character were seriously questioned by the missionaries visiting Bouma and he was still spotted engaging in cannibalistic activities.¹⁴ In June 1845 he was implicated in a plot to kill Tuikilakila with a Bouma chief. The latter was then brought to Somosomo and executed in the most gruesome way while Lewenilovo had to take refuge in another village outside Bouma and ended his command in the region (Sayes 1982:154). Bouma still participated in other quests to regional supremacy thereafter, siding with various candidates, until the European planters swarmed in in the 1860s and the paramountcy of Tui Cakau was stabilized.

From these documentations it appears that Bouma was acting with autonomy from Wainikeli. Certainly it was under the sway of Somosomo leaders, but it by no means was a mere subject to the chiefdom of Cakaudrove, for it had demonstrated much flexibility in making associations with other *vanua*. As Reid cautioned, the use of such general terms like “subject” can be misleading because different *vanua* had its own relationship with the rulers of Somosomo governed by different circumstances (Reid 1990:84). Arriving at a similar conclusion that the words “subject” or “vassal” do not truly reflect the Fiji term *qali*, Hocart gave his famous observation that “[in] Fiji two contradictory statements are not necessarily inconsistent” (Hocart 1952:61). He was explaining the claim by the people of Vuna that they were not subject to Cakaudrove, yet admitted so to a degree. This was because Vuna was not a subject to Cakaudrove in the sense of Fiji’s ritual-political dualism, but a subject because defeated in war.

Bouma again as Methodism regained their foothold on the island, but now they had to compete with a well-established Catholic congregation (Thornley 2002:492).

¹⁴ 22nd February 1844, Lyth Journal B53x, MS-Lyth-II. In “Archives on Cannibalism (data and controversies)” provided Marshall Sahlins, CREDO (Centre de Recherches et de Documentation sur l’Océanie). <http://www.pacific-credo.fr/index.php?page=cannibalism-archives-en-ligne&hl=fr&action=detail&id_file=16>.

This reflects the excessive rise of powerful Fijian chiefdoms in the latter half of the 19th century, especially with the interference of foreign politics. As lamented by Hocart, “The two sides that used to face each other, equal except in precedence, have begun to break up into units which all face the chief, like planets round the sun” (p.58). This also reflects the current situation of Bouma, whose position was planted under Wainikeli and Cakaudrove in the neo-traditional Fijian tribal system.

3.3.1 The Making of Bouma

The official origin of Bouma was formally recorded in the *Ai Tukutuku Raraba* (statement of tribal history, cf. France 1969:10-14 for further discussion) of *Yavusa* Vidawa accumulated by the Native Lands Commission (NLC) in 1929. Denied access to this record which is now closely guarded at the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs with many restrictions, here I rely on two pieces of oral history collected during fieldwork, told by the leader of *i-Tokatoka* Matanaira of *Yavusa* Lekutu, Aisake Tale, and the herald (*matanivanua*) of *Yavusa* Vidawa, Sepo Rapuga. Both of them are recognized authorities for the history of Bouma and I had seen them sharing their knowledge in different occasions. Sake is a well-respected elder living in the village of Vidawa. He was a key figure in the establishment of Vidawa’s rainforest hike ecotourism project and spoke good English. I went to interview him in the beginning of my fieldwork in March 2010. By the time my command of the Bouma dialect was not advanced enough so the majority of the interview was taken in English. Below are the key segments of his narrative regarding the history of Bouma:

As I know, the story of our ancestors, they said that Taveuni was divided into only two parts. One belongs to Tui Vuna. One belongs to the Bouma people and

Tui Lekutu. If you go pass Waiyevo, you come to a place where the boat anchors ... They call that place Naiyalayala Estate. *i-Yalayala* means, that's a boundary for the Bouma people ... And from Naiyalayala Estate ... go south ... that belongs to the Vuna people and Tui Vuna ... I think they came together [Tui Vuna and Tui Lekutu] and divide the land.

The people of Lekutu they came from Nakauvadra ... That's where all the Fijians come and stay. Only one tribe, they live there. And then ... they wanted to move. They make their own tribe just to follow the one that they have in Nakauvadra. And the [leader] of Lekutu, Labalaba, says, we want to try to find a new place. So they come by *bilibili* [bamboo raft] and stay in Taveuni. They came with the people of Vuna. And then [they established] the same kind of tribe ... the chief, the clan of *bete*, *mataisau*, *gonedau* ... And then [there's] a lot of people in Bouma, so they have to divide.

Tui Nasau and Tui Lekutu, they always move together. The chief is Tui Lekutu, and the *sau* ... he protects Tui Lekutu. Where the enemies can come, that's where he [*sau*] stays, to protect the chief. The first place they lived is Naibili. Naibili is right in the creek of Somosomo, on top in the mountain, in the bush. They still have house mound there ... [Today near] Somosomo ... there's a small village there called Lamini. That's a part of the Bouma people, just to watch over the place. And then they move again to Burotu. Burotu belongs to the freehold now, but you can still see the house mound there. And they move move move ... until pass Waibula river, to Natinatina. [*Tinatina* means] mother of all the house mound around here.

And then they move from Natinatina to Navuga. They call it Naitagiyaga. To mark the village site they have *vuga* [tree]. Every tribe should have a tree. Before you enter Naitagiyaga, [you can see] *vuga* tree there. One on the right side and two on the left side. Tui Lekutu lived up there, Tui Nasau down here at the Nasau village. He stayed to watch the enemy down here. Nasau, that's where the chief lives ... with the old people. And the warriors live in Nakade.

Fijians were fighting before. They grew in number and started to scatter around. There were two wars that time. First war, they scattered from Nakauvadra. And some chiefs were trying to find new islands. They call that war *Valu ni Toa*, the rooster wars. And then another war [took place] after that in Lau. The first people who [left Lau and] came here [to Taveuni], they were the *mataisau* and *gonedau*. They have boat. When they see the war, they say, we don't want to fight. They come here and ask for land.

The chief of Lekutu and Nasau, they own the land, and they give this place, to [them]: "That's your land," almost 500 acres. And then they give the [title] too: "Stay here and be my chief." That's why [today] everybody listens to the chief: Vunisa.

The old village they were given [is called] Naituku ... That's given to them for protection in the war time. [From] Naituku you look down to the ocean, to the creek, there's a place they call it Nakoro. The real name of Nakoro is Koroiraqa. [It's an] old village in Bouma. You go there and you see all the big house mounds ... High house mounds. That means chief. Now it's a burial place (Aisake Tale, interview, 03/12/2010).

Before I go into the analysis of this narrative, I shall provide the account given by Sepo. Sepo told me that his father who held the same herald position before him was very familiar with the tribal legends but he wasn't interested in these things when he was young, thus the knowledge did not pass down to him. It was later in his life when he was more established that he had an epiphany one day and suddenly the past histories became clear to him, which he attributed as a gift (*i-solisoli*) from God. I take this revelation as a legitimization of his stories, through making the connection between *vanua* and Christianity. Below are the key segments of his narratives, which were originally recounted in the Bouma dialect:

On the island of Taveuni, all the people and their families can be traced back to that of Lutunasobasoba from Nakauvadra. His descendants were divided in Viseisei of Vuda Point [northwest Viti Levu]. "Viseisei" means dividing the land. Roko Mautu, son of Lutunasobasoba, brought people and settled at Tailevu [eastern Viti Levu]. There were two men staying at the same place. Their names are Labalaba and Waqanawanawa. Their original village was in Ra [northern Viti Levu], where they had the *vuga* tree. They then brought their people to Taveuni and settled at Somosomo. One day, Labalaba said let's survey this island. They found a place close to Wairiki to serve as a boundary. That place is called "Naiyalayala," which means "boundary of land."

The two then went back to Somosomo, up in the mountains. There they said that they should decide who should go up and who should go down because it's getting too crowded. That place is called "Naibili," which means "jostle." There's an old village site over there today, where the hydro-power project is going to be implemented. After that, Waqanawanawa told Labalaba that one of his men should go with him. The leader's name is Botowai. He then gave his magical power to them, the rain, which Labalaba accepted. Today if there is a gathering in Bouma, there will be rain. Labalaba then put some of his people at Naibili, and let Botowai lead those people. Waqanawanawa went on and put some of his people at Tavuki [and went to south]. They are the Vuna people.

Labalaba then established his settlement inside the forest, where he planted the *vuga* tree. That place is thus called Navuga. During that time, the Vunisa wasn't there yet, only Tui Lekutu the war chief [*vunivalu*]. When they were living up in the forest, another migrant group came. They were led by two men, Manasavalevu and Naulusole. They came searching for land all the way from Tonga, via Lau. They too were the descendants of Lutunasobasoba. They had settled at Nayau Island in the Lau Group. Now they came to the shore and temporarily settled near today's Korovou. They call this place Nayau. They then went on and passed today's Vidawa [along the coast], where they saw the point of today's Lavena. Naulusole told Manasavalevu that they should go there, to which Manasavalevu replied, "It's too far away!" The place is called "Naiyawa," which means "faraway." Close to today's Waitabu, suddenly heavy rain dropped. They moved to the shore where they found a place to cover their heads and take shelter. That place is called "Pulou," which means "covering up."

Labalaba saw them as he went down [from the mountain], and brought them back to Navuga. They stayed for a while but never stopped looking around for their own settlement. One day, Labalaba told them that let's walk around a little bit. During that time, there wasn't Lavena yet. When they passed Lavena, Naulusole told him that they went to Tonga to search for land but it was full there, so they went on searching again. That place is called "Taletoga," which means "again, Tonga." They then asked for land from Labalaba. When they went to a place close to today's Salialevu, Labalaba finally agreed. That place is called "Naio," which means "yes." That is the boundary for the Bouma people.

After that, they went back to Navuga. Labalaba told Naulusole, "When you go down to look for a place to stay, do not pass the boundaries." Naulusole then went to settle at today's Welagi ... Labalaba then told Manasavalevu, "Why don't you put your people at this lush forest land here?" Manasavalevu then stayed and assisted Labalaba with his leadership when there were too many troubles. By that time Labalaba was a dying old man. He told his three sons, Tuvatu, Yavoivoi, Kabukabuilekutu, and a daughter Adi Sova, "One day, you should give the leadership to Manasavalevu, because he had taken a lot of responsibilities." When Labalaba passed away, his eldest son Tuvatu took over the position, and established *Mataqali* Lekutu. He then moved the settlement to Vunisea. When Tuvatu passed away, he gave the position to Yavoivoi, who then moved to Naceva. At Naceva, he finally gave the position to Manasavalevu, who formally accepted the leadership in the way of the land and thus began the reign of Vunisa (Iosefo Rapuga, interview, 03/18/2011, my translation).

While Sake's narrative painted a dynamic picture of the making of Bouma, their ancestral linkage to Nakauvadra, and the relationship between the settlers and migrant groups of Taveuni,

Sepo's account provided specific personal names, titles, and place names now embedded in the landscape of Bouma. Both of their stories stressed that the Bouma people were the first settlers of Taveuni, or at least northern Taveuni, while the Vuna people's autochthonous status was also recognized. Elsewhere in their narratives which were not provided here, both of them asserted that the Wainikeli people and their paramount chief Tuei arrived later than the Bouma people. This is significant for Bouma because in the Austronesian founder ideology, a superior status is given to the original settlers (Bellwood 2006[1996]), thus making Bouma superior to Wainikeli. It should also be noted that the ancestral figure Waqanawanawa mentioned in Sepo's tale, who accompanied Bouma's ancestors to Taveuni, appeared quite different in the founding narratives of Vuna and Wainikeli. In Vuna's version, Waqanawanawa and Ului are Tui Wai's sons. They established their settlement at Wainikeli with their father and then went to search for their own land and eventually settled at Lakeba. After a quarrel with his brother Waqanawanawa returned to Vuna with his supporters and was installed as Tui Vuna by the native polity already established there. In Wainikeli, the legend of Tui Wai was not heard of, but the people recognized the return voyage of Waqanawanawa in which one of his followers went on to marry Tui Wainikeli's sister, and their son was later installed as the first Tuei. Waqanawanawa also appeared in the founding narratives of other windward islands in northern Lau including Laucala and was responsible for similar power takeovers of their native polities (Sayes 1984).

In the legend of Bouma, the theme of power takeover was also featured. As told by Sake, "stay here and be my chief," said the Lekutu people. The original settlers of Bouma were the Lekutu people led by the first Tui Lekutu, Labalaba, and his *sauturaga* (executive chief). The first place that they settled within the boundary of today's Bouma region was Natinatina. It is an old village site located at the inland mountains of the Vunivasa Estates, north to Waitabu. In his

excavations on Taveuni, Frost discovered a ring-ditch fortified site at that location with many carved paddle-impressed sherds unearthed inside. Compared with evidence elsewhere on the island, it was estimated that the site could have been occupied anywhere between 1100 A.D. and 1850 A.D. into the European contact period (Frost 1974:27). Following the legend, Tui Lekutu and his people then moved to Navuga while his *sauturaga* settled at a nearby strategic location called Nasau, apparently named after his title. The site of Navuga is located below the summit of Mt. Koroturaga, the highest mountain of northern Taveuni, now reachable by a trail from Vidawa. It was also excavated by Frost in 1968, where he found a sizable village site of 21 *yavu* (house foundations), 4 stone-faced terraces, and 1 cemetery. The discovered artifacts were of mixed and later origins, indicating that the site was occupied after initial European contact on the island. Using a report from the Fijian Land Claims Commission which stated that the parcels of land around today's Vunivasa were sold between 1863 and 1868, forcing the indigenous inhabitants (possibly occupants of Natinatina) to move, Frost concluded that Navuga was very likely to be settled after this movement which is around 1870 A.D. (Frost 1979:65). However, as told by Sake, it was when Tui Lekutu was stationed in Navuga that the new migrant group from Lau came and asked for land, to whom not only was land given, but also the chieftainship. The new chiefly title, Vunisa, and his power were recorded as early as December 1843 in the Methodist missionary Thomas Williams's journal entry (Henderson 1931b:214 n.107). This would put the settlement of Navuga much earlier than the mid-1850s. It could also mean that the dispersal of the people from Natinatina between 1863 and 1868 and the occupation of Navuga were two separate events.

The determination of exact dating nevertheless is not the focus of this discussion. Here we encounter a recurring theme in the Austronesian-speaking societies as well as other places in

the world which was elaborated by Sahlins as the “stranger-king” (Sahlins 1981). It revolves around the idea that the paramount chief or divine king is an immigrant foreigner who married the woman of the local tribe and begot the ruling bloodline. The mythical origin of Tui Cakau is a classic example. It is said that there was a youngster known as the *gone mai wai* (child from the sea) traveling from Ra/Verata. He came to Cakaudrove and married the daughter of the local chieftdom and had a set of twins, of which one appears as a shark and the other human. The shark became to be known as the fierce shark-god Dakuwaqa in Fiji, and his twin brother Ro Kevu was later installed as the first Tui Cakau by the natives of Cakaudrove (Reid 1990:71; Sayes 1982:43-44). For Sahlins, the act of taking the local woman, or devouring the local agricultural produce, is a key part of the establishment of the king’s sovereignty on the indigenous society. Through this act of consumption, the foreign king then entered into a risky dialogue with the native landowners and was symbolically put to death and eventually domesticated by the *vanua* into a local ruler. This *vanua* however is not an end product of this divine comedy, nor is it final and complete. As concluded by Sahlins in a further study of his famous thesis, the fundamental of the stranger-kingship is the affinal relationship stemmed from the union between the foreign chief and the local consanguine groups. The union offers a new path of “becoming” to the stable indigenous sociality that is forever “being” on the land (Sahlins 2008). We are therefore provided with a glimpse into the nature of *vanua*, which is always open-ended and had the capacity to be transformed. In his extensive reading of the Fijian *Ai Tukutuku Raraba*, France discovered that they are not the account of heroic deeds, but tales “of defeat as well as victory; of begging land from their conquerors as well as distributing it to the vanquished; of seeking as well as giving shelter” (France 1969:11). As a matter of fact, it appears that periods of calm and enduring settlement of land were rarely mentioned. According to France, out of a total of over

six hundreds of *Ai Tukutuku Raraba* recorded in Viti Levu and adjacent islands, only twenty-one were about a tribe occupying the site on which it was founded (p.13).

3.3.2 Mosaic Landscape

As demonstrated above, the making of *vanua* is complex and multivocal which always entails stories of movement and transformation. If *vanua* is the environment that Fijians live and experience, then we should be able to see these dynamic meanings reflected in the landscape, which is an embodiment of people's senses of place and time, through which they are able to make sense of their current situation (Bender 2002). The first obvious clue is the place names scattered on the landscape. Like "Nasau" and "Vatuloa" mentioned in the "Song of Waitabu," these place names not only evoke memories and sentiments, but also serve as coordinates to their past and origin. Introducing the notion of "topogeny," Fox argued that it indicates an ordered succession of places names, and the recitation of which is the same as the recitation of a genealogy (Fox 2006d[1997]:89). Often using a journey as metaphor, these place names and locations create a ritual/sacred space that can be traced and relived, as well as inform inhabitants about land ownership and resource management (Roseman 1998). Below in Table 2 is a list of place names and their etymologies mentioned in Sake's and Sepo's tales. It should be stressed that, as Fox cautioned, "Fictitious etymologies are also frequently devised and elaborated to support narrative claims about origin claims within this discourse" (Fox 2006c[1996]:5). The meanings of place names therefore are expected to be contested and reinvented, the same as landscape that can be built and reshaped. This list, of course, is just the tip of an iceberg of a plethora of place names known in Bouma today. On the *mataqali* boundary map created by the

NLC between 1934 and 1935, almost a hundred place names were marked along the coast and inside the mountain valleys in the region of Bouma. In Waitabu alone I had collected almost 40 place names. There are also many others that are used in everyday life but not recorded on any survey map. Moreover, new place names are still being created, especially in family farms. For example, the native catechist in Waitabu is known to give biblical names to his gardens.

These Bouman place names obviously do not all fit neatly into the indigenous stories or founding narratives. They certainly do not represent a clear directional succession either. The meanings of some of them are so archaic that local people don't even know their origins. The small list of place names provided below, however, gives us a platform to investigate how they work in the context of Bouma's identities and landscape. Before we begin, I shall present the earliest detailed observation of the places and landscape of Bouma by Thomas Williams in early February 1844. Located at the rugged eastern side of Taveuni facing continuous trade winds, Bouma was only reachable by sailing from Somosomo at the time, and was barely, if ever, visited by European traders and vessels. In his four-day sojourn at Bouma, Williams had a close encounter with the local people as well as the notorious Lewenilovo. He soon gave the very first account of the landscape of Bouma: "Bouma is divided into three parts by two mountain streams. The houses of which the town is composed are neat, and, for the most part, very clean in the interior" (Williams in Henderson 1931b:238). He then mentioned several affiliated villages in Bouma that he had either heard or personally visited. These places include: 1. Lewena, a village 4-mile away that he saw a messenger sent by Vunisa traveling to (p.239); 2. Nasea and Navatu, of which the former was known for producing scarlet feathers from wild parrots and traded to Tongans (p.240); 3. Gota, a land inhabited by strangers and chiefly fugitives from Vuna. He also mentioned the discovery of *yavu* over there (p.244); 4. Nasau, where he met an old man who

appeared to be the leader asking his people to go out and hear the teachings of Christianity, and told Williams that “[b]eg of our chiefs at Bouma to *lotu* that we may follow” (p.245). Of these places, Lewena should have been the present day Lavena, judging from the distance estimated by Thomas. Its description also matches the etymology provided by Sepo that “Lavena” denotes the last place to “lift up” (follow) the chief’s message (Iosefo Napuga, interview, 03/18/2011). Nasea and Navatu are tricky, but their inhabitants are very likely to have been the forefathers of today’s Vidawa who were still residing inside the mountain at the time. This belief is based on their connection to wild parrots and the similar historical place names “Vunisea” and “Navutu” recorded in Vidawa’s landscape today. Finally, there’s no question that Nasau is the same place where the forefathers of Waitabu came from. As for Gota, there is no clear clue for its exact location today, but the presence of strangers and fugitives is a further testimony of the inclusiveness of *vanua*.

Place name	Origin	Location on map
Naiyalayala	“boundary”	1
Naibili	“jostling”	2
Natinatina	“mother”	3
Navuga	“Springfire tree” (<i>Metrosideros collina</i>)	4
Nasau	“executive chief”	5
Naiyawa	“faraway”	6
Pulou	“cover up”	7
Taletoga	“again” and “Tonga”	8
Naio	“yes”	9
Waitabu	village from Lakeba, northern Lau	10
Vatuloa	place name from Lakeba, northern Lau	11
Nayau	island of northern Lau	12
Lavena	“lift up”	13
Tavuki	“roast” and “turn”	14

Table 2. List of place names and their origins as told in the legends of Bouma.

egg, or the separation of a primary couple – but once this unity is shattered, concern is with a multiplicity of entities” (Fox 2006a:231). In the founding narratives of Bouma, we see the splitting of groups and setting of boundaries, manifested in the place names of Naibili and Naiyalayala. We also have place names that anchor nested identities under Bouma, such as Navuga and Nasau, as well as signify the diverse origins from Lau and Tonga, such as Taletoga, Waitabu, Vatuloa, and Nayau.¹⁵ “Pulou” is also a very salient marker because of its phoneme /p/ which standard Fijian lacks. It is actually a Lauan or Tongan word (Hazlewood 1850:181; Churchward 1959:421) that could not be found in standard Fijian dictionaries today. “Naio” is also very interesting because it penetrates into the heartland of Vuna. According to Reid, it is actually the name of the fortified village that was under attack by the Somosomo army in 1840 and was later destroyed (Reid 1990:83). However, the location of this fortified village of Vuna should be at the western corner of Vuna, documented as “Buia” by Wilkes (1844:315), rather than at the eastern side close to Salialevu as Sepo narrated. Either way, its linkage to Bouma in the legend is intended to demonstrate the range of mobility in a glorified past when the Bouma ancestors controlled more than half of the island. Finally, the claimed etymology of Tavuki village (*tavu* “roast” and *vuki* “turn”) represents an effort to insert the significance of Bouma into the dominant historical narrative of Cakaudrove. In 1862 a group of Tongan army led by the Tongan warrior Wainiqolo invaded Taveuni to challenge Tui Cakau and the Cakaudrove chiefdom. At the famous battle of Wairiki, Wainiqolo was documented to be killed by Tui Cakau’s brother Daunivavana (Crispin 2009) and his troops defeated. However, according to

¹⁵ “Vidawa” or “Veidawa” can be potentially added to the list of place names with Lauan connections. I had encountered somewhere else that it is an archaic place name on Nayau Island. This certainly requires further verification but explains why the *yavusa* title of the people of Korovou is Vidawa, who trace their ancestry to Lau. Note that the village Vidawa where the Lekutu people now reside was originally *Yavusa* Vidawa’s territory, hence the same name.

Sake, it was actually an unnamed Bouma warrior that killed Wainiqolo whose heart was then removed and placed on a stick to be turned around and roasted. The location of this cannibalistic event was thus named Tavuki (Aisake Tale, interview, 03/12/2010).

As in other Austronesian societies, the notions of multiplicity and unity in the *vanua* are in a dialectic relationship. Landscape therefore often serves as a way to mediate these contradictions and dynamism. Here I want to introduce another aspect of landscape, that is, architecture, or more specifically, the house. The Austronesian house and its physical structure have already received extensive scholarly attention (Fox 2006b[1993]). In the case of Bouma I want to focus on the symbolic aspect of the house that appears in its very name. The root of the word “Bouma” is *bou* which comes from the Proto-Oceanic **bou*, meaning the “bearers supporting raised floor or roof structure, or centre post supporting ridge-pole” (Green and Pawley 1999:62). In the traditional Samoan round meeting house *fale tele*, all the vertical posts are called *pou* but special meanings are given to the central pillars which are called *poutu* and are erected first (Hiroa 1930:13; Tuvala 1918). Except that of western Viti Levu, most Fijian houses (*bure*) are rectangular and do not have these central posts (Burley 2013:446; Geddes 1945:11; Hocart 1929:120; Raven-Hart 1956:103). Rather, they have *bou* which are the kingposts located at both ends of the house supporting the ridgepole and the thatched roof, while all other vertical posts are differentiated as *duru*. *Bou* are either rooted in the ground or placed on the cross beams. It is well-documented that human sacrifices used to be buried under them in Fiji, which are associated with the chief or ancestral spirits (Best 1924:234; Brewster 1922:180).

The ridgepole is also a significant component in the Austronesian house which is often regarded as the spine representing the main line of descent or the order of society (Van Meijl 2006[1993]:207). In Fiji it was observed that it “is to a Fijian house what the keel is to a ship”

(Forbes 1875:142). The standard Bauan term for ridgepole is *doka* but in the Cakaudrove dialect it is called *saqai*. Interestingly, the traditional *yavusa* title of Waitabu is Naisaqai. It was explained to me that in the olden days when the chiefly house was being built in Bouma, it was customary to ask the Waitabu people to come over and put on the roof as the final touch. The manager of Vidawa's ecotourism project Kanisa once pointed at a replicated Fijian house in the village (see figure 9.) to me and said "if you want to know about the history of Bouma, just go inside the house and see." Sake further explained this:

When we build a *bure* for the chief, especially Vunisa, Vunisa and all these clans and all these tribes should prepare the food every day for building the house. And when it's finished, you have to cover the top. The ridge cap. Only the people of Nasau should go up there to do that. If I'm not from Nasau and I'm up there too, the thing will leak. The right people should be up there. When they come down they should be presented with some gift. That's called Naisaqai. *Tou saqai na vale qo. Me saqai ya vale*. To put the cap (Aisake Tale, interview, 3/12/2010).

This tradition was also documented by Hocart in his ethnography in the Lau Group:

House-building in the Fijian style is expensive, if properly done. Fests are made for workers at each stage of building ... The putting on of the rafters was accompanied by a collation brought on trays by the ladies. Thatching is a very big affair. Word goes forth to pick the leaves, which are pinned together. A day is appointed to put on the thatching. A big feast is made because it finishes the house. In Fiji proper, upon finishing a nobleman's house gifts are given to the workers when they come down (Hocart 1929:126).

In his study of Stonehenge, archaeologist Barrett argued that meanings are not entrapped in the static building itself, but "emergent through the struggle to interpret the significance of that place within its landscape, a struggle that predate the building of the monument and encompassed the consequences of its construction" (Barrett 2003:27). By struggled he means the diverse social practices, movements, differentiations that took place in and around the monument, which does not imply a coercive leadership. Similarly, the image of the Fijian house with the kingpost, ridge-pole, and thatched roof, while neatly demonstrates the ideal construction of the

vanua, that is, the central chiefly figure and the servant descent groups, is not a mere top-down hierarchical structure. It is the union of the foreign chief and the indigenous land people, mutually serving or facing each other (*veiqaravi*) as Hocart illustrated.



Figure 9. A traditional Fijian *bure* (house) built in Vidawa.



Figure 10. The ridgepole (*saqai*) that supports the thatched roof.



Figure 11. The kingpost (*bou*) of the house.

Finally I want to discuss an alternative form of landscape in Bouma, that is, the weather, which has lately received much attention from both landscape anthropologists and archaeologists (Ingold 2011:115-135; Pillatt 2012). Drawing from his notion of the “open environment,” Ingold argued that the conventional view of landscape confined our scope to the surface and the materiality within, without realizing that it is open to the recurrent encounters with wind, fog, snow, and rain, just as it is repeatedly shaped and reshaped by human activities. If we acknowledge the mutual constitution of people and landscape, then the agency of weather should also be counted into this equation. As Ingold further argued, “the relation between land and weather does not cut across an impermeable interface between earth and sky but is rather one *between the binding and unbinding of the world*” (Ingold 2011:121, *italic original*). The metaphorical motions of binding and unbinding are exactly the logic of *vanua* that this dissertation proposes. It is constituted of the endless movements of people, things, and forces (including atmospheric ones) which need to be stabilized and reaffirmed constantly.

Weather and sky have always been intrinsic parts of the Austronesian world as their ancestors navigated through open-seas using only celestial guidance. As they settled on small coral atolls or islands prone to meteorological disturbance, their relationship with the weather is as close as that with the landscape. Having heard many stories in the Pacific of indigenous weather foresights, I had encountered one myself in Waitabu days before Cyclone Evan came in December 2012. One afternoon as we were debating whether it would hit Taveuni or not, the sky was suddenly filled with frigate birds swirling above. Their Fijian name is *kasaqa* while the villagers call them *koti* (scissors) because of their sharp long wings. They were said to be carrying the message of cyclone.

The identity of *Vanua* Bouma is very much based on their mountainous terrain as well as the almost never-ending precipitation. The inhabitants see themselves as occupying the most rugged and toughest environment of Taveuni, but also blessed with fertile soil and abundant rainfall for agricultural activities, which could reach about 5,000 mm/year. Prevailing southeast trade winds rising over the central ranges of the island would cause even more orographic rainfall on the eastern slopes where most Bouma cultivations are located (Ash 1987). I had heard Bouma farmers referring to their legs as “*na duru*” (strong posts) for they often farm on the steepest and most slippery hills on the island.

The rain is a *mana* given to the people of Bouma, as mentioned in Sepo’s tale given earlier. It was received by Tui Lekutu and brought to the *vanua* of Bouma. Sake explained to me in further detail:

When the people of Bouma [are] gathering, they can have a meeting in the house [or] they can have a meeting in the playground (*rara*) ...When they serve their god properly, there must be a cloud coming. That’s a sign. Or even a shower, to protect them. That’s happened. I see it. They see it. Sometimes I explain that to the tourists. If we don’t follow the order of the customs, the *tabu* ... [when]

there's a meeting, sun [would] come. Look up, you must confess, make reconciliation and the thing [rain would] come again (Aisake Tale, interview 3/12/2010).

This *mana* has become quite well-known to other places in Fiji. One day in 2009 when I was at the University of the South Pacific campus in Suva learning the Fijian language with Dr. Paul Geraghty, a Fijian student came in to our meeting to talk to him. Paul quickly introduced me as a fellow from Bouma to that student. I then saw him jokingly frown and make the comment “Ah! Bouma people always bring the rain!” There was also a story often retold to me in Bouma about a Provincial Meeting at Somosomo. It was a fine day with cloudless sky, but as soon as the people of Bouma arrived, heavy rainfall began to pour down. It is said that the rain will travel with Bouma people, which is known as *salauca*, “the path of rain.”

Recognizing the rain, as well as place names and symbolic architecture, as part of the landscape of Bouma would give us a broader framework to appreciate what *Vanua* Bouma is and how multiple and diverse temporalities embedded within are able to be visualized and reconciled. This however does not mean that a singular Bouma identity is thus forged. On the contrary, multiplicity is fiercely maintained in the processes of interpreting and reworking the landscape. Even the legend of the rain provides a potential crack to this stable *vanua* structure – it was a power given only to the Lekutu people before Bouma was even established. In the following I will demonstrate that this complexity of identities and histories is also evident at a smaller scale – the village of Waitabu, and how it is mediated through ritual and kinship.

3.4 RITUAL, KINSHIP, AND IDENTITIES IN WAITABU

As mentioned earlier, Nasau – the initial inland settlement of the ancestors of the Waitabu people – was first documented in Thomas Williams’s journal in 1844. As the inhabitants later moved to the coast, their coastal residence first appeared on one of the earliest survey maps of Taveuni produced in 1880, but the name was put as Vidawa. This is telling because I was told that when the forefathers of Waitabu and Vidawa moved down to the coast, they once resided together in a single settlement for a brief period of time. On a Wairiki Catholic mission inventory in 1895,¹⁶ there appears to be a chapel in Vidawa with a *tuirara* (native ceremonial steward, cf. Thornley 2000:446 n.23) stationed there serving the people in the vicinity. The village name Waitabu, separated from Vidawa, was later noted by Hocart during his 1912 research trip (Hocart 1952:69). In his final report he wrote an intriguing passage: “Nasau in the village of Waitambu [sic] in Mbouma [sic] in Taveuni is *tauvu* to Nandaranga [sic]” (p.110). As mentioned earlier, *tauvu* relationship denotes two groups of people that have the same ancestral origin. Here Nadaraga (Nandaranga) is a *mataqali* of the *Yavusa* Mabuco in eastern Vanua Levu and what Hocart’s description indicates is that there was a separate layer of identity known as Nasau within the village of Waitabu. Given that there is currently no *mataqali* in the kinship structure of Waitabu called Nasau, and the actual settlement of Nasau had long been abandoned at the time of Hocart’s fieldwork, the existence of “Nasau inside Waitabu” in his statement becomes very interesting.

¹⁶ RCAF 12.1.13 “Inventory of Church Property” of Wairiki, Roman Catholic Archives of Fiji, Suva.

3.4.1 Ritual and Identity

Before I began the discussion of Nasau, I shall first give a brief analysis of the *i-sevusevu* ritual which is pertinent to solving the riddle created by Hocart. Known as the ceremony of entry into a Fijian community (Nabobo-baba 2006:26-27), *i-sevusevu* generally requires the presentation of a bundle of dried kava roots called *waka* to the chief of the land.¹⁷ Once accepted, permission and protection would be given to the visitors, as well as pardon to any ignorance of the local custom. This is probably the most well-known Fijian ritual to foreign researchers or tourists for its implication of appropriateness and highly formalized procedures. It is however also widely practiced among indigenous Fijians themselves, in occasions of asking a favor, making a formal request, or seeking forgiveness, which is conducted in ritualized speeches and involves members of different social status in the society. Anthropologists have long recognized the centrality of *i-sevusevu* in Fijian society, stressing the significance of confirming traditional social order outside the sphere of money (Toren 1989), constructing local identity (Brison 2001,2002), maintaining the cosmological balance and prosperity (Turner 1987), and reflecting a well-established hierarchical structure (Arno 1985). The inclusion of Christian prayers towards the end of the speech is also seen as a way to mediate the tension between *vanua* and *lotu* (Toren 2003:709).

i-Sevusevu should not be confused with *i-sevu*, the first fruits ritual, although both have very similar meanings and gone through similar transformations. *i-Sevu* originally refers to the

¹⁷ On greater occasions, a pile of unprocessed *yaqona* with roots, stems and leaves would be presented which could mount to “thirty-five feet long and seven high” (Wallis 1851:213). They are often accompanied by *tabua* (whale’s tooth valuables) or turtles, a Fijian prestigious delicacy (Hocart 1929:118). In modern contexts, tinned meat and fish (Bedford, McLean, and Macpherson 1978:55), tobacco, cigarettes, and sweets (Toren 1989:151) were seen being offered in place of *yaqona* in less formal *i-sevusevu*.

annual offering of first harvest, using *uvi* (yams, *Dioscorea alata*) as token, to the priests on the behalf of the ancestral gods for their blessing in times of peace or war (Seemann 1862:299; Williams 1858:230; Williams in Henderson 1931b:256). Because of its almost identical meaning to “first fruits” in the Christian context, John Hunt conveniently adopted *i-sevu* in his bible translation and today it becomes a Christian ritual that is practiced and celebrated on “Harvest Sundays” in the Methodist churches of Fiji. In the same light, *i-sevusevu* refers specifically to the use of *yaqona* but also as offering to the ancestral gods. Hazlewood had documented a “heathen prayer” uttered by a native priest as offerings were taken to the temple, in which *i-sevu* and *i-sevusevu* were used interchangeably (Hazlewood 1850:71).

Following Hocart’s and Sahlins’s ideas of Fijian chiefship, the chief is transformed into the local god after the installation ceremony in which he drinks the *yaqona* offered by the people of the land (Toren 1990:100-101). He then becomes the recipient of *i-sevu* and *i-sevusevu*, and like the ancestral gods, needs to redistribute his kindness and other valuable things back to the *vanua* (Sahlins 1981). As explained by Hocart:

Though the land is offered up to the chief it does not become his property, but remains the property of the former owners; the land is spoken of as “his,” but the possessive used is not that of property (*nona*), but that of destination (*kena*) signifying that it is for his use. He can command the produce for feasts but not the estate. Both chiefs and gods receive a share of all the produce as first fruits (*i-sevu*). Whenever a chief visits a subject tribe or returns to his own tribe after a journey he is presented with an earnest (*i-sevusevu*) of the land in the shape of a kava root (Hocart 1915a:643-644).

Therefore, in many early records in Fiji by missionaries and explorers, *yaqona* was seen offered either directly to the paramount chiefs, or through the priests (Waterhouse 1866:192), even when they were visitors to a foreign land. For example, when the crew members of H.M.S. Herald visited a small town on the Rewa River in August 1856, *yaqona* was presented to them because

they were accompanied by a local high chief by the name of “Ko mai Naitasiri” (MacDonald 1857:241). Similarly, the same ritual was conducted to Colonel William James Smythe and his entourage in August 1860 because they were escorted by the high chief of Namosi, Kuruduadua (Smythe 1864:65), as well as to the Austrian natural historian and collector Baron Anatole Von Hügel when he was at Serea in June 1875, accompanied by the high chief Ro Saumaka (von Hügel in Roth and Hooper 1990:39). This does not only apply to Fijian chiefs, but also to foreigners. In December 1839 the Methodist missionaries David Cargill and Thomas Jaggar went into the land of Naitasiri and were greeted with chiefly respect by the natives who sat down as they passed by. They were also presented with “a bunch of bananas or a root of *yaqona*” (Cargill in Schütz 1977:164). In November 1854 Reverend Waterhouse noted that “a large bunch of kava-root” was presented to King George Tupou I of Tonga when he visited Cakobau at his chiefly residence (Waterhouse 1866:228). In October 1874 when Cakobau ceded the Fiji Islands to the British Crown, he broke off a piece from a *yaqona* root and placed it in Britain’s representative Arthur Gordon’s hand as a formal sign of submission (Legge 1958:206 quoted in Toren 1990:103). Therefore, while the English translation “earnest” probably better captures the essence of *i-sevusevu* which was surely practiced in non-religious/political settings,¹⁸ its chief meaning was firmly associated with offerings to the god/chief, as exemplified above. However, similar to the significance and usage of *tabua* which were inflated by the increasing contact with Western traders in the first half of the 19th century (Thomas 1991:116), *i-sevusevu* was also seen given from high chiefs to their far away subjects through Western vessels as a request for them

¹⁸ In June 1844 when Williams’s infant child passed away in Somosomo, he noted that “Early in the morning the chief of a settlement next to us paid us a visit accompanied by another old man. The purpose of his visit was to assure us that he sympathized with us in our loss and to present us with a root of *yaqona* as a proof thereof” (Williams in Henderson 1931b:276). Williams no doubt had learned about this practice when he was in Lakeba in 1841 because he had used the same method to save a native seized by Tui Nayau (p.27).

to cooperate with the capturing of *bêche-de-mer* (Wallis 1851:245,345). With more and more foreigners entering different *vanua* of Fiji, making a variety of requests and dealings, or even permanently settling there, it is possible that *i-sevusevu* gradually became more “democratized” and acquired its form today that can be presented to all local autonomous entities. Its original meaning as offerings to the high chief was then reserved in the ritual called *yaqona vakaturaga*, the chiefly welcome ceremony (Ravuvu 1987:25-26).

In today’s *i-sevusevu* rituals, even though the *yaqona* is offered to the chief or local leader, he is no longer the stranger-king set to consume the *vanua*, but representing the *vanua* by which he had been absorbed. The *i-sevusevu* offering therefore is not to deify the chief himself, as seen in the installation ceremonies, but to empower the *vanua*. In her study in Rakiraki, a land that does not have the tradition of paramount chiefdoms like Eastern Fiji, Brison (2002) argued that *i-sevusevu* was used to assert their self-worth as guardians of a sacred tradition against the wealthier and more powerful outsiders. This is evident in their insistence on using the local dialect in *i-sevusevu* speeches as opposed to standard Bauan Fijian which is associated with the dominant chieftains in Fiji. Undergoing a parallel transformation, the *i-sevu* ritual today also has an emphasis on the *vanua* differentiated from the high chief. Turner (1984) observed that in Wainimala, the *i-sevu* was offered to the true land-owning, first settler *mataqali* (known as *i-taukei*), and then to the chief and the Church. He concluded that it was due to the seasonal characteristic of the yams that made them a suitable symbol to secure the wealth and well-being of the whole community, rather than mere offering to a higher power. As I shall demonstrate in the next section, the *i-sevusevu* in Waitabu also has the same implications and it is through these ritual processes that the significance of Nasau emerges.

3.4.2 Meanings of a Chiefly Title

In late January 2011 my families from Taiwan and a colleague from the United States decided to visit me in the field. Upon learning about their plan, I volunteered to conduct the *i-sevusevu* for them when they arrived. Taking this matter seriously, my father Mika who is an expert of ritual speeches himself, decided to train me properly. The speech itself has a clear structure, with a formalized opening and ending. While the main body is flexible and thus can be subject to much creativity and manipulation (Cretton 2005), the manner should always be humble, apologetic, and affirm established tribal relationships. The speaker therefore needs to be knowledgeable of the proper titles and relationships, as well as the correct metaphors and registers. An *i-sevusevu* speech could be lengthy, but people would take notice if it was conducted beautifully. In my case, given my non-native speaker status, I was taught a “short but sweet” version that has all the necessary formula. Below are the full text and its translation:

*Au 'ere'ere me 'eitou ca'aca'a ti'o yane
Va'aturaga 'ina vanua ena i-ti'oti'o ni veiliuta'i na gone turaga na Tui Nasau
'eitou la'o ti'o mai na we'amuduo mai na matanitu Taiwan vata 'ei America
'eitou mai ca'asoqo ti'o 'ina vanua
Na 'ena yaqona se i-sevusevu yai e lailai sara
'eitou 'erea me 'eitou ciqomi na we'amuduo yaco ti'o mai
E qai balavu na vosa ni i-sevusevu
Sa va'aturaga ti'o vua na turaga na Tui Nasau, sosoratu*

I beg to let us conduct this ritual to you (clap three times)
In a chiefly manner in the land, to the seat of the youthful¹⁹ chief Tui Nasau

¹⁹ The juxtaposition of “gone” (child, young) and “turaga” (chief) in the title of high chiefs even of old ages had puzzled Hocart who eventually theorized that it is within a binary against “qase” (old) which denotes lower ranked chieftain (Hocart 1921). Sahlins saw this as a further evidence of the stranger-king who took the wives of the land people and begot the ruling chief who became symbolically the young sacred nephew to the elderly folks of his mother’s brothers (Sahlins 1981). Identifying the outstretched rope on the kava bowl in installation ceremonies as a symbolic “umbilical cord,” Turner argued that the title “gone turaga” suggested that the chief was born from the kava (Turner 1995:109). Either way, it is clear that “gone” implies the quality of energy and mobility, as opposed to the static and ancient land.

We, your kinfolks, came from the countries of Taiwan and the United States
We came here to hold a gathering in your land
This kava offering is very small (responded with “*levu!*” [it is big])
We, your kinfolks, beg you to accept our arrival
This speech of offering has been too long
In a chiefly manner, I present to the chief Tui Nasau, let it be done²⁰

The same as what Brison observed, the whole speech was given in the local Bouma dialect. In this brief text we can easily see the apologetic manner expressed in the words “offering is very small” or “speech is too long” which would immediately be responded by the *i-sevusevu*-receivers. They may seem pretentious to outsiders, especially for my quick “eight-liner” speech, but as argued by Miyazaki they serve a particular ritual purpose. He called this a temporary “abeyance of human agency” which deliberately creates a moment of fracture that enables participants to be hopeful and appreciative of an eventual fulfillment (Miyazaki 2000, 2004:104-106). Although in Miyazaki’s study the final sense of completion would be provided by the Christian God, the same fulfillment could also be achieved by the mention of *vanua* in *i-sevusevu* speeches, which is the ultimate receiver of the *yaqona*. This was evident in one of the phrases uttered in response to my speech: “*i-sevusevu la‘i tabe tio mai noqu vanua va‘aturaga*” (The *i-sevusevu* came to sit in my land in a chiefly manner).

Theoretically the *i-sevusevu* is presented to Tui Nasau, who is from the chiefly *Mataqali* Vunivesi, with the presence of the leader of *Mataqali* Waisoki serving as the herald. However, in each of my numerous entries into Waitabu, I had conducted the *i-sevusevu* to different persons. The first time in 2007 I was received by Tui Nasau *Kuku Sepo*. The second time in 2008 he was absent so I performed it to another elder in the village, M. T., who is also a member of Vunivesi

²⁰ “*Sosoratu*” is an expression used at the end of offering speeches. It usually occurs when *tabua* is presented (Quain 1948:209), but it has been documented that it can also be used in *i-sevusevu* (Lester 1942).

and inherited this right through his mother. In 2010 after *Kuku Sepo* passed away, I did it to his eldest son P. who took over the Tui Nasau position. Shortly afterwards, P. seemed to have left this position and went to reside in Suva, leaving much confusion behind. For a while I saw the ritual performed to M. T. or his half-brother E. V. by different visitors. For my second entry of the year 2010, I was taken to the leader of the other *Mataqali*, Waisoki. Finally, when my families visited me in 2011, the *i-sevusevu* speech illustrated above was given to *Kuku Sepo*'s daughter M. This certainly is not uncommon in Fiji where many chiefly titles were disputed or left vacant after the decease of a prominent title holder. But no matter who is the receiver, the content of the *i-sevusevu* speech does not change. As noted by Arno in his research in Lau, even when there's no sitting chief on the island, all public speeches were still made in the same respectful manner because "the traditional power relationship still existed between the chiefly lineage and the others" (Arno 1985:135). In June 2010 when I was going to take a film crew from Taiwan to Vuna, my father Mika, ever so conscious of customary etiquettes, taught me an *i-sevusevu* speech in case I was to be put on the frontline. In the beginning of that speech I was told to address both Tui Vuna and Tui Kanacea, although I would certainly not be able to meet both of them – the former was without a title holder at the time and the latter represented the people of Kanacea who took refuge in Vuna after their island was sold by Tui Cakau in 1863. To Mika, the *vanua* of Vuna is complete only when both titles are mentioned. People move, but the land stays. Both qualities are inherently inside the *vanua* which holds the key to reconcile this contradiction (cf. Tomlinson 2014:54-58). Through rituals like *i-sevusevu*, it mediates the constant movements, confrontations, and confusions, which are unavoidable realities in a community. Tui Nasau, not the person, but the symbolic entity, is such an anchorage that holds a neo-traditional village like Waitabu still amid modern changes and challenges.

Not only does it have the stabilizing quality, Tui Nasau also links the village to a “golden era” in the past when they were the Forest People that owned almost half of the island, before there was Cakaudrove, or even Bouma. In the *Ai Tukutuku Raraba* of *Yavusa* Naisaqai, the earliest registered Tui Nasau M. B. traced the history of his people to an ancestral-god figure Latianavanua and actual founder figure Batiuraura. It was recounted that they were part of the Forest People migration to Taveuni led by Labalaba. Their custom was formally established at the settlement of Vurevure where Labalaba was installed with the chiefly title Tui Lekutu na Vunivalu, and the responsibility of the ancestors of Waitabu was to look over the house of the chief, hence they were called the Naisaqai people (as explained earlier). It was after the advent of Vunisa and the forming of Bouma that they moved to Nasau and established the title Tui Nasau.²¹

Considered the most knowledgeable guardian of Waitabu’s history, *Kuku Sepo* left a hand-written manuscript of Waitabu’s history before he passed away. In his version of the past, a few notable details were given that would potentially change the status of the people of Waitabu. For example, Latianavanua, the ancestral-god of Waitabu, was said to be the elder brother of the first Tui Lekutu Labalaba, with a third brother called Botowai. The establishment of his leadership was also much earlier, which took place at the settlement of Naibili:

Then came the time to separate the three brothers. Because he was the *ulumatua* (eldest child), Latianavanua was installed as the *sauturaga*, and became the founder of Nasau. Labalaba became the founder of Lekutu, and Botowai became the founder of Somosomo (Iosefo Cakanacagi, manuscript n.d., my translation).

²¹ M. B. in NLC Final Report Vol.1 Province of Cakaudrove, 1929, pp.10-11, Native Lands and Fisheries Commission, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Suva.

Here an interesting interpretation of the title “Nasau” took place. As told in Sake’s narrative, Nasau comes from the word *sauturaga*, often translated as the “executive chief,” “whose rank was next to that of chiefs of the blood, and whose function was to carry out their commands and to support their authority” (Derrick 2001[1950]:8). In Fiji’s tribal kinship structure there is commonly a *mataqali sauturaga* whose responsibility is to install the chief. That’s why it is also known for the name “the kingmakers.” However, *sauturaga* also has the connotation of the title *Sau*, a prestigious title of high chiefs in Lau and Cakaudrove, which may be further installed as the regional paramount chief (Hocart 1929:28,50). *Sau* and its variant *Hau* with the meaning of ruler or war chief are particularly found in the sphere of influence of Western Polynesia including Tonga, Uvea, Rotuma, Lau, as well as Taveuni (Gunson 1979; Reid 1977). In Hocart’s theory of dual chieftainship, *Sau* is the active “second chief” issuing order for the ritual “first chief” whose title is *Tui*. Going through much internal and regional transformation, there are places now in Fiji where *Tui* and *Sau* are jointly held by one single chief, or *Sau* is the one and only ruler (Hocart 1929:232-238, 1952:33-37; Sayes 1984:18; Toren 1994:199). The order of first and second also does not imply precedence in bloodline, as demonstrated in some other founding narratives in Fiji in which the eldest son is *Sau* while the younger is *Tui* (Walter 1978c). From these studies it is clear that *sauturaga* and *Sau* although sharing the same root, have entirely different political capacities and significances.

The ambiguity of the term *sauturaga* has already been pointed out by scholars (Capell and Lester 1946:298-300; Scarr 1970:12 n.49), but it is through this ambiguity that Sepo was able to add new meanings to the ancestral-god of Waitabu. This is even more salient in Sepo’s later tale in which Latianavanua shared leadership with Labalaba in Navuga as two chiefs (like *Tui* and *Sau*) but the latter challenged him into a battle of *mana* to decide who could be the

paramount. Eventually Latianavanua was able to beat his hot-tempered brother by making fish bones come alive in the river, but still he let Labalaba take over the paramount leadership as Tui Lekutu. These stories elevated the status of Tui Nasau and empowered the past of *Yavusa* Naisaqai – They were not the descendants of the people who merely looked over the house of the chief, but of the noble bloodline of the eldest son who was a supreme ruler himself.

3.4.3 Kinship in the Making

So far we still haven't given a direct answer to the question that Hocart posed: What is the identity of Nasau and who were the “Nasau People” inside Waitabu? To answer this question we have to look into the kinship organization of *Yavusa* Naisaqai, which is illustrated below in figure 12.

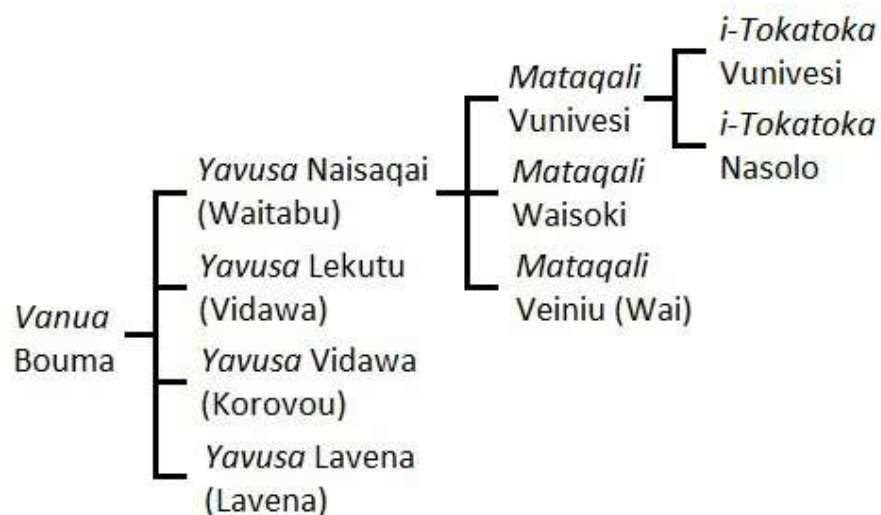


Figure 12. The official kinship structure of *Vanua* Bouma and *Yavusa* Naisaqai (Waitabu).

This pyramid-like communal system was based on Fison's theory and Maxwell's native policy in which *yavusa* is a group of people sharing common ancestry, and its sub-division *mataqali* is a patrilineal descent group and the basic land-owning unit. Numerous anthropological studies, particularly that of the Fijian researcher Nayacakalou, had already addressed the inadequacy of this model which restricted the flexibility that local communities actually exercise (Abramson 1999; Clammer 1973; Kaplan 2005; Nayacakalou 1971, 1975; Sahlins 1962; Walter 1978a; Young 2001). The works by historians, geographers, and archaeologists also revealed the wide range of mobility and scatteredness that Fijian societies displayed, which were thought to be the outcome of constant tribal warfare (Capell and Lester 1941; Field 2005; Ward 2007). France further concluded:

The tribes of which Fijian society is composed were formed by combinations of independent agnatic families which became linked by ties of marriage and the needs of common defense. Their leaders gained power initially through their ability to organize the defense of a settled area. But gradually the unifying theory of common descent transformed them into the descendants of a tribal deity (France 1969:14).

Even Maxwell himself recognized the influence of warfare. In his model he hypothesized that in times of war several *yavusa* came together and formed a *vanua* (confederation) under the leadership of a regional chief. What he did not realize was that such a process occurred much more frequent and localized even at the *mataqali* level.

The kinship data I gathered from Waitabu conforms to what France described above. On paper the structure has a timeless aura but in reality the alliance or recruitment that formed the kinship organizations of *Yavusa Naisaqai* today was a fairly recent development. Sometime after the Reverend Thomas Williams encountered Nasau and its inhabitants in 1842, they began to move down to a settlement closer to the coast called Nakade. It was over there in 1900 that our

protagonist in this section, a woman by the name M. M., was born (see figure 13). By the time Hocart was on the island doing research in 1912, the settlers of Nakade had moved to and established today's Waitabu. At this time, the identity of Nasau became very important because into the 20th century Waitabu had to recruit people to add to its apparently thin population. For example, a gentleman by the name M. B. from Naselesele was recruited into Waitabu and assumed the leadership role. His brother P. N. later married M. M. Both of them did not have issue. M. B. however adopted a son called A. V. to whom the leadership was passed down. Together they formed the foundation of *Mataqali* Vunivesi. Sometime after P. N. passed away and M. M. became a widow, M. B. brought in a catechist called A. W. from the village Muana in eastern Vanua Levu for the Catholic congregation in the village. He was given several pieces of land and established the *i-Tokatoka* Nasolo. As for *Mataqali* Waisoki, all current members were the descendants of two men: M. R. from Korovou and later L. T. from Vanua Levu who came and married the widowed M. M. In accordance to the patrilineal logic of the Fijian *mataqali* system, their children belong to Waisoki. With these recruitments, *Mataqali* Waisoki grew larger and at one point it had three *i-tokatoka* as documented in the NLC report in 1929, but two of them had since migrated out. As for the third *mataqali* Veiniu at Wai, its members were the offspring of one single man R. L. who came and acquired a piece of land from Waisoki in the early 20th century.

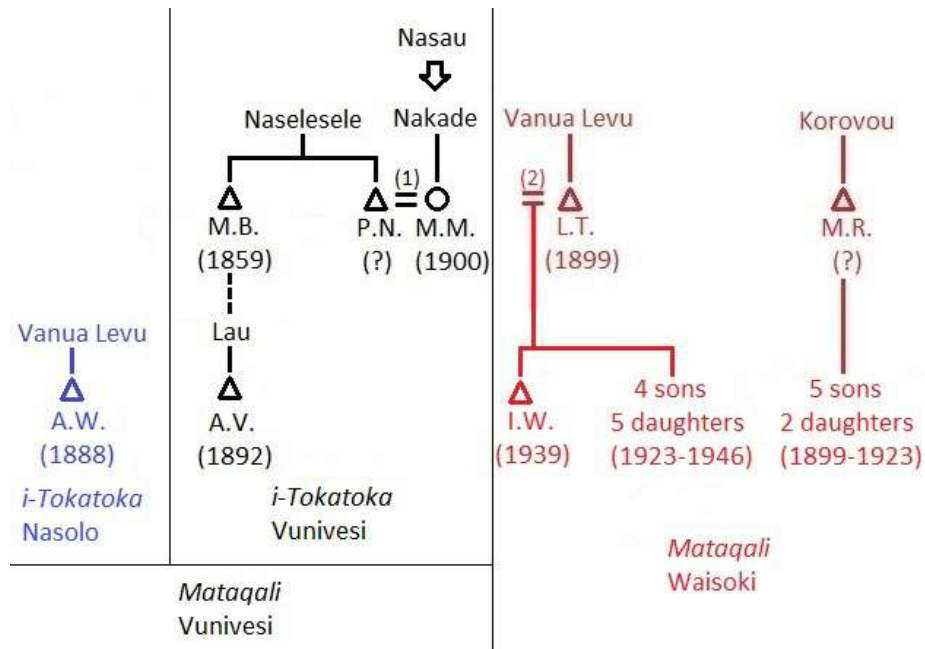


Figure 13. The making of kinship organizations in Waitabu.

Although the first registered Tui Nasau M. B. described in his 1929 account that the current three-*mataqali* (along with nine *i-tokatoka*) structure was already in place when the settlement was in Vurevure, it was probably stated to match the official model of Fijian social organizations, as happened elsewhere in Fiji (Nayacakalou 1975:14). Therefore, when recruited into Waitabu, all these people mentioned above could have either created a new *mataqali* or taken over a dissolving one, both of which were common practices for the Fijian tribal society. It should be noted that in Fiji an extinct *mataqali* is referred to as “*sa lala*” (it’s empty) implying that it could be filled back in like a container.

As we can see, when the officials of the NLC came into Waitabu and recorded their kinship structure in 1929, M. M. and her children were the only ones who had blood ties to Nasau. Today only one of her children, an elder called I. W., is still residing in Waitabu. He and his children are thus acknowledged by villagers as *Kai Nasau dina*, the real Nasau people, and

have usufruct right to Nakade, the birth place of M. M. The recognition of this *dra tabu* (sacred blood) flowed from women was first identified by Sahlins in his research in Moala where his informant told him “Brothers are only brothers, but the sister’s child is a new path ... Brothers are only in the house; they have been there from the past to today. But the descent of my sister is a new line” (Sahlins 1962:168 quoted in 2004:223). This statement especially rings true for the Nasau people because their blood and identity were able to survive and live on through their sister M. M. and her children, their *vasu*. This also shows how the maternal reckoning goes parallel with the patrilineal logic of *mataqali* and how it offers new possibilities for the “stagnant” autochthonous group.

3.4.4 Depopulation and Regeneration

But why was M. M. the only descendant of Nasau that made it into the 1929 tribal kinship registry of Waitabu? What happened to her kinfolks from Nasau to Nakade and then to Waitabu? Warfare certainly is the usual suspect especially in explaining depopulation from 1800 to 1850 in Fiji, which was also the opinion of the natives themselves. When Reverend Thomas Williams was in Bouma in 1844 he struck a conversation with a local young man and blatantly told him: “Your race is almost extinct,” to which he responded “we the inhabitants of Feejee [sic] are finished by war” (Williams in Henderson 1931b:245). Similarly in 1870, noticing the declining native population on the island, Taveuni planter J. B. Thurston asked a local old man “what has become of the people?” and the answer was “clubbed and eaten” (Scarr 1973:135).²² In the

²² It was of the opinion of the geographer R. Gerard Ward that the muskets introduced into Fiji by the early 19th century traders were responsible for the intensification of warfare techniques in Fiji and had led to increasing death

second half of the 19th century the indigenous population encountered an even more lethal destruction: disease. Taveuni first received a taste of it in September 1839, shortly after the missionaries Lyth and Hunt arrived at Somosomo. It was a severe case of influenza that also affected Rewa and Bau in Eastern Viti Levu where the missionaries had also just established their presence. It was therefore called by the natives the “sickness of the *lotu*” (Cargill in Schütz 1977:149; Thornley 2000:132). While many natives as well as the families of the missionaries were seriously infected, the death toll was not specified in the missionaries’ report. And then in December 1874 after Fiji was ceded to Britain, the former ruler Cakobau and his two sons went on a state visit to New South Wales and contracted measles during the journey. After their return in January 1875 they were immediately met with chiefs and tribal leaders from all over Fiji to learn about their status after the Cession. From then until June, the disease spread in a striking speed and intensity to almost every corner of the Fiji Islands. At the end, the death rate was about one-fifth of the total native population and around 40,000 in total (Cliff and Haggett 1985:35). Baron Anatole von Hügel provided a vivid description of the aftermath on June 26th, 1875 when he visited Eastern Viti Levu:

Five miles above Viria is Nameka, another deserted town ... It is very saddening to pass these abandoned towns, formerly so prosperous and full of life, now so forlorn. The history of one seems to be that of all. Through generations a severe strain had been put on these smaller towns and villages by the petty feuds with neighboring tribes, by which, until a few years ago, the country had [been] incessantly harassed. The cannibalism and barbarity which under these circumstances grew apace still further reduced the population so that now, at the termination of the epidemic of measles, not a soul remains in many of these towns, which look so smiling when seen from the river that it is difficult to believe that they actually contain not a living soul (von Hügel in Roth and Hooper 1990:29).

toll and the destruction of villages and gardens (Ward 1972:111). This had been questioned by scholars who argued that early muskets were largely inaccurate and unreliable in the damp Pacific climate and subject to mishandling by the natives (Howe 1974; Sahlins 1993b). The use of muskets at the siege of Vuna in 1840 were documented by the missionaries but was deemed “ineffective” against the fortified fences (Thornley 2000:144).

Fiji was later again caught up in a much larger scale of outbreak: the global Spanish influenza pandemic 1918-1919. It entered into Fiji on November 4th 1918 through a steamship called Talune traveling from Auckland, New Zealand where the influenza was already a serious matter. It soon spread out quickly in Fiji and lasted about five to six weeks, eventually causing a total of 8,145 deaths, among which 5,154 were indigenous Fijians whose death rate was around 5.66%, the highest of all populations in Fiji.²³ Most of the people killed in this pandemic were in the prime of their age, further crippled the operation of the colony (Lal 1992:58).

Both of these events were told by Sake in his account of the history of Bouma, which were said to be the prime reason why the inland settlements were moved down to the coast:

And then in 1874, when they gave the Fiji Islands to Victoria, Tui Viti, Cakobau, went to [New South Wales]. When he came back, he brought back a kind of sickness...measles...and then the government said all the people should come down to coast...easy for the government to treat them. And another one came in [1918], some villages...like Korovou, I was told only four people left, all sick. Only the four people cook the food and feed them. Nearly every village [was infected]. When they go for funeral, four, five people [were] buried together. That's why they leave the bush and come down ... When they are in Waitabu the second one [the one in 1918] came. Only the Catholic Mission in Wairiki nobody sick there. They carry the food to every village they can help, with the priest to anoint the sick [Aisake Tale, interview 03/12/2010].

Sake's tale was echoed by a couple of elders in Bouma who remembered the endemic told by their fathers. The catechist of Korovou, Fabi, told me that the style of burial during that time was called *bulu vakavudi* (buried like plantains), indicating the vast number of bodies being buried at the time. What they were referring to was no doubt the 1875 measles epidemic, which may have wiped out the majority of the indigenous population in Taveuni or caused them to be displaced. Due to lack of medical staff and colonial personnel in the beginning of the Cession, the exact

²³ Colonial Reports – Annual. No.1047. Fiji. Report for 1919, p.15, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

situations of the outlying islands amidst the spread of measles in 1875 were only partially known. The Methodist missionaries nevertheless were able to provide detailed numbers at the local level where they were stationed. For example, in the Lau Group, the death rate on some islands (Oneata in particular) could reach as high as 75% (Cliff and Haggett 1985:36). For Taveuni, the only mention of the local death toll I was able to find was on a piece of news report: “Out of a population of 300 at Na Korovou [Vuna], at the south end of Taviuni [sic], 75 have died up to the date our informant left.”²⁴ The proximity of Vuna to a major port of entry on the island at the time probably explained why it was the only place on Taveuni mentioned in the news, but the same devastation could very well be applied to other villages with which Vuna had remained in close contact.

As for the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic, the situation appeared to be relatively minor in Taveuni. According to the District Medical Officer (DMO) V. W. T. McGusty, after the disease was introduced to the island in early December 1918, 143 cases were treated and there were 11 deaths.²⁵ In particular, the entire southern part of Taveuni was the only region in Fiji that was not affected, thanks to the planters there self-enforcing a *cordon sanitaire* (McLane 2013:141). DMO McGusty later also commented that the communities in Taveuni enjoyed a natural advantage of “good water supplies, good drainage, and a plentiful food supply” that maintained a generally healthy environment.²⁶

As we can see, the Nasau people were very likely stricken by the 1875 measles epidemic. As the remaining members moved down to Nakade and later to Waitabu in the early 20th century,

²⁴ “Late Fiji News.” *Australian Town and Country Journal* (Sydney, NSW : 1870 - 1907) 5 June 1875, p.21. <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70491624>>.

²⁵ “Influenza in Taviuni District,” February 7th, 1919, CSO MP 1671/1919, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

²⁶ Annual Medical Report, Taviuni. Legislative Council Paper No.2, 1921, p.6-7, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

they essentially had to reinvent their community and identity entirely. I am certainly not engaging in the debate of the “invention of culture” (Hanson 1989) or implying that their current identity is fabricated. What I want to stress is that, as exemplified in the peopling of Fiji, the early political histories of Taveuni, as well as the making of Bouma, *vanua* has always been flexible and incorporative, endlessly involving new members and ideas. It is also due to this fluid quality in the *vanua* that it is in need of finding an anchorage to stabilize itself in a constantly changing world. Here landscape and rituals are crucial parts of the *vanua*, which recognize the multiple origins of a multivalent past but at the same time facilitate the forming of the wholeness of the community. In Waitabu this wholeness is achieved through continuously acknowledging the significance of the title “Tui Nasau” and the existence of the Nasau people in order to sustain their *vanua*. I once heard a private argument in the village about the operation of the Marine Park project. Accusations were flying around about whom and who are “actually not from Waitabu” but were giving orders or occupying important positions. Finally it was Mika who said that “after all, we are all Nasau people.” The significance of this remark did not strike me until now: Waitabu is a microcosm of Bouma, of Taveuni, and of Fiji. It needs to be both diverse and unified at the same time.

But to put this perspective back to the framework of the environment, it is equally important to reckon that *vanua* is lived and experienced and therefore would always be subject to change just as the environment is under constant forces of different natures. In other words, emplaced meanings could be forgotten, altered, or reinterpreted. For example, even as Waitabu clings to the Nasau identity, Nasau as a place today is rarely maintained and even considered by some to be inflicted with ancestral curses. I was also surprised to find in the monograph of Frost’s archaeological study of Taveuni that Nasau was a location unbeknownst to him, even

when he was consulted by the local people during his excavation (Frost 1974:21). Similarly, when the villagers talk about Vatuloa, I doubt that the nominal connection to Lakeba would be the first thing that comes to their minds. To them, it will always be the place where they could enjoy a moment of shower with peace, fetch the freshest water, and just be an everyday villager of Waitabu as they are. Recognizing this transformative aspect of *vanua* is important because it demonstrates that a community as small as Waitabu with clear traditional leadership and territory is actually very complex and dynamic. As contemporary development projects are introduced and established in the environment and new leadership and territory are created, *vanua* with its capacity of interaction and change would serve as a powerful framework for the indigenous people to work with these new actors and ideas, just as their forefathers had always been dealing with new migrants and polities.



Figure 14. The plaques on the wall in a corner of the Wairiki Catholic Church on Taveuni. The one on the left says: “Compassion: For Virgin Mary who protected the Visitation Girl’s School during the influenza epidemic 1918-1919” (*Loloma: Vei Maria Imakulata Mai Lourdes Ka Vakaruruca Na Koro Ni Vuli Ni Visitasio E Na Matetaka 1918-1919*). On the right: “Glory: For Our Lady of Lourdes who kept the St. Joseph Boy’s School unharmed during the influenza epidemic 1918-1919” (*Me Lagilagi: Na Marama Mai Lourdes Ka Maroroya Na Koro Ni Vuli I Santo Iosefo E Na Matetaka 1918-1919*).

4.0 REMAKING THE ENVIRONMENT IN PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL

TAVEUNI

*Tagimaucia ga na senikau talei
Ni vanua rogo ka kilai levu ko Cakau
Salusalu qoroi kei Uluiqalau
Era lili ka ra sala tu e taba ni kau
E a vu sara mai na dua na turaga
Totoka ka mata vinaka, divi ni yabe mai
E a sa qai lewai mera vakatalai
Nodra yali no suidra ga e a qai laurai*

The precious *tagimaucia* flower
In the famous land of Cakaudrove
Gathered from the Uluniqalau Mountain
Creeping and hanging from the branches of the trees
It grew from a gentleman
With a handsome and charming face
Came with no position, then ruled the land with grace
After his body perished, the flower then appeared

*E delana koya e nodra la'ki tu
Era tagi ka ra laiva nodra i-loloma dei
Nai kadre cake mai na senikau talei
Tagimaucia na nodra i-loloma dei
E matalia ga na kena i vakarau
Ka ni rawa me se, lewa na Tui Cakau
Sakisaki e dai ni senikau dokai
Matalau ka totoka tu na kena i rairai*

On the top of his grave
The people cried, but his love remained
Sprouted up came the beautiful flower
Tagimaucia, that was his gift to stay
It reacted to the manner of the land
If the flower blossomed, it meant Tui Cakau ruled
It's a thing of admiration, the respectful flower
With a joyful and lovely appearance

“*Tagimaucia ga*” (Simply the *Tagimaucia* Flower) – Percy Bucknell

In this chapter I will show how the indigenous environment of Taveuni was shaped by the pre-colonial European planters and British colonial governance starting from roughly the second half of the 19th century. In this process, even the “pristine” or “well-protected” natural scenery on the island that is advertised by tourist agencies today has an “unnatural” history, involving complex indigenous and colonial politics that have marginalized local communities through processes of uneven development. To illustrate my point, I want to first use the example of the famous

tagimoucia flower that is depicted in the lyrics of the classic Fijian tune “*Tagimaucia ga*” given above. The *tagimaucia* or *tagimoucia* flower (*Medinella waterhousei*) is regarded as the emblem of Taveuni and could only be found in the cold and humid central high mountains of the island.²⁷ The song was composed by the legendary Fijian songwriter Percy Bucknell, who is the grandson of the prominent English planter/settler Charles Wentworth Bucknell in Serua, southern Viti Levu, from the early 1870s. Having no connection to Cakaudrove, Bucknell may very well base his inspiration for this song on the prevailing notion that the flower has a spiritual connection to Tui Cakau. The origin of the flower depicted in the song, however, is different from the popular version known to the general public. In a nutshell, it is a love story about the daughter of a paramount chief who fell for a handsome boy from a nearby settlement. This affection was rejected by her father and out of desperation she ran up into the mountain and cried. Her tears were then transformed into these exotic flowers with scarlet bracts and white petals hanging from the trees, resembling drops of tears (Ryan 2000:230). On the other hand, in Bucknell’s song the story is essentially a tale of a “stranger-king” who came and seized the leadership of the land people. *Tagimoucia* thus became the symbol of Tui Cakau’s chieftainship.

When I began fieldwork in Bouma in 2010, I had also heard the story of *tagimoucia* being told by local elders. The plot itself generally conforms to the popular version given above, but interestingly the protagonists were said to be the daughter of Tui Lekutu and a young man from Laucala, names unknown, who first met in Navuga. The etymology therefore has a Bouma dialect origin: “*tagi me uci ‘ea*” (cry to be like her). In terms of territorial notions on the island, the volcanic crater lake “Lake Tagimoucia” in the central mountain, where an abundance of

²⁷ It was later confirmed that it also appeared on Mt. Seatura in western Vanua Levu (Smith 1985:389).

tagimoucia flowers could be found, is within the customary boundaries of *Vanua* Bouma. In the development plan for the Bouma National Heritage Park (BNHP), the lake is actually proposed to be a potential tourist attraction (NLTB 1989:7). When the American Peace Corps volunteer Stewart arrived at Vidawa in November 2012, he was also given *tagimoucia* as a token of welcome. In reality, the ownership or guardianship of the flower or lake is very confusing, even for the people of Bouma themselves. The lake is now within the passively managed Taveuni Forest Reserve declared in 1914, leased from 18 different *mataqali* on the island (Watling 2012). The most documented way to the lake was from Somosomo, which was the route taken by the giver of the flower's scientific name, botanist Berthold Seemann in 1860 (Seemann 1862:26).²⁸ When I interviewed Mr. Tuverea Tuamoto, a Conservation Officer of NatureFiji, a domestic NGO dedicated to environmental management in Fiji and the establishment of a Taveuni National Park, he said that they recognize Tui Cakau as the custodian of the flower, and when they took a survey trip to the lake it was required to do the *i-sevusevu* to the paramount chief. In Bouma however, there is no consensus regarding the proprietorship of the lake. Some said it belongs to *Mataqali* Qali of Lavena, where there is a very steep track leading to the lake, but later destroyed by Cyclone Tomas in March 2010.²⁹ Some said the owner is Tui Lekutu who still has a spiritual reign inside the forest. Finally, according to the NLC survey map, *Mataqali* Naituku of Korovou owns the northern part of the lake, and the south is shared between *Mataqali* Qali and Matakuro of Lavena. Accompanied by the Peace Corps volunteer Stewart, I took the third route, which is through Tavuki, a village on the western side of Taveuni, on a

²⁸ Guided by Tui Cakau Ratu Golea's wife Adi Elenoa Mila, Seemann and his entourage went to the lake in the month of May and thus did not see the *tagimoucia* flower which blooms between October and February. It was later shown to him by Rev. Joseph Waterhouse and he generously named the flower after him.

²⁹ This track was identified by Baron Anatole von Hügel when he visited the lake in April 1877 (von Hügel in Roth and Hooper 1990:448).

four-wheel drive accessible trail leading to the 1,200-meter high Des Voeux Peak and tried to descend to the lake. The road was built for the Digicel and Telecom Fiji Limited (TFL) service stations on the peak. Naturally, it became the easiest way to see the lake for visitors. Along the way we met some Tavuki villagers who told us that Tui Tavuki is the owner of the territory and they had already been taking tourists or flower pickers to the lake, charging them a certain fee that could be over F\$100.

This messiness probably reflects what Walter termed the confusion between “rights of territoriality” and “ownership of land” in Fiji’s land tenure system (Walter 1978b:91). The former are a spiritual/political connection to the ancestral land but with flexible boundaries and capacity to manage political relations between and within settlements, while the latter is founded on labor and cultivation and since colonial times has become more delineated. What Walter saw was that some *mataqali* were given large pieces of land for exclusive cultivation which were previously held by more flexible “rights of territoriality.” This had led to an unequal land distribution and severely weakened the *mataqali* with fewer lands. In Taveuni this process has a different twist. *Vanua* Bouma clearly has “rights of territoriality” to the lake and other central mountain areas. However, the boundaries of and relations within this territory are constantly changing due to warfare and migration in the past, which might explain the confusion regarding today’s exact “ownership.” After the colonial land survey, a more demarcated proprietorship of the lake was then given to the three *mataqali* (Naituku, Qali, and Matakuro) in Bouma, but this process ran parallel to another ongoing project on the island: the politics of nature-making and spatial development that began from the advent of European planters in the 1860s and continued with the implementation of colonial environmental policies into the 20th Century. Through this project, protected areas were created in the central mountains and eastern coast of the island,

while other places on the island were turned into estates and plantations. Situated in the rugged eastern region, *Vanua* Bouma had kept their native land intact but was then “naturalized” and marginalized along with these protected areas and became the “back country” of Taveuni. The song of *tagimoucia* therefore is an epitome of this process: The Bouma connection to the flower was trivialized as the Tui Cakau chieftainship was empowered by British colonialism and as visitors gained access to the lake from the more developed western half of the island.

By nature-making project I follow what Tsing defined:

[O]rganized packages of ideas and practices that assume an at least tentative stability through their social enactment, whether as custom, convention, trend, clubbish or professional training, institutional mandate, or government policy. A project is an institutionalized discourse with social and material effects. Each environmental project propels us into a transformed natural and social world through the way it combines environmentally significant ideas, policies, and practices (Tsing 2001:4-5).

In this process, not only was “environment” produced, representations of the community such as “indigeneity” or “wilderness” and power relations of resource distribution were also created and negotiated (Dove 1999, 2006; Li 1996, 1999, 2000, 2010; Tsing 1999, 2005:198). However, in this chapter I will also show that the nature-making project in Taveuni is far from an “organized” package, but has always been vague and oscillating between development and conservation. Due to the lack of efficient management and the growing cash-cropping industries on the island, there have been many encroachments into the forest reserves, including logging operations. It is also through these gaps that the communities of Bouma were able to seize the growing discourses of sustainable development and proposed the BNHP program. The “nature” and *vanua* therefore, are by no means pristine and kept in isolation, but have always been in the process of planning and negotiating.



Figure 15. The *tagimoucia* flower gathered from the ground on the way to the Des Voeux Peak on Taveuni in December 2012.

4.1 PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT IN FIJI

4.1.1 A Brief History of Capitalist Development

Thirty-four years after the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand and eighty-six years after the establishment of the Crown Colony New South Wales in Australia in 1788, the Cession of Fiji in 1874 may be seen as the next strategic move of the British Empire's expansion in the Pacific, but in actuality the decision was marked with great reluctance³⁰ and filled with underlying agenda beyond political-economic interests.³¹ In 1858 when the annexation was first

³⁰ The Fiji Islands were first offered to Queen Victoria by Cakobau in 1858 which was pushed forward by the British Consul W.T. Pritchard. In 1860 the botanist Berthold Seemann and Colonel W.J. Smythe were commissioned by the government to survey Fiji and provide a report regarding this decision. Due to Colonel Smythe's strong disapproval, the cession was declined in 1862.

³¹ Scholars have explored a wide range of agenda behind the annexation of Fiji. For example, the interest of the Wesleyan Mission and its rivalry with the Roman Catholic Church (Gunson 1965); The international competition of the American, British, and German powers in the Pacific (McIntyre 1960); The internal politics of the British Colonial Office (Drus 1950); The British anti-slavery heritage that prompted the humanitarian intervention against

proposed, the prospect of Fiji for providing cotton supplies and serving as a midway station for steamboats in the Pacific were the main concerns (Morrell 1960:136). Although eventually both factors were deemed unworthy to establish a Crown Colony, the continuous cotton boom in the early 1860s due to the American Civil War had brought more and more white settlers, most of whom British subjects, traveling via Australia or New Zealand to Fiji. By this time the Fijian sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* trade in the first half of the 19th century had almost completely died out. In this period of time capitalist development was pure exploitation. The most notable land use changes were the removal of the sandalwood groves and the clearing of woodland for fuel for the *bêche-de-mer* driers (Ward 1965:21). It was only after 1840 that small long-term European settlements began to take shape. The main agricultural exports during such time were yams for the Australian colonies and later small-scale plantations of copra, coffee, and cotton which made its first shipment to Manchester in 1860 (Ward 1965:22, 2002). These endeavors were invested with low capitals, mostly manual labor from neighboring native Fijians mobilized by the chief (Morrell 1960:141). The population of these foreign pioneers was also not large. As the first British Consul in Fiji W. T. Pritchard observed (1866:209), in 1858 there were no more than 30 or 40 Europeans and Americans in Fiji.

It was a different story after the 1860s cotton boom. Estates were established on smaller islands which were sold entirely with the native residents relocated (Ward 2002). Plantations were scattered around the coasts and river valleys of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, which were acquired through dubious transactions or even violence (France 1969:41). While struggling planters still existed and most were actually losing money in the cotton business due to lack of

the illegal labor trade in Fiji (Samson 1998; Tate and Foy 1965); And finally, a distrust in the local government to maintain law and order (Routledge 1974).

knowledge and high freight charges (Stokes 1968; Ward 1965:23), this era began to see entrepreneurs like the German Hennings brothers who owned a series of plantations, employed several hundreds of laborers, and invested in mechanical improvements for their production. Trading houses, credit institutions, commercial harbors, and townships also emerged. It was estimated that by 1868 the European population in Fiji was 1,288, occupying around 235,000 acres of land, of which only about 5,000 acres were under cultivation (Legge 1958:44-47). Moreover, due to the prevailing opinion that Fijian labor power was unreliable, the introduction of Pacific Islander laborers from mainly the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), the Solomon Islands, and the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) also started in 1864 (Shlomowitz 1986). All of these were happening without a stable government entity, and thus hostilities between the planter society and the natives, power struggle among the chiefdoms, and abuses of laborers were constantly taking place.

As anarchy continued in Fiji, in 1870 the cotton price crashed and planters in Fiji greatly suffered. In the same year cotton still accounted for over 93 per cent of Fiji's exports (Ward 1965:23). Now planters were forced to seek other alternatives. Some went back to copra production which was most prominent in the southern coast of Vanua Levu, Taveuni, and the Lau Group; some experimented with sugar cane, coffee, maize, tobacco, and cattle-raising, while others abandoned their estates which were then acquired by large trading firms (Ward 1965:25, Stokes 1969). Given these hardships, the white population in Fiji soon fell from over 2,000 in 1870 to an estimation of 1,786 by the year 1874 before Cession. The area of lands occupied by them nevertheless grew dramatically to 862,967 acres, of which 13,245 were cultivated.³²

³² "News of the Day." *Evening News* (Sydney, NSW: 1869 - 1931) 19 May 1874, p.2.

Although they accounted for almost 20% of the total land area of Fiji, as noted by Ward these lands were located either at coastal and river sites with transport advantages, or flat alluvial land that could be turned into large plantations. Accordingly, “the loss of productive or potentially productive land by the Fijians became a significant consequence of land sales” (Ward 1969).

4.1.2 Impact to Indigenous Fijians

To the dismay of the planter communities, land alienation was stopped immediately after the implementation of native land policy by the first Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon. Having arrived in Fiji in 1875, Gordon soon formulated a plan that indigenous Fijians should be separated from the Western influence in order to preserve their declining population and traditional way of life which was deemed to be founded on inalienable communal land ownership. Moreover, he was determined that the land sales before 1874 should be reviewed and granted titles from the government. The forming of a Lands Claims Commission was soon gazetted in October 1875 and began hearings in December of the same year until February 1882. Of the 1327 reports for the applications received, 517 were granted as claimed, 390 were disallowed as of right but granted “ex gratia” entirely or in part, or with modifications, while 361 were disallowed. Many confusions and falsehood in past transactions were also exposed in this process.³³ A neo-traditional land tenure system in Fiji was thus formed, which saw indigenous Fijian communities retaining almost 83% of the total land area, while the approved alienated

<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107143106>>.

³³ Land Claims Commission Final Report, February 2nd, 1882, by G.W. Des Voeux, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

lands categorized as Freehold were cut down to 8%, compared with the pre-Cession figure at 20%.

While this policy may be viewed as paternalistic and protective of indigenous rights, many scholars saw it as the crystallization of uneven spatial development in Fiji (Bedford 1988:51-55; Britton 1980; Sofer 1988, 1993). As the accounting historian Davie pointed out, the financial principle of the British Empire was to use as few metropolitan resources as possible. Therefore, budgeting in the colony became essentially an imperial project. This was especially the case for Fiji as the local government was having international debt and civil war crises and the cotton economy was dwindling just prior to the annexation. After Cession, the employment and empowerment of native aristocrats with lower stipends became a financial and political necessity, which had to be built upon a sound native communal system (Davie 2000). The first step was to survey and construct an inalienable native land tenure structure, which was later legalized in the Native Lands Ordinance in 1880. And then in 1876, the Native Taxes Ordinance was passed, which allowed the village as a unit to pay taxes in kind, as opposed to the individual money-taxation utilized before. The designated products were all cash crops including copra, cotton, candle-nuts, tobacco, maize, and coffee (Gordon 1879:188). In 1877 the Native Labour Ordinance was announced, which put much restriction on the natives from taking wage employments, such as working on Freehold plantations, and banned them from leaving the village without the consent of local chiefs. The Native Regulation Ordinance in the same year also gave local chiefs the right to solicit service and produce (called *lala*) from their commoner subjects. Moreover, to solve the problem of labor sources since Fijians were not available, in 1879 Indian laborers were brought to Fiji to work chiefly on sugarcane plantations. All of these had ensured the stability of a native communal system which was confined in the subsistence

sectors, and the minimum involvement of the natives in the growing capitalist economy of the young colony. On the other hand, with the growing sugar export industry and the monopoly of the Australian-based Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) that maintained low-wage labors and low cane-processing costs, the Freehold lands were seeing expanding developments and foreign investments (Britton 1980).

However, were the indigenous Fijian communities really “trapped” in this system and segregated from capitalist sectors of the colony? Arguing against the dualistic economic model in colonial Fiji, political scientist William Sutherland put it quite directly that “Fijians were never ‘left out’ [but] had always been ‘involved’ in the system of capitalist relations by virtue of the positions which they occupied in the sphere of production or circulation or both” (Sutherland 1984:81). He argued that despite the 1876 Native Labour Ordinance, able-bodied Fijians continued to be employed as contract laborers on Freehold plantations through bribery or cash offering to the chiefs, a loophole in the policy (Bain 1988). These laborers were supported by free food and shelter from the villages, thus making the reproduction of this labor power essentially costless for the capitalist mode of production to exploit. Secondly, the incomes gained from these contracts were then pressured to be spent on trade goods and went back into the capitalist sectors. Therefore, the indigenous communities were still subordinated under the capitalist system, despite the so-called “protection” policies. Arguing along the same line but taking an entirely different stance, economic historian Bruce Knapman asserted that the commercial activities were far from static in the Fijian communities in the period of time 1874-1939. Not only were the villagers able to explore a wide range of monetary opportunities, they also brought a degree of affluence to the village while maintaining tribal social relations at the same time. These were all possible mainly because of the colonial native policies that facilitated

the gradual change of the indigenous sectors (Knapman 1987:47). One particular example was the exceedingly growth in Fijian cash crop production, especially copra, either for taxation or commercial purposes, which allowed villagers to receive tax refunds in cash or gained directly from the export market. These incomes permitted them to make the annual Methodist Church donations, purchase a wide range of trade goods, and spend on traditional feasting expenses. In fact, in 1901 export earnings were the leading category of the indigenous incomes, significantly greater than wages (p.36).

It should be noted that colonial native policies were also changing towards opening up the indigenous sectors and the fate of Fijian villages became connected to the global economy more than ever. In 1912 an amendment to the Native Labour Ordinance officially permitted Fijians to leave their district and take wage employment without the consent of local chiefs. The following year paying taxes in cash became obligatory. Thanks to the extensive planting of coconuts after Cession, the first two decades of the 20th century saw relative prosperity for Fijians especially in the eastern copra districts. Dryland taro and cassava were also introduced between 1900 and 1912 to supplement their subsistence strategies (Bedford 1988:63-64). Copra prices collapsed during the 1930s Great Depression, and villagers were experiencing great hardship but had the flexibility to fall back to their subsistence sectors. It soon recovered in the late 40s along with the material goods poured into the Pacific during WWII, but it could not reach the same level of success in the early 20th century (Brookfield 1972:77-78). After WWII, while there had been a return to the communal orthodoxy which saw kin groups as the foundations of Fijian economic success, creative schemes like cooperative enterprises, independent farmers (*galala*), land-subdivision for leasing, development funds, and agricultural subsidies were devised to promote rural development (Bedford 1988:74-75). However, many

studies like the Spate (1959) and Burns (1960) reports still felt that the policies were not radical enough to break up the communal structure and unequal land distribution among kin groups which greatly inhibited their economic performance. Their opinions were nevertheless strongly opposed by the Great Council of Chiefs who stressed that *mataqali* should still be the basic landowning social unit (Brookfield 1988a).

4.1.3 Civilizing and Developing “Environment”

This colonial legacy has tremendous implications for the post-colonial development process in Fiji. After independence in 1970, Fiji’s national economy gradually went in another direction. While the sugar industry remains the pillar of Fiji’s economy, tourism has excelled and became the single largest industry in Fiji in 1999, earning around \$558 million US dollars, contributing to 16% of the GDP and providing employment to an estimation of 40,000 people in Fiji (United Nations 2003:12). Initially the tourism boom only impacted well-developed Freehold lands where international entrepreneurs or companies had invested on infrastructures and tourist facilities (Britton 1980). However, since the mid-1980s a discourse of sustainable development has emerged in Fiji with a focus on nature-based tourism in rural areas. Given that most of the natural resources in Fiji are held under communal ownership by indigenous Fijians, it is argued that this brand of tourism, now called ecotourism, could provide an answer to the rural development dilemma in Fiji. These projects aim to not only provide supplementary income to the subsistence economy of the communities, but also establish better resource management regimes. In turn, community members will actively protect the environment due to the monetary incentives generated by these projects (Korth 2000:262).

However, the fact remains that these small communities are receiving little financial and infrastructural support to compete in the global tourist market. Consequently there has been an argument that more attention should be given to the existing large forest or nature reserves in Fiji (Waqaisavou 1999). Schemes of natural resource management and protection in Fiji had started long ago with the onset of British colonialism. In 1877 the Director of the Botanical Gardens in Mauritius, John Horne, was invited to Fiji by Governor Arthur Gordon who served in the same colony as Governor just prior to his posting in Fiji. With a mission mainly to investigate the potentiality of sugarcane, which was already a booming industry in Mauritius, Horne also made many recommendations regarding environmental management in Fiji. One of those was the establishment of a variety of reserves which should be managed by the government under a Forest Ordinance (Horne 1881:215). From the writings regarding his year-long trip in Fiji, it is clear that the sentiment was that Fiji was covered with dense forest resources which were not efficiently utilized. He lamented that “[i]t is a pity to see so much timber wasted here; fine trees are felled and then burnt off the land, while large imports of timber for building are constantly arriving from New Zealand and Oregon” (pp.37-38). Therefore, the schemes of reserves he proposed were an attempt to balance conservation and development which could then provide firewood for the native communities, preserve water supplies for irrigation and cattle industry, and generate revenues for the colony from selling forest products. His philosophy was articulated clearer in the following passage:

It would seem that a proportion of unwooded arable land and of forest were required to render the climate healthful for man, and to the growth of the plants which man cultivates to supply his daily wants and for the purposes of civilization; and that when the balance inclined too much either way, unhealthiness of the climate for man and his domesticated plants and animals was the result. Examples of this may be seen in various colonies, Mauritius in particular. Before the balance of forest and arable land required by the law of nature can be restored to

that island, a large sum of money (about £200,000 sterling) will have to be expended in the purchase of land, planting and protecting the forests, and likely a generation will pass away before the desired results are attained. To avoid these dangers, and preserve that salubrity of climate, for which as a tropical land Fiji is noted among the islands of the Pacific, it will be necessary for the Government of the colony, in the disposition of lands, to set apart large forest reserves in both the wet and dry districts (pp.129-130).

It is very interesting to see the ideas of “desiccationism” being referenced here, which is a climatic theory that attributes rainfall and its fluctuation to forest cover and deforestation. As the environmental historian Richard Grove pointed out (1995:485-486), while having much earlier intellectual origins, this theory was revived and practiced by a group of environmental thinkers and colonial scientists in late 18th century tropical island colonies, including the French on Mauritius and British in the Eastern Caribbean, which were the precursors of modern environmentalism. The main concern was to recognize the vulnerability of these small Edenic islands under the threat of destructive plantation agriculture, and how the state could salvage this situation by using necessary environmental control (p.478). The proclamation of reserves therefore is not just an environmental project, but also a civilizing project, as well as a colonial project as evident in Horne’s own words, which could ultimately save the colony from over-spending.

Directing the same botanic garden founded by the French environmental thinker and colonial administrator Pierre Poivre who initiated the first conservation projects in Mauritius, Horne surely had inherited such thinking from his working environment and colonial predecessors. His vision was nevertheless only partially realized in Fiji into the 20th century. In 1913, the Forest Ordinance in Fiji was formally enacted by the Legislative Council. The first reserve in the colony was soon proclaimed, covering the river bank mangrove area outside of the capital Suva and Namuka Harbor in Viti Levu. In the following year (1914), the central

mountain of Taveuni was also proclaimed a forest reserve, which became the first and to this day the largest mountain forest reserve in Fiji. However, the formal body of a Forest Department and the position of a Conservator of Forests were not established until 1938. Before then it was the Director of Lands that was assuming this responsibility. Due to the lack of manpower and clear legal framework, the execution of these reserves was not particularly successful. In 1933 a visiting forestry officer from Nigeria, R. A. Sykes, remarked that “[h]uman activity has hitherto been solely destructive so far as the forests are concerned, and no measures whatever to improve their condition have ever been taken” (Sykes 1933:317). He also cited unrestricted logging as the greatest threat to the forests in Fiji. The forestry project in Fiji was further disrupted by the beginning of the Pacific Ocean theater of WWII which saw resources mobilized for the Allies forces (Bennett 2001). After the war, Conservators reported that not only the reserves were never truly demarcated, unlicensed logging was still prevalent (Strong 1951). It wasn’t until 1953 that a Forest Act was passed, giving the Forest Department full control of the Forest Reserves which occupied only 1.8% of the total land area of Fiji (Angus 1958). Since the 60s, the policy had been focusing on the development of timber industry by granting long-term logging licenses, while deforestation caused by agricultural expansion, felling for firewood, and failure to replant persisted (Thaman 1988a:33). Due to the shortage of Crown Lands, the leasing of Native Lands to establish reserves had become a solution but had encountered resistance from the indigenous communities requesting compensation for their foregone timber royalties (Carew-Reid 1990). As would be demonstrated later, the so-called “pristine” and “well-protected” nature that tourists see in Taveuni today was generated from the historical ambiguity of Fijian forestry policy.

4.2 LAND ALIENATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN TAVEUNI 1839-1970

Known as the “Garden Island” for its lush forests, fertile soil, and prospering agriculture, Taveuni is also advertised as a “Freehold Paradise” for the freely transferrable estates and properties. Most notably is a 4,000-acre former plantation called “Taveuni Estates” located at the western side of the island, privately owned and developed by the real estate company Taveuni Estates Ltd. The company is run by the Stinson family which was a prominent European settler family in Fiji since the 1860s and had many business holdings and political ties (Howard 2011[1991]:69). Having well-paved roads, luxurious houses, and public facilities, the Taveuni Estates is like a world of its own on the island. This story – former plantation, well-developed properties, transferable titles, and current foreigner owners – is in fact quite common in Taveuni. In this section I will demonstrate how Taveuni gradually came to have the moniker of “Garden Island” and “Freehold Paradise” and how the spatial development was formed on the island through the entanglement with other historical agents from the 19th century.

4.2.1 The Advent of Foreigners 1839-1870

Vulagi is the Fijian term for strangers or guests, which literally means “origin from the sky.” As mentioned in earlier chapters, *vulagi* is a significant cultural category in the Fijian social landscape. Hocart noted that it has the connotation of “heavenly god” which stemmed from a Fijian custom of making relationships with non-kinsmen entering the *vanua*. They were given privileges, treated like gods, and could potentially be affinal partners (Hocart 2004[1952]:82-84). Therefore, *vulagi* is not a foreigner plain and simple, but someone who becomes connected or

entangled with the land (Hocart 1929:31). Tongans, for example, were prominent *vulagi* to Taveuni as some of them were attached to the local kinship groups. In this section I want to discuss a later wave of *vulagi* to Taveuni, the white Europeans, who did not necessarily form bonds with the land people, but found other ways to enter the *vanua* and transform the environment.

As the Fiji Islands were opened up to the *bêche-de-mer* and sandalwood traders into the 19th century, many spots in the Archipelago became regular stops for the Western trading vessels with whom the local chiefdoms began to have various kinds of dealings. Taveuni and its power center Somosomo nevertheless were not frequented by these new *vulagi*. It is very possible that they were discouraged by the notorious reputations of the Cakaudrove people who were considered the “worst cannibals in Feejee” and documented as generally hostile towards visitors (Sayes 1984). In the 1830s, the then Tui Cakau Ratu Yavala became more welcoming to Western ideas. On October 12, 1835 two British Methodist missionaries William Cross and David Cargill came to the shore of Lakeba in the Lau Group of Fiji and established a Mission. On January 31st, 1837, they were met by Ratu Yavala and his two sons who anxiously requested missionaries to be sent to Somosomo. It was over there that the famous words “True – everything is true that comes from the white man’s country; muskets & gunpowder are true, & your religion must be true” were uttered by his eldest son Tuikilakila (Cargill in Schütz 1977:95).

In July 1839, missionaries John Hunt and Richard Lyth were sent to settle in Somosomo and formally began the foreign presence in Taveuni. Their letters and diaries became the earliest ethnographic accounts of the island. In February 1840, the island was visited by the United States Exploring Expedition led by Captain Charles Wilkes as well as the ethnologist/philologist Horatio Hale for a few days (Hale 1846; Wilkes 1844:149-170). In late 1840, a British

beachcomber/adventurist William Diaper also came to stay in Somosomo for a lengthy period of time (and returned again in 1845, Erskine 1853). The two Methodist missionaries were later on succeeded by Thomas Williams in August 1843 and David Hazlewood in September 1844. Due to constant warfare and passive interest from the local chiefs, the station was evacuated in September 1847. In 1851, the Roman Catholic Church who first set foot in the Fiji Islands in August 1844 also made an attempt to set up a mission at Somosomo, led by Fr. Jean-Baptiste Breheret. It was greeted by hostile attitudes by the Somosomo chiefs and they left in 1852. In September 1859, the Methodist Mission was reopened in Taveuni but moved to Wairiki instead. Missionaries Joseph Waterhouse and Jesse Carey were stationed there, as well as a Tongan minister Joeli Bulu. In May 1860, they were visited by the botanist Berthold Seemann, who later gave a detailed account of the natural and human environment of Taveuni. From his writings, we can see that the native population of Taveuni had begun to dwindle, as he observed that the capital village Somosomo was “a mere collection of ten houses, with neither heathen temple, Christian church, nor respectable strangers’ house” (Seemann 1862:20-21). This was the same sentiment felt by the Methodist missionaries as they shifted the station across the strait to Waikava, southeast Vanua Levu, in September 1860. Into the second half of the 19th century, Taveuni still saw few white settlers taking up residence on the island (p.20). One of them was a partnership of Sydney businessmen Joubert and Wilson who established a small coconut estate in Somosomo around 1860. They imported several Rotuman workers and utilized local water-power to extract coconut oil, but the establishment was destroyed during the Tongan invasion in 1862. This is the earliest documentation of a foreign estate on Taveuni.

A watershed event of Taveuni’s history took place in 1862 when a combined army of Tongans and Fijians from northern Lau led by the Tongan military leader Wainiqolo invaded

Taveuni. They had already seized Somosomo and captured the Tui Cakau at the time, Ratu Raivalita. In September at the shore of Wairiki, they were met by Cakaudrove warriors led by Ratu Raivalita's brother Ratu Golea, who would later on become the next Tui Cakau. The Tongans were defeated at the scrimmage and Wainiqolo was killed on site. Two significant changes happened after the war. One is that the new Tui Cakau Ratu Golea proclaimed all Taveuni subjects Catholics for he saw the invasion as a conspiracy from the Methodist Tongans and missionaries (Pritchard 1866:345). A small piece of land called Betelema in Wairiki was given to Fr. Loresio Favre to establish the Catholic Church and from 1864 two priests Fr. Bochetti and Fr. Jay were appointed to Taveuni and began their Mission work (Crispin 2009:21). The second is that to retaliate against those places that sided with Wainiqolo's army at the battle, or to accumulate ammunitions for future warfare with the Tongans, Tui Cakau began to sell massive areas of lands to foreign planters. Outer isles such as Kanacea, Laucala, Qamea, Naitaubu, Rabi, Mago, Vanua Balavu, and the Ringgold Islands were sold one by one to European planters from January 1863, creating many displaced Fijian communities. He also wanted white settlers on his principal domain Taveuni in order to secure his authority and resist possible Tongan invasion again (Young 1984:185). Lands of the old polities that were subordinated to Cakaudrove's hegemony were thus alienated. Wainikeli had experienced this process earlier when its land in Matei was provided to the Macuata chief Ritova and his entourage as temporary residence when he was deposed from power after losing battle to the Tongans in Vanua Levu in 1859 (Pritchard 1866:340; Seemann 1862:256; Thornley 2002:200). "Na Sele Sele" Estate was also sold to Williams Beddoes in the same year, who would come to be the biggest land purchaser on the island in the following years (Young 1984:95). Still recovering from the defeat to Cakaudrove in 1840, Vuna also saw its lands subdivided as Oliver

Brown purchased “Vatu Were” and the Vuna Estate on May 14th 1863 (p.94). By 1871, the entire southern tip of the island was in the hands of the white settlers (p.187). As for the traditional territories of Bouma, favorable alluvial lands along the Vurevure Bay, known as Tabaune and Vurevure in the Land Claims Reports, were sold respectively to Charles Connor on July 19th, 1863 and G. M. Henry on January 19th, 1863.³⁴ These are the places to which the people of Waitabu and Vidawa claim ancestral link, but they obviously had no say in the transaction. After changing hands and being subdivided for numerous times, they eventually became the Vunivasa, Sere ni Wai, and Colocolo Estates today. Unlike other tribal polities on the island however, Bouma was able to retain most of its territories, possibly due to the unattractiveness of the rest of its lands.

As noted by the historian Scarr, Tui Cakau “sold more land to Europeans than perhaps any other chief in Fiji, rarely consulting the occupants first” (Scarr 1973:38). Sometimes he would even give away land to European planters just to demonstrate that he had the authority to do so (France 1969:48). The land-selling frenzy ended in late 1870 as Tui Cakau told his trusted advisor J. B. Thurston that he was tired of being constantly asked by white men. He even went so far as hiding for months at Thurston’s estate at Tabaune, which was the largest single alienated block on the island created through a series of purchases from July 1867, arranged by none other than Tui Cakau himself (Scarr 1973:117,135). Studying the formation of land tenure in Taveuni, geographer Brookfield commented that by that time Tui Cakau probably had little more land to sell any way. According to his data collected in the mid-1970s, almost half of the island (49.5%) was Freehold (Brookfield 1978b:58), and this was after the Land Claims

³⁴ Land Claims Commission Report No.160-165 “Tabaune,” No.923 “Vurevure.”

Commission's investigation that reduced many of the Freehold areas.³⁵ In fact, the very first session of the Land Claims Commission was held at Wairiki, Taveuni on December 6th 1875, possibly due to the messy situation created by Tui Cakau on and around the island. It is also interesting to note that most of the transactions made by Tui Cakau were deemed as legitimate by the first Commission, and titles were granted to the European claimants (Pritchard 1882:30). This further demonstrated how the dominance of Cakaudrove chiefdom on the island was perpetuated by the colonial government.

4.2.2 Spatial Rearrangement 1870-1970

As the door of land alienation opened in Taveuni in 1863, European planters began to flood to the island and the fame of the fertile island soon spread out. In a report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1867, it was said:

The island of Taviuni is one which has commanded considerable attention lately, several good purchases of land having been made there by late comers as well as old residents. It is about 2000 feet high, but is exceedingly fertile to its very summit ... The chief, Tui Cakau, is not disinclined to sell large plots, but he asks now from 3 s. to 4 s. per acre. There are comparatively few natives up on the island; nearly all, however, profess the Roman Catholic religion. This island, it is thought, will become one of the principal white settlements in Fiji.³⁶

And one of the principal white settlements in Fiji it became. When Thurston first arrived at Taveuni in 1865, there were just 17 white planters on the island (Scarr 1973:137). In 1870 the number had grown to over 100 with 13 white ladies. This was also when the earliest reference of

³⁵ Vuna planter J.V. Tarte recalled that "my titles were all right but many thousands of acres were confiscated where payment was made in guns, powder, and bullets" (Tarte n.d.:27).

³⁶ "Notes from Fiji." *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842 - 1954) 13 December 1867, p.5.
<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13163411>>.

Taveuni as “the Garden of Fiji” appeared (Britton 1870:60,63). All of the settlers were chiefly cotton planters whose yield used to consist of one-third of the total cotton production in Fiji before the industry collapsed after 1870 (Stokes 1968). The hostility against the Methodist Tongans was also relaxed. In 1867 Tui Cakau declared “liberty of conscience” on the island and allowed the Wesleyan Mission to send teachers over. In the same year he and the ambitious Tongan chief Ma’afu who controlled most of the Lau Group founded a political union called *Tovata Ko Natokalau Kei Viti* (Confederation of Northeastern Fiji) and had a parliament house built in Wairiki (Britton 1870:64). Provided with this prosperous environment, the Wesleyan Cakaudrove circuit headquarter soon moved from Waikava to Vuna in 1870, under the patronage of a growing white planter community numbering about 40 (Thornley 2002:376). As noted by Young who studied early planter societies in Fiji, this collection of settlers were not the usual rush-for-riches type of opportunists, but people with higher social status, educational background, and wealthier possessions which allowed them to bring their families over and settle permanently (Young 1984:187-189).

Known as the “Taveuni Lords” for their material wealth and influences, these planters gradually transformed the spatial dynamics of the island. They quickly acquired the best parts of the island, notably the central-west and south, and turned the landscape into plantations and public facilities. Initially the planters tried cotton. When the cotton boom was over in 1871, some of them experimented with growing coffee for a while. Others who owned land in the leeward dry side of island tried sugarcane cultivation. After both ventures failed, copra became their main focus. By the time the importance of the old political center Somosomo had declined following the Tongan war in 1862 and Tui Cakau had since switched his chiefly seat to Wairiki, which was surrounded by planters and both Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches. A jetty

was built there in 1870, and soon a hotel and a store were established. It also had a 7-mile road available for vehicles leading to Somosomo – one of the earliest of such in Fiji (Britton 1870:64). Another emerging center was Vuna Point in the south, which was created from a deserted old Vuna village. Situated at the leeward side on the island with a mostly flat topography and rich volcanic soil perfect for cotton cultivation, Vuna became the most completely alienated region on the island. The planters over here were also living closer together and soon formed a tight-knit community (p.13). Located at the westernmost point of the island, Vuna Point in 1870 had a jetty that was able to have direct shipments from and to Sydney, Australia (p.63). By 1871 it had become a cultural and commercial center with a hotel, store, library, road and even a ladies' school was later established (Calvert 1985; Cooper 1882:200). A census survey of Taveuni in 1875 revealed this new spatial development: Of the 155 Europeans residing on the island, 23 were in the north and northeast, 27 between Somosomo and Vuna, and 105 in the south (Bedford 1978:109).

One of the most prominent planters in Taveuni was the Englishman James Valentine Tarte who came to Fiji when the cotton price was on the verge of collapsing. Taking the advice to engage in the copra business which was rather neglected at the time, he gradually accumulated many blocks of land (almost 20 km² in total after the Land Claims Commission review) in Vuna from 1871 and amalgamated them into a single Vuna Estate which was planted with coconuts. With five years without cyclones, which is how long it takes for coconuts to mature, Tarte soon became a very wealthy man (Tarte n.d.:28). In the Cyclopedia of Fiji in 1907, there were vivid descriptions of how Tarte developed his Vuna estates: he brought cattle from New Zealand, raised horses and mules, built steel rails with portable trams, and employed Indian and New Hebrides laborers (Cyclopedia of Fiji 1907:290-291). To this day the fifth generation of the

Tarte family is still very active in these estates, engaging in a variety of projects such as tourism, biofuel, and virgin coconut oil.

After the 1920s, there was a trend of subdivision of these large estates. This was mostly due to the termination of Indian indenture laborers in 1920 and many estate owners would subdivide their land to either sell or lease them to their Indian workers in hope that they would remain on the land (Brookfield 1978b:42-43). While this marked the wane of the dominance of estates on Taveuni, these blocks and the infrastructure invested on them became the foundation of commercial farming, most notably the taro export business today, which was prominent on flat alluvial lands and already freed from the communal constraints. According to Brookfield's estimation, in 1976 59% of the "usable" area of Taveuni was Freehold, while Fijian collective ownership only controlled 14% (Brookfield 1988a:27). After WWII, these blocks from former estates were changing hands quite frequently, and a new class of buyers emerged. They were large company owners (e.g. Morris Hedstrom, Burns Philip, Malcom Forbes) who sought land to diversify their business and build shops, hotels, even private airstrips (Brookfield 1978b:44). Again, these mostly took place on the western side of Taveuni where many blocks of freehold land were available. As tourism became a viable plan for the economic development of Taveuni after the 1970s, it was expected that the facilities on these land can generate employment and boost urban development in semi-townships like Naqara, Matei, and Waiyevo. Today, these places are where the hotels, resorts, and major commercial areas are located.

As discussed above, the image of Taveuni as the "Garden Island" has a colonial and capitalist interest lurking in the background. It was not just a Western gaze of the exotic. It was a practice of land-grabbing and resource-extracting under the global capitalist expansion of the British Empire. This process was further enhanced by the opening of the Suez Canal in

November 1869, after which regular trades between England and the Oceania colonies via steamships became possible in the 1880s (Fletcher 1958). During such time, the Fiji Islands were in regular steam communication with Sydney and New Zealand. The importance of Fiji in the network of imperial commerce, coupled with historical contingencies of native politics, essentially created the “Garden Island” and the pattern of spatial development on the island.

4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IN TAVEUNI 1877-1990

As the estates were prospering on the western and southern side of Taveuni in the early 20th century, an awareness of environmental protection from the colonial government also began to take shape in the central and eastern forests. As mentioned earlier, the first Forest Ordinance of Fiji was passed in 1913 which provided the legal framework for the proclamation of forest reserves. In the following year, the mountainous area in central Taveuni became one of the first forest reserves in Fiji. Around the same time a large strip along the southeastern coast of the island known as Ravilevu was acquired by the Crown and later declared as nature reserve in 1959. Together with the most recent declaration of the BNHP conservation area in 1990, these areas occupied almost 40% of the island and now are the basis for a proposed Taveuni National Park. On the surface, it showed the British colonial government’s early commitment to environmental protection on outer islands. However, as many reports have already pointed out, the management of these reserves was virtually non-existent (Environmental Management Unit 1993). Encroachments from agricultural activities and logging were not regulated. No resource

management plan was ever carried out. In this section, through colonial records I examine the planning of these two reserves and how it was related to the spatial development on the island. I then discuss how their establishment and ambiguity affected the land use and resource management of *Vanua* Bouma.

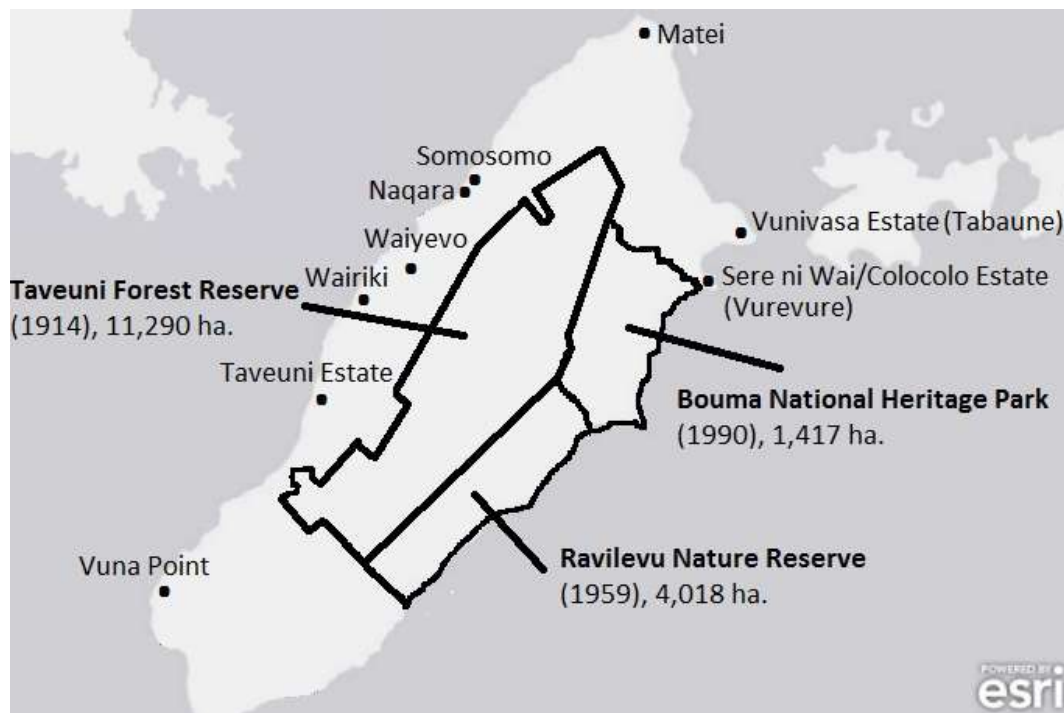


Figure 16. Reserves and estates on Taveuni.

4.3.1 Forest Reserves and Nature Reserves

The seeds of Taveuni's environmental project were sowed rather early. In 1877 John Horne visited the island and made the following observation and suggestion:

This is a very fertile island, and capable of producing large quantities of sugar, coffee, and cocoa-nuts. There are considerable numbers of the latter, but there is room for twice as many ... The area of the island is computed at about 217 square miles, of which about 45 near the coast could be planted with cocoa-nuts, 45 with

sugar cane, and 45 with coffee, leaving 82 square miles for forest reserves and waste land (Horne 1881:54).

In his proposal for a Forest Ordinance in Fiji, Horne again used Taveuni as an example and stressed the importance of balancing cultivation and conservation. He foresaw the danger of deforestation on the island if the balance was not carefully planned and suggested that as a general rule, the top third of the elevation of mountains should be reserved for climatic purposes, while the lower parts may be cultivated (p.216). It became clear later that such a scheme actually perpetuated the spatial development of Taveuni where the western side had potential for further development, while the steep and wet eastern side should be protected.

In December 1909 a report on “Forest Reservation, Island of Taveuni” was submitted to the Colonial Secretary Office by the Commissioner of the Lands Department, Dyson Blair.³⁷ It was stated that in Taveuni, “The soil is a scoria and volcanic loam with which quickly absorbs moisture but does not retain it well, and it is on that account that the question of forest reservation is so important in that island.” Moreover, “Even where no deforestation has taken place it is remarkable how soon after rain the streams cease to run or dwindle to a trickle, and very short droughts seriously affect stock in Taveuni.” As a result, following Horne’s top third rule, Blair proposed that an area of 29,900 acres (12,100 ha.) in the central mountain should be declared as “Forest Reserve.” It should be noted that by “stock in Taveuni” he meant cattle and other animal livestock kept on the estates. It is also clear that in the report the interests of the planters were the main focus and an inquiry of available lands for further alienation was even made. Such a proposal was possible might be due to the miserable state of native population on

³⁷ “Report on Forest Reservation, Island of Taveuni,” December 14th, 1909, CSO F32-18, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

the island. According to Blair's report, there were only 1107 indigenous Fijians on Taveuni in 1909 (Bouma, Waitabu, Vidawa had a combined population of 80 people). It was proposed in the report that they would be kept on 10 native reserves, occupying a mere total of 9,654 acres of land (about 9% of the island). However, their customary communal territory extended much beyond their residential space and stretched further into the forest area. The decision to set up a forest reserve was therefore essentially an act of land alienation from the natives. Such was a time when the Governor of Fiji was Everard F. im Thurn (1904-1910), who was an opponent of the paternalistic protective native land system. He felt that since the native Fijian population was declining, more of the land they occupied should be made available to others who would be able to put them to better usage (Howard 2011[1991]:37). Native Fijian land was thus made alienable again from 1905 until such a policy was overturned in 1908, except for a provision allowing the government to assume land for public interest. It was under this historical context that the central mountain of Taveuni was planned as a forest reserve.

Since its proclamation in 1914, the Taveuni Forest Reserve remained a shell of a vague policy. In fact in the 1913 Forest Ordinance, the nature of "forest reserve" was never specified. If we accept Horne's definition, then the ultimate goal of this type of reserve was to produce commercial timber while having proper management. However, as late as 1939 in the Annual Report of Taveuni it was mentioned that the Taveuni Forest Reserve was not maintained, nor was the potential of commercial timber explored.³⁸ The issue of land tenure inside forest reserves was not discussed until in 1953 when the Conservator of Forests, J. R. Angus, remarked that since the enactment of the 1913 Forest Ordinance, the creation of forest reserves was done

³⁸ Taveuni Annual Report 1937, CSO F26-2-2, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

“in a very arbitrary manner without the need for any consultation with the native owners nor any specific safeguarding of their rights.”³⁹ Citing grievance from Fijians regarding these establishments, he asked for a further review into the existing reserves in Fiji, among which the Taveuni Forest Reserve was by far the largest. Also cited in this memo was a note written in 1946 by the Secretary for Fijian Affairs, Sir Ratu Lala Sukuna, who had called for a greater involvement of Fijian communities in the management of forest reserves. Furthermore, it was stressed that “a *mataqali* owning a large area within the Reserve would be entitled to a proportionately large share of the revenue” of the timber sales.⁴⁰ The 1953 Forest Ordinance amendment finally addressed this issue which was reiterated by a letter to all local/regional native administrators by the Secretary for Fijian Affairs G. K. Roth in 1955:

In a Reserved forest any Fijian who has any share in the ownership of the land, may fish and hunt according to native custom, he may collect wild fruits and vegetables, and he may cut and take trees, poles, grass, creepers and so forth free of fees and royalties for his own use or for the common benefit of his village. But he cannot set fire to the bush or grass within a reserved forest for hunting, or collecting vegetables. He cannot clear and cultivate land nor graze stock nor cut forest produce for sale or trade except under license from the Forest Department, and is then liable to royalty and fees.⁴¹

However, 40 years had already gone by and the colonial government had lost the opportunity to develop the relationship between the forests and the surrounding communities, particularly the gradually marginalized Bouma region. Brookfield noted that since 1965 Fijian cultivation had penetrated the Taveuni Forest Reserve at several points, while other sections had been included in modern leases and lease applications by Fijians (Brookfield 1978b:40). After Independence in the mid-1970s, there was a timber project started by a Fijian settlement on the Qeleni Road

³⁹ “Reserved Forests on Native Land,” June 1st, 1953, CSO F32-75 Memo No.18/6.25, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Forest Ordinance,” November 15th, 1955, CSO F32-135, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

which extended deeply into the Reserve (Brookfield 1988c:223). The irony was that throughout this period of time, despite the various usages inside the central mountain, the Ministry of Forests considered the Taveuni Forest Reserve as protection rather than production of forest resources, therefore no regulations nor compensations were given (NLTB 1989:1). It wasn't until 1991 that a compensating system was adopted to pay the pertinent *mataqali* an annual rent plus compensation payment (Turnbull 2003:16). However, to this day the boundary of the Taveuni Forest Reserve is still very much unsettled and was under another government survey by the Forestry Department when I was in Taveuni in late 2012.

Ravilevu, a 9930-acre (4,018 ha.) land heavily covered with forest located at the southeastern coast of Taveuni also has a turbulent history of conservation. It was purchased from the “native owners” (possibly Lavena) in June 1914 for the sum of £3,750 and became a “Crown Land.”⁴² The original purpose was speculated to be for the settlement of ex-servicemen returning from WWI. No particular decision had been made afterwards, except for a proposal to open up the territory for Indian settlement in 1931, which was immediately turned down.⁴³ In the late 1940s a license was granted to a local Fijian to collect coconuts along the coastline for an annual fee of £10.⁴⁴ From 1953 Ravilevu suddenly became a hot commodity. In that year a British Captain H. M. Frewen applied for a lease to establish a timber mill on Ravilevu but was rejected. Later in the same year, the District Officer of Taveuni noted that there were several other

⁴² CSO F37-49-1 Memo No.28/54, National Archives of Fiji, Suva. Apparently the government was still paying interest money to the natives at least into the 1930s. As mentioned in a report, the District Commissioner of Taveuni “[p]aid interest money £340 on Ravilevu property to natives,” “Month diaries,” April 16th, 1931, CSO F26-3-1, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴³ “Indian Affairs,” half-year report 30th June 1931, CSO F26-4, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁴ CSO F37-49-1 Memo No.28/54, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

applications to which he replied that it was not available for leasing.⁴⁵ In 1954 the Governor of Fiji R. H. Garvey inquired the possibility of relocating part-European communities over there to solve their over-population problem. A survey team from the Agriculture Department was then sent in to investigate the potential for “commercial exploitation.” The result concluded that Ravilevu was covered with heavy bush, making it almost inaccessible and unsuitable for cultivation. However, in 1955 a lease of 524 acres within Ravilevu was still granted to a planter N. D. McGowan to produce copra⁴⁶ and in 1957 the Governor continued to push for a banana growing scheme to be implemented in the area.⁴⁷

A turning point took place in February 1958 at a meeting regarding nature and scenic reserves in Fiji when the Chairman of the Nature Protection Committee of the Fiji Society, Hubert W. Simmonds, proposed the idea of making Ravilevu a “Nature Reserve.”⁴⁸ As an entomologist, Simmonds’s concern was to preserve interesting life forms for the scientific study of naturalists. In Taveuni, the fauna and flora cited included the “Red headed, red breasted species of parrot, the Orange dove, the Paradise flycatcher, and Tagimoucia.”⁴⁹ This was during a time when establishing a National Park in Fiji was all the rage, which was strongly opposed by the Conservator of Forests for lack of funding and human resources. It was instead suggested that nature reserves would serve the same purpose as “National Parks” but with a clearer framework, for which the 1953 Forest Ordinance provided a strict definition:

The purpose of a nature reserve is to preserve an area of forest and the animals and birds therein for a particular reason. Therefore in a Nature Reserve no cutting,

⁴⁵ CSO F37-49-1 F31/566, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁶ “Ravilevu Crown Freehold – Taveuni,” October 29th, 1958, CSO F37-49-1, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁷ CSO F37-49-1 Memo No.68/57, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁸ “Nature and Scenic Reserves,” Record of a discussion held on the 6th Feb. 1958, CSO F32-135, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁴⁹ Society for the promotion of Nature Reserves. October 24th, 1956, CSO F32-135, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

hunting, shooting and so forth will be allowed, unless it is for the purpose of conserving or improving the Nature Reserve. Thus in a Nature Reserve all Fijian rights will be restricted, and no fishing, hunting, collecting of fruits and vegetables, cultivation, grazing and taking of forest produce will be allowed, except under license from the forest department.⁵⁰

In June 1959, the Forestry Board of Fiji unanimously recommended that the whole of the Taveuni Forest Reserve and Ravilevu be declared together a Nature Reserve.⁵¹ This was immediately cautioned by the Executive Council that unlike forest reserves, in nature reserves all native rights including collecting royalties would be lost. The Secretary for Fijian Affairs, A. C. Reid, further argued that a considerable of lands in Taveuni had already been alienated and the inclusion of native lands in the Taveuni Forest Reserve into the proposed nature reserve would reduce the areas of land available to the indigenous Fijian communities.⁵² Finally, at the end of 1959 Ravilevu alone was proclaimed as Nature Reserve while the Taveuni Forest Reserve maintained its status quo. While Ravilevu remained virtually untouched from development projects ever since, from the 80s Lavena villagers began to take tourists to its coastline and forests, particularly for the magnificent waterfalls inside. It was soon recommended that improvements of access to northern Ravilevu should be made to facilitate these excursions (NLTB 1989:9).

These two reserves are often treated as evidence of the early environmental interventions implemented in Taveuni which serve as further testimony of the “Garden Island.” Through the examination of the biographies of these two reserves, we can see how ambiguous they were when being designed in the first place. As argued by scholars, despite the pedigree of conservation projects pioneered in different colonies before entering the Pacific Islands, British

⁵⁰ “Forest Ordinance,” November 15th, 1955, CSO F32-135, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁵¹ CSO F37-49-1 Memo No.5711/249, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁵² CSO F37-49-1 Ex.Co.No.244, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

colonialism only created “reserves” and “national parks” under necessary legislation but did not carry out substantial management plans to conserve biodiversity (Lockwood et al. 2008:110; Techera 2013:100). Moreover, in the case of Taveuni the establishment of reserves had implications to the spatial development and land alienation processes on the island. As the community with the closest ties to these areas, Bouma and its environment were significantly affected by these nature-making projects.

4.3.2 Processes of Uneven Development

As mentioned earlier, other than the alluvial flats around Vurevure Bay which were purchased for cotton plantations, the communities of Bouma generally retained their customary territory. In fact, they have kept the most complete native block in Taveuni, while major villages like Somosomo, Welagi, Vuna, Naselesele, and Qeleni all had pieces of land around their settlements subdivided and sold. This certainly was a blessing for they were spared from seeing their native soil being alienated. On the other hand, in the grand scheme of spatial development on the island, Bouma was equated with the eastern forest areas and generally left out from development initiatives until the mid-20th century. There was limited commercial development, which was even declining in the 1970s (Brookfield 1978a:8). This was also reflected in the lack of infrastructure in the region, as the circuminsular road of Taveuni did not begin to be extended to Bouma until 1964 and did not actually reach Waitabu until 1976. Before then it only stopped at the Waibula River at the Vunivasa estates (formerly Tabaune). The two alienated blocks of Tabaune and Vurevure estates at both sides of Vurevure Bay in the 1870s were therefore like the last frontier of white civilization on the island, beyond which were the rugged mountains. Today

when you stand at Vurevure and look southwards at Bouma, the first thing you would notice is a steep climb that leads you uphill. People in Bouma today still use this spatial reference: As they are going counterclockwise to the western side of the island, they will say “*la‘o sobu*” (going down) and “*la‘o ca‘e*” (going up) when heading back clockwise. It is therefore not difficult to imagine that in the late 19th century when there was no road or other establishments, the whole territory must have seemed like deep wilderness. This was even clearer in the Land Claims Commission’s report of Vurevure’s title which was eventually granted to A. A. Coubrough in 1880 with adjustments to the boundary.⁵³ In the report, the space beyond Vurevure estate’s boundary was marked as “hill land.” The owner of Tabaune, J. B. Thurston, remarked in 1870 that the high and wet territory south to his property was largely uninhabited by Fijians, where he had noticed some deserted village-sites (Scarr 1973:134). There was, however, a documented conflict in 1871 between the “natives” over there and the then occupiers of Vurevure, Howard Fitzsimmons and Lawrence Ryan, which resulted in several deaths of their imported laborers. The white planters said the issue was about women, but the natives maintained that it was a boundary dispute that stemmed from coconut-picking.⁵⁴ The action of these natives, who were very likely to be the predecessors of the later inhabitants of Waitabu, showed that this was not an empty space void of indigenous activities. On the other hand it also confirmed the danger and untamedness beyond the estates, which were alarmed by other planters in Tabaune (p.161).

Such was also the time when Taveuni’s native population was recovering from serious depopulation, especially compared with the growing white community. In 1872 Taveuni was one

⁵³ Land Claims Commission Report No.923 “Vurevure,” National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

of the regions in Fiji with the highest proportion of Europeans (150 whites. 1,000 natives).⁵⁵ After the measles outbreak in 1875, it was observed that there were “remarkably few Fijians” and “not many Fijian settlements” on this island (Anderson 1880:38,41). This had tremendous implications for the developing plantation economy of Taveuni because it had to seek other sources of labor to meet its growing demand – The native population was not large enough to begin with and was generally considered unreliable or had been almost invisible, immersed in the wilderness like the Bouma communities. To solve this issue, from 1864 Taveuni planters soon began to import “Polynesians,” as they were known at the time, from the Line Islands, New Hebrides, and later the Solomon Islands. In the year 1881 when the first census was taken, there were 1706 indigenous Fijians, almost 400 Europeans, and over 1000 “Polynesians” (Bedford 1978:109). The “Polynesian” work force was gradually replaced by the Indian indentured laborers since their introduction in 1879 and Taveuni planters were the first in Fiji to employ them on the plantations. In 1882 there were already 299 Indians on the island, which continued to rise as the plantation economy expanded in the 1890s until the termination of all indentures in 1920 (p.103). Around the same time indigenous Fijians in Taveuni were forbidden to work on estates. Even when the policy loosened in the early 1900s, planters would prefer Fijian contract labors from other districts, most notably Lomaiviti, Lau, and Kadavu,⁵⁶ many of whom then married into local villages (Brookfield 1978b:41). After experiencing a decline in number through the Great Depression in the 1930s, both the Indian (or more correctly the Indo-Fijians as most of them were now born in Fiji) and Fijian contract labors were demanded again by the

⁵⁵ “Statistics of Fiji,” *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848 - 1957) 22 April 1872, p.7.
<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5861798>>

⁵⁶ “Monthly diaries,” 7th December, 1937, CSO F26-3-6, National Archives of Fiji, Suva. See also the “Native Affairs” in the half-yearly report of 1932, CSO F26-4, which stated that “in the case of natives here invariably leads to laziness and disinclination for work. Hence all native labour has to be imported from other districts.”

estates after WWII when copra price rose significantly. As a result, between 1946 and 1956 the total island population almost doubled (from 3,044 to 5,890), which was mostly contributed by these immigrants, thus making Taveuni the region with the highest proportion of “strangers” in Fiji (Bedford 1978:95-96). Since the 1930s these people, particularly the Indo-Fijians, had gradually established new settlements, purchased or leased lands, engaged in the retail trade sectors or commercial farming, and had risen from the most disadvantaged group of people heavily relying on wage labors (Nankivell 1978:295), to the most economically flexible ones on the island.

Despite contributions from immigrants, Taveuni is still very much underpopulated considering its size and the wealth of its natural resources.⁵⁷ However, the research team led by Brookfield had pointed out that the island still suffered from “numerous cases of acute land shortage, evidence of great disparities in income levels” which were “the result of a maldistribution of resources rather than any scarcity of the basic necessities for a productive rural livelihood” (Bedford 1978:92; cf. Brookfield 1978a:3). Echoing this observation, the geographer Ward also concluded that “[t]he high proportion of freehold land in the region coupled with the importance of commercial agriculture, particularly copra production, result in a shortage of land in a number of Fijian villages” (Ward 1965:241). This is particularly the case for Bouma where the unequal distribution and control of resources was not solely due to its topography, but more importantly the pre-colonial plantations politics and the colonial native policies carried out thereafter. I have briefly discussed the lack of infrastructural development

⁵⁷ The 2007 national census put 13,372 people on the island (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007), while a study in 2010 has estimated 17,000 (McGregor et al. 2011a:13). In comparison, islands with similar areas as Taveuni are Barbados (431 km²; around 284,000 ppl.), Curaçao (444 km²; around 142,000 ppl.), and Guam (541 km²; around 159,000 ppl.) which all have significantly larger populations.

and the alienation of the most arable lands in the region. While lacking direct data to capture the life of the Bouma people from the late 19th to early 20th century, the colonial reports from the Taveuni District Commissioner's Office in the 1930s offered a glimpse into the commercial and subsistence activities of the natives in Taveuni under colonial rule. Particularly, the condition of inequality on the island was mentioned in several different places. For example, in the half-year report of 1932:

The natives of Taveuni possess but little land of their own – all the best areas being the property of European Planters who are apparently jealous of the land rights and are rigid in their exclusion of the native on their land save those engaged as labour.⁵⁸

Also in the annual report of 1937:

Most of the good land of Cakaudrove was alienated before cession, the then Tui Cakau trading it for arms and ammunition in his wars against Cakaubau [sic]. Practically the whole of Taveuni is under European ownership up to the 2000 foot level above which is impenetrable bush.⁵⁹

While the Taveuni European estates had already experimented with several different enterprises, the natives had only one major option for income earning – coconut-growing and the production of copra,⁶⁰ which remained the most important cash crop into the 1980s. Coconuts had always been a traditional Fijian staple, but the commercialization did not begin until the mid-19th century in Eastern Fiji which was encouraged later on by the Methodist missions and the colonial government as a form of tax payment (Knapman and Walter 1980:206; Ward 1965:164). After the Cession in some places in Eastern Fiji, which are also known as the coconut districts, copra was able to bring in a considerable amount of cash income. For example, in the Lau Group,

⁵⁸ CSO F26-4, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁵⁹ CSO F26-2-2, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁶⁰ “The cutting and selling of copra is perhaps the only trade that is followed with any continuity by the natives of the Province ... The local storekeepers are the principal buyers of native produced copra.” Annual report of 1939, CSO F26-2-2, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

copra sale to traders and refunds by government because of overpayment of copra for government taxes, coupled with high copra prices in the 1920s, had enabled the Lauans to spend on a wide array of things, including church building, schools, boats, and water supplies, as well as personal goods like biscuits, canned meat, flour, sugar, soap, salt, kerosene, matches, tobacco, cloth, and housing (Knapman 1976). Two important historical conditions allowed this kind of expenditure to happen. The first was the revolutionary land and taxation policy implemented by the Tongan chief Ma'afu when he controlled the territory from the 1850s, which stimulated an increasing production of coconut oil and cotton on native lands. Around the same time European traders like William Hennings also entered the islands and provided market outlets for the Lauans' cash crops, as well as trade goods that created incentive for the natives to engage in cash cropping (pp.170-171). The result was that by the 1880s Lauans had already been fairly familiar with the market economy and were able to participate in it on their own terms. Secondly, copra sales were not the only source of cash income for the Lauans. Rent paid by Europeans for leasing plantations and store sites, occasional sales of food to plantations, and casual wage labors on plantations or boats, were all available cash-earning opportunities (p.175). Even during the copra price depression of the 1930s, they were able to explore in the sale of marine products to diversify their sources of income (p.182).

With the lack of wage employments on the plantations and early exposure to the market economy, as well as the deficiency of productive lands and transportation, the options of the people of Bouma were limited as they were incorporated into the colonial capitalist system. Despite an abundance of native crops, they were not profitable due to the high freight and

transport costs.⁶¹ According to the colonial reports of Taveuni, similar to the Lauans, some native communities were quite well-off as the recipients of lease money from Indians or Europeans.⁶² However, with no attractive lands left, Bouma again was deprived of such an opportunity. The prospect of copra on the island was also not looking well in the mid-1930s. The blame however was not placed on the low selling price, but the natives' work ethic. In the half-yearly report of 1935, it was stated that

In the communal production of copra performance has been almost everywhere so lethargic that no useful estimate of results can yet be given. One small, compact and law-abiding district Naweni, had made and shipped all their copra and paid all rates and taxes by the middle of May, and there is little doubt that the majority of district could in theory have done the same if they had worked with any enthusiasm.⁶³

This was reflected in the increasing failure of the native communities to meet taxation demands, as the number of offenders grew dramatically from 1924 to 1934 (see Table 3). Even when they did earn money from copra, "the major portion of their money goes into the pockets of the storekeepers, the balance, where taxis are existent, to the taxi-owners."⁶⁴ We can thus reasonably speculate that up until the 1930s with limited productive land and means of transportation and production, the copra business in Bouma did not bring them the prosperity that other places in the coconut districts of Eastern Fiji enjoyed.

⁶¹ Annual report of 1939, CSO F26-2-2, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁶² "Native Affairs," half-year report of 1932, CSO F26-4, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁶³ CSO F26-2-1, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

⁶⁴ "Native Affairs," half-yearly report 1936, CSO F26-2-1, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

Year	Number of offenders
1924-1929	5
1930	10
1931	40
1932	42
1933	60
1934	80

Table 3. Number of people imprisoned for tax and rate default in Taveuni District 1924-1934 (Source: Annual Report of Taveuni 1934, CSO F26-2-1).

Things took a different turn after WWII. Not only did the copra price recover from the early depression, the cooperatives organized during wartime to provide the Allied forces with food paved the way for the cooperative movement in Fiji after 1947 (Bennett 2009:224; Parham 1947). Soon in the 1950s villages began to establish their own producer marketing cooperatives. They bought coconuts from the villagers, produced copra by their own driers, and sold them to major buyers. A Waitabu elder told me that in the 1950s there were three cooperatives in the region. Buyers would come over to collect copra via boats and docked directly at Vurevure Bay. The cooperative in Waitabu was so successful that it was able to invest in cattle-rearing near the village and purchase a 17-acre land in Delaivuna, southern Taveuni, to plant more coconuts. This was also a period of time when the relationship between estates and surrounding native communities was much improved. The first known case of wage labor in Waitabu was my father Mika's father Talemō who was a copra worker at Veitalacagi in the Vunivasa Estates in the 1940s. Mika remembered that in the 1960s after his father returned to the village vicinity and kept on planting and selling copra, the family situation was quite well-off. There always were rice, sugar, and flour stored in the house. He even had his personal stocks of cattle and was able to contribute generously at funerals. The wealth accumulated enabled them to build the first cement house in the village in 1982. As for the Vurevure Estate, in 1952 James Hennings

(known as Jim in the region), the great-grandson of the famous German trader William Hennings, left his job as a manager in Veitalacagi and took over the eastern half (Colocolo) of Vurevure which was purchased by his namesake grand-father in 1924 to start a coconut plantation. The trade store he subsequently opened was frequently visited by Waitabu villagers to purchase rice, sugar, and flour. He also socialized with the villagers and in 1977 married Elena, the daughter of the then Tui Nasau. To this day his families and Fijian workers at the estate still have many interactions with the Waitabu villagers.

However, with the increasing involvement in the market economy from the beginning of the 1950s, the growing need for cash pressured villagers to expand their coconut groves, which led to an old question in new form: land shortage (Knapman and Walter 1980:207). This was coupled with a significant population boom in Waitabu, from 39 in the 1946 census to 105 in 1956 (Gittins 1947:101; McArthur 1958:79). This growth was against the general trend of population decline in most Fijian villages due to emigration to townships or commercial independent farmers staying away from the village (Ward 1959:330), which suggested that outside opportunities were still limited to Waitabu villagers at the time. With this population growth, the uneven distribution of *mataqali* land codified by the NLC became more salient. Of the 655 acres of land allocated to Waitabu, 507 belong to *Mataqali* Waisoki. More importantly, most of the acreage is on inarable steep hills or bushes. This condition had caused cases of land encroachment in Waitabu, some of which are still not settled today. Around the same time, despite several occasions of peaking, the copra price was generally trending downwards and continued to decline in the 1980s due to the global oversupply (Brookfield 1988b:101-103). The industry was also continuously marred by “low capitalization, high labour coefficient, ancient technology, minimal R&D input, and archaic systems of marketing and transportation”

(Brookfield 1977:136). Today in Waitabu copra has been fully replaced by the kava and taro export ventures, but the legacy of land shortage still remains. “Not enough land” is the general sentiment of the Waitabu farmers when being asked about the drawbacks of farming in the area. The most productive farmer in Waitabu can have 3,000-5,000 taro plants in his gardens at a given time, while the number for the commercial farmers in the southern lowlands of Taveuni is ten times of that. In 2010 I interviewed Peter, the manager of the company Pacific Produce Ltd. which currently owned Vunivasa. He told me an interesting anecdote that in May 2000 after the coup and socio-political crisis broke out nation-wide in Fiji, an elder from Waitabu came to him in Vunivasa and kindly asked if they could have their land back. When being asked why such a request when Waitabu already occupied a large territory, he replied that the land was not developed and without proper roads, which made it difficult to farm, unlike Vunivasa with many tracks leading to the mountainous area (Peter Kjaer, interview, 06/24/2010).

The unequal control of resources was also manifested in the growing dominance of the Cakaudrove chiefdom on the island since the Cession, not only ideologically but also materially. As the Land Claims Commission reviewed the transaction of Vurevure in 1880, Tui Cakau Ratu Golea’s right to sell the land on the behalf of the natives was never questioned.⁶⁵ After Ratu Golea passed away, his Sydney-educated son Ratu Lala succeeded the title and became the first Roko Tui Cakaudrove in 1880, a paid native administrative position invented by the colonial government (France 1969:108). Manipulating both Fijian custom and colonial law, Ratu Lala continued to seize about 837 acres of land, controlled labor workforce on the island, and made tremendous profit through large-scale planting (Scarr 2013[2001]:152). The land he acquired

⁶⁵ Land Claims Commission Report No.923 “Vurevure,” National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

was not just Freehold, but also native land that was made inalienable by colonial land policy. For example, near Vurevure Bay a small area was enclosed to keep his pigs.⁶⁶ Ratu Lala was very much feared on the island and appeared to be able to take resources freely from his native subjects (Gardiner 1898:196). In the early 20th century a traveler H. Wilfrid Walker visited Taveuni and was taken on various fishing expeditions in different tribal territories on the island under his authority (Walker 1909:30). This “modern” paramountcy of the traditional leaders of Cakaudrove did not cease after Ratu Lala died at a young age in 1905. In 1926, the then Roko Tui Ratu Isoa who was also a high chief of Cakaudrove organized a subdivision of native lands around Somosomo to 17 chiefs for their personal usage. He also acquired a large holding from Qeleni which was transferred into Freehold registered under his name, as well as the whole island of Yanuca (Brookfield 1978b:41-42). Their hands began to reach into the Forest Reserve and Bouma when a Korean logging operation was established on the island under the consent of the then Tui Cakau Ratu Penaia Ganilau and his cousin at the Provincial Office in the late 1980s. The operation was first carried out unsustainably in the Waica area on the western side of the island (Environmental Management Unit 1993:15). Then in 1988 it attempted to incorporate Bouma into their scheme. With no other viable economic option at the time, this proposal was initially accepted by a *mataqali* in Bouma (Farely 2009:198). It was later that a sentiment of being strong-armed by these Cakaudrove chiefs grew, and some of the villagers of Bouma who were aware of the sustainable development movement beginning in Fiji decided to approach the Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB) for their assistance to initiate a program that can protect their forest, provide tourism opportunities, and most importantly conserve their cultural heritage that

⁶⁶ Ibid.

is rooted in the forest (Crosby 2002:371). In November 1990 with funding from the New Zealand Overseas Development Agency (NZODA) and management assistance from Fiji's Forestry Department, an area of 1,417 ha. was designated as the Bouma Forest Park (later BNHP) under a 99-year lease. This conservation program was therefore essentially a response to not only the threat of environmental degradation from logging, but also the manipulation of environmental resources by the Cakaudrove chiefdom, as well as the growing marginalization of *Vanua* Bouma.

Overall, what I wish to demonstrate in this chapter is that the pre-colonial planter activities and colonial environmental planning in Taveuni that created the Taveuni Forest Reserve, Ravilevu Nature Reserve, and BNHP should be put in the context of uneven spatial development on the island that accelerated after 1863 and was solidified by colonial policies. The indigenous politics among different chiefdoms and foreign powers also played a decisive role that led to the event of 1862 and continued to influence the environmental planning of Taveuni into the 20th century. There is therefore no "pristine" nature on the "Garden Island" which is itself a product of planter politics. The selection of alienated land also involved a capitalist glance that calculated which spaces were suitable for production and those that did not fit the scheme were soon categorized as either native or nature. But even the policies regarding the reserves were ambiguous and oscillating between conservation and development. Bouma, the region that retains most of the native lands, therefore does not own an entirely untouched and isolated space which formed the basis of the BNHP. These lands were already involved in the process of the production of nature and these historical elements would always be part of their *vanua* as the villagers engaged in contemporary development projects.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CASE STUDY I: CONFLICTS AND COLLABORATIONS OF THE WAITABU MARINE PARK

It was another typical night in March 2005, in the northeast coast of Taveuni. The Vurevure Bay was tranquil as usual. There was no running electricity in that part of the island so everything was in pitch dark from the foreshore to the open sea – perfect for spearfishers to sneak pass Sikeci point and enter into the Marine Protected Area (MPA) just outside of Waitabu village (see Figure 17). It has been almost 7 years since the MPA was established by the community, which was designed as a no-take, no-anchor zone. Annual biological surveys had shown visible improvements in the marine ecosystem. Groupers were coming back. Giant clams were growing. Soft corals were forming. But starting around 2004, incidents of uninvited fishermen intruding into the MPA during night times were reported (Sykes 2007). “*Qoli buta‘o*” is what the locals called these activities, which literally means stealing in the fishing ground, or “poaching” in a modern legal sense.

On that night, upon seeing a boat presumably leaving the MPA, a group of Waitabu villagers led by the *turaga ni koro* (village elected headman) Sam rode on a van and stopped at the roadside of Vurevure Bay, where the fishing crew were supposed to get back onshore. The engine was switched off while they waited patiently in the darkness. As expected, a small gang of fishermen slowly emerged from the coast into their sight. The driver then suddenly turned on

the headlight, while the passengers jumped out from the van and threw rocks at them. They yelled and chased the fishing party away, confiscated the fishing equipment and fish catches that were hurriedly left behind.

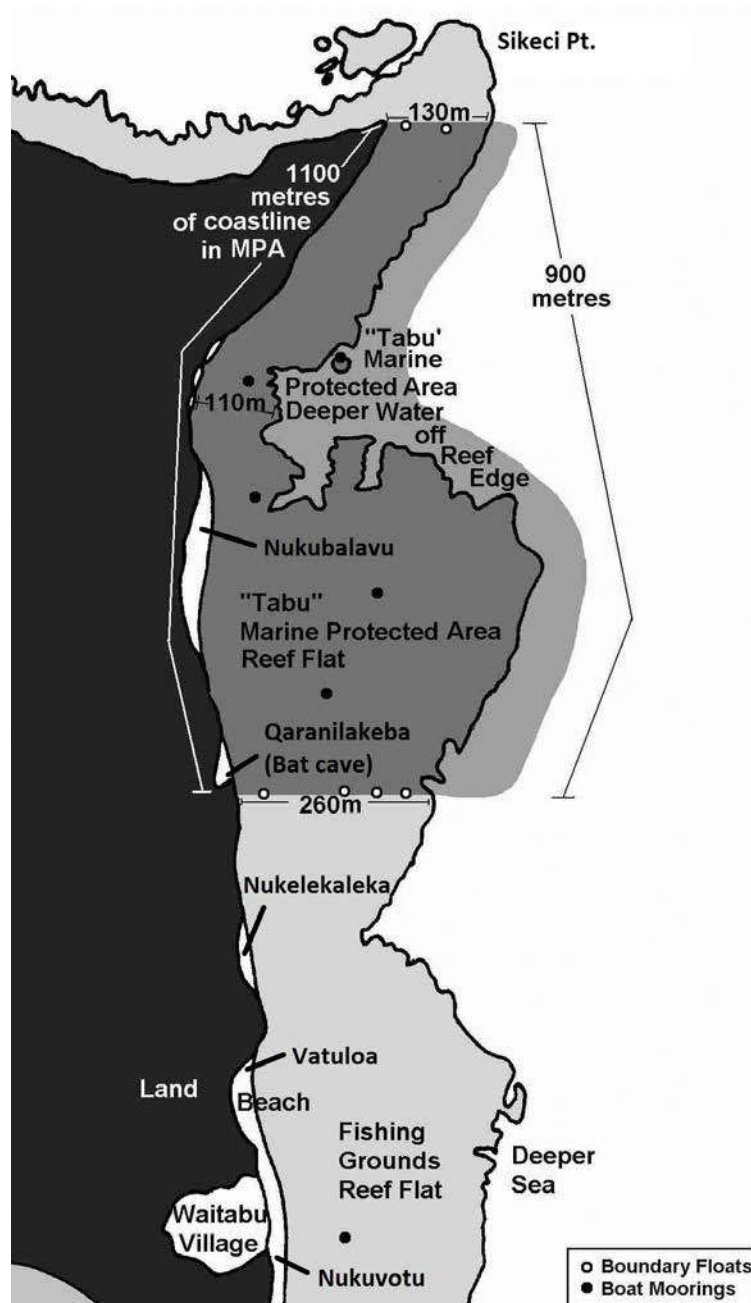


Figure 17. The MPA of Waitabu (basemap provided by Helen Sykes).

The following day, Sam was standing at the roadside bus stop waiting for the bus to go purchase fuel. Over there he was confronted by a Vurevure resident who was present at the altercation from last night. The latter took matter into his own hands and started a fist fight, in which Sam was hit by an object in the head and died on site. The police was involved quickly and took the man who allegedly initiated the attack into custody. He was subsequently sentenced in the Taveuni Magistrates Court for 5 years of jail time to the Labasa prison in Vanua Levu. As angry as the whole village of Waitabu was, they accepted the formal apologies from Vurevure in a *mata ni gasau* (reconciliation ceremony) organized in the following days. *Tabua* valuables (whale's tooth) were presented to reconcile the tension.

The story above was not just a trivial event on some remote island in Fiji. By that time Taveuni has been promoted as a tropical paradise with lush vegetation and pristine nature for international tourists. Other than the foreign-owned luxurious hotels and resorts and their associated beaches and water sports, the Bouma region where Waitabu is located is one of the most celebrated tourist hotspot in Taveuni. The Bouma Forest Park, later known as the Bouma National Heritage Park (BNHP), was officially founded in November 1990 with funding from the New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (NZODA)⁶⁷. The BNHP program consists of the four major land-owning communities in the Bouma region, each having its own ecotourism projects. It has been championed as a blueprint for sustainable rural development in Fiji, which is able to provide sound environmental management, conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, as well as adequate incomes and livelihood to the rural communities (Bricker 2002:283; Buckley 2010:83; Crosby 2002; Malani 2002; Pigliasco

⁶⁷ From July 2002, the NZODA program has been replaced by the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

2007:331; Zeppel 2006:46-47). In November 2002, it became the winner of the “National Parks and Protected Areas” category of the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The then manager of Waitabu Marine Park, the late Sarah Fatiaki, was invited to fly to London to receive this honor on the behalf of Bouma. This was a huge success to the project which was only in its initial stages. The government of Fiji was quick to pick up this storyline. Officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Fiji Visitors Bureau, Fiji Trade and Investment Board all commented that such rural ecotourism and sustainable development program is an alternative way of success for rural communities in a national economy that relies on sugar and garment export (Tikotani 2002). However, as Farrelly’s ethnographic research (2011) pointed out, despite the official and international narratives of success, after 2004 there were many confusions and resentments in Bouma towards how the program was managed, which were mainly due to the inadequacy of the imposing democratic decision-making body over the existing traditional decision-making systems. The 2005 incident in Waitabu was cited as one of the fallouts from this conflict (Farrelly 2011:820).

Being part of the BNHP ecotourism program, Waitabu nevertheless gained its own fame through another channel: the global marine conservation network. While modern marine sanctuaries in Fiji began on privately-owned islands around the 1970s, Waitabu was one of the first villages to establish a community-based MPA (CBMPA) in 1998. As a founding member of the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area network (FLMMA) which was formally launched later in 2001, it was a pioneering site that collaborated with marine scientists and foreign NGOs (Coral Reef Alliance, Conservation International, Resort Support, etc.), and continues to have annual biological monitoring and training activities. In a country that already leads the Pacific and Southeast Asian nations in marine conservation establishments (LMMA 2010:6), Waitabu’s

status as the longest operating CBMPA in Fiji is well-recognized. Every year there are researchers and students, foreign and domestic, coming down to study the effects of the MPA and receive the hospitality from the Waitabu villagers. In March 2001, almost three years after the MPA was initiated, trained tour guides from the village began to take tourists to snorkel and experience the regenerating marine life. Things were looking prosperous, until the tragic event happened. The conservation worker/marine biologist Helen Sykes, who has been working with Waitabu since the MPA was installed, still remembered the aftermath of the violent act vividly. She said that she was ready to terminate the project after the death of Sam: “I felt if it was creating such conflict that people were dying over it, it wasn’t worth it,” she said to me during an interview (Sykes, interview, 04/07/2010). Waitabu villagers nevertheless were adamant about the operation of the Marine Park, and it continued on despite this interlude of calamity. The tension between the communities soon dwindled, and the Marine Park was business as usual.

But underneath the Marine Park ecotourism business, many issues still remain to be explored. As presented in a news report from the Fiji Times covering the story, the death was the result of “a dispute over fishing rights.”⁶⁸ The issue of customary fishing right and fishing ground (*i-qoliqoli*)⁶⁹ is a widely debated subject in Fiji. Despite continual calls for full territorial ownership throughout the colonial and post-colonial times, currently the state (and before the British Crown) still owns the area below the high tide mark including the seabed, while the indigenous communities hold fishing rights in their registered fishing grounds. According to the Register of Native Customary Fishing Rights in Fiji, the northeastern coast of Taveuni is a joint

⁶⁸ “Fishing Dispute Leads to Killing,” *Fiji Times*, March 15, 2005.

⁶⁹ *i-Qoliqoli*, or widely simplified as just *qoliqoli*, is a Fijian term referring specifically to the fishing grounds within which *yavusa* (tribe/village) or *vanua* (region/state) hold customary fishing rights, either independently or jointly. It can be in the inshore territories, around outer islets, or in inland freshwaters.

fishing ground called “Wainikeli-Bouma,” in which all the customary land-owning communities along the shore as well as those on the western side of Qamea Island share customary fishing rights (see Figure 18). In section 13(1) of the Fisheries Act, it is stated that any member of these communities could take fish within this inshore area as long as it is for subsistence consumption. Was it possible that the “poachers” actually still considered themselves as rightful owners of customary fishing rights inside the MPA, and used “poaching” as a way to resist the environmental institutions imposed by the state, which was seen as a legacy of colonial repression as shown in many cases in eighteenth-century Europe and contemporary East Africa (Adams and McShane 1996:160-165; Neumann 1998:47-49; Scott 1990:189-190)? Could it be that the MPA was inadequately designed with an intention to forcefully separate wildlife from human activity, thus creating resentments and distress of the local communities (Harper 2002; Igoe 2004; West and Brockington 2006; West, Igoe and Brockington 2006)? These are some of the questions raised by researchers studying the imposition of protected areas or conservation projects, which have wider political implications of inequality, resource maldistribution, and ethnic marginalization (Anderson and Berglund 2003).

Diverging from these top-down approaches imposed on people and places were the movements of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDP) and Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) which are said to be more bottom-up, democratic, and locally oriented. However, as studies had pointed out, local values rooted in the indigenous cosmology were often misunderstood or neglected (Ellis and West 2004; West 2005, 2006). The shaping of “communities” and “indigeneity” based on different legal definitions in the processes of conservation was also challenged, which was said to have marginalized groups of people who did not fit into this system (Dove 2006; Li 1999, 2002). The financial and

political baggage of CBNRM that attempted to convert communities into manageable projects was also questioned (Tsing, Brosius and Zerner 2005). As a result, cases of conflict and resistance were often reported in these well-meaning environmental interventions (Holmes 2007).

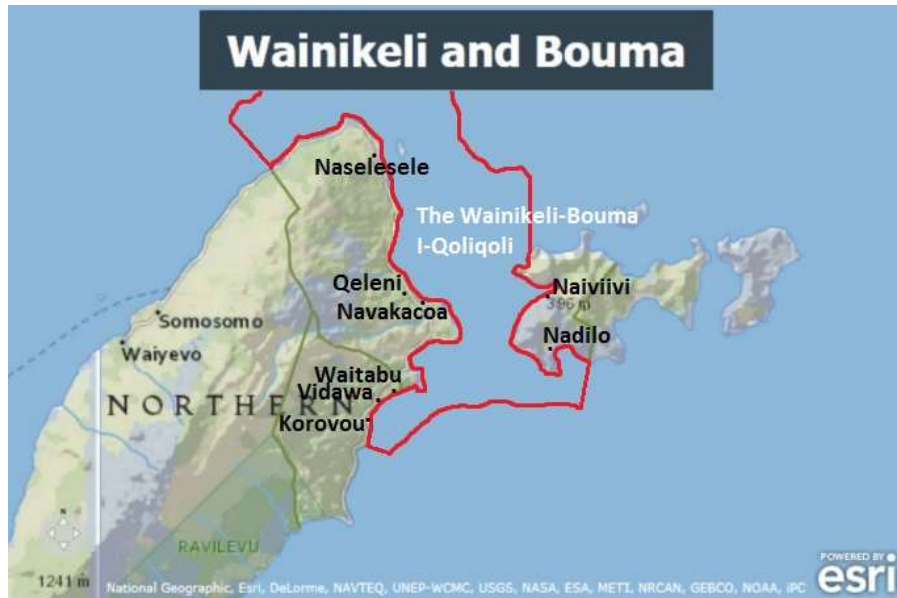


Figure 18. The Wainikeli-Bouma customary fishing ground.

While the fatal incident happened in March 2005 in Vurevure certainly seemed like a classic example of conflict and resistance caused by the imposition of global conservation projects at the local level, this view also implies the clash of two rigid entities that leaves no room for maneuvering. Writing from the theoretical framework of *vanua* as an open-ended and dynamic environment that is constantly made and remade by different ideas and forces, in this chapter I want to instead discuss the potential for collaboration in the Waitabu Marine Park. As mentioned earlier, in terms of biological results the MPA was exhibiting tremendous improvement (Sykes and Reddy 2008). From the stand point of finance and business

management, however, the ecotourism side of the Marine Park can be at best described as “a mixed success” due to “poor communications and lack of organizational skills within the community” (Sykes and Reddy 2009:5). Moreover, funding was irregular and managements from the top were constantly changing. In 1997 due to local complaints against the original managerial bodies Fiji Pine and its predecessor the Forestry Department, NZODA decided to allocate its funding through a NZ-based consultant agency Tourism Resource Consultants (TRC). This was the primary source of financial aid for the Waitabu Marine Park from its establishment in 1998 until the 2000 Coup in Fiji that led to the withdrawal of NZ funding, after which the assistance was reduced to only material investments (Sykes 2004). In 2004, financial aid from the NZ government came back through another local managerial body, the National Trust of Fiji, but Waitabu never directly received any funding since. During my fieldwork it was obvious that monetary income was limited and did not benefit the community as a whole, which had resulted in a generally nonchalant attitude towards the management of ecotourism. Yet at the same time villagers had shown a commitment to the protection of their marine environment. This challenges the premise of ICDP which assumes that the integration of local people into commodity-based systems of environmental management would encourage them to engage in the conservation of bio-diversity (West 2006:35).

The question then becomes, given the lack of monetary incentives, why do Waitabu villagers still actively conserve their marine environment? Have they really bought into the values of environmental conservation? Here I follow the framework of collaboration proposed by Anna Tsing which focused on how knowledge moves across different agencies, thus forming odd collaborations that made projects possible (Tsing 2005:13). As she further demonstrated, collaboration does not mean homogeneity or consensus. Rather, differences within collaboration

are a pre-established condition through which universal values are able to find local purchases and be realized and reconfigured. Calling this “productive confusion,” Tsing used her research of a community-managed forest in South Kalimantan as an example to show how local villagers, student nature lovers, and national activists from the capital, while having different kinds of commitment to nature and fantasies of development, were able to successfully form an alliance to stop forest destruction (Tsing 2005:245-246; cf. Tsing 1999).

In Waitabu, the *vanua* that was shaped by different historical processes and embedded with different cosmological thoughts provided a platform for such collaboration. Rebuilding from depopulation in the late 19th century and struggling for development throughout the colonial era on the island, Waitabu as a community sees the conservation project as a way to empower their *vanua* and re-establish their identity. This empowerment was not only reflected in the number of foreigners visiting the village and the international fame they have achieved, but also the state of peacefulness of communal relationships, signs of prosperity observed in the environment, as well as implications of territorial ownership brought forth by the MPA. These processes are set forth by interactions between the introduced ideas of modern scientific environmental management and the local concerns of identity, community, and leadership, which have created an unexpected collaboration that prompted the active conservation of the marine environment. However, globalization is not a well-oiled machine, neither is the reconfiguration of *vanua* as it takes in diverse elements. Moments of discontinuity and awkward connection are bound to take place, which are not simply “symptoms” of inequality or Western domination, but opportunities for the rearrangement of power and culture (Tsing 2005:9-11). For example, issues of community and leadership were brought up during the operation of the Marine Park, but were then settled within the framework of *vanua* through customary meetings

and ritual speeches. The problem of poaching should also be viewed under this light: It is not a product of conflict from the eternal stand-off between two value systems, but part of the new space opened up for further dialogue and motion.

5.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARK

5.1.1 Marine Protected Area

Before the BNHP began, it was agreed that all four villages in *Vanua* Bouma would have their own projects, just as in the Fijian custom each *yavusa* would have its own totemic tree, flower, and bird (Aisake Tale, interview, n.d.). The first two projects that were established after the inauguration of the BNHP in 1990 were Korovou's Tavoro Waterfall in 1991 and Lavena's Coastal Walk in 1993. Both of them had been taking tourists to their respective scenic areas before the official opening of their ecotourism ventures and both are by far the most successful projects in Bouma in terms of infrastructure and the number of annual visitors.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the Waitabu Marine Park and Vidawa Rainforest Hike, both officially launched in 1998, had no previous experience in tourist management and their projects were essentially built from the ground up.

Initially Waitabu also considered a forest-based project for they shared the same cultural heritage of the Forest People (*Kai Lekutu*) with Vidawa. In the early 1990s a group of New

⁷⁰ According to the field data collected for the year 2010, Korovou had 4,368 visitors, while Lavena had 2,502. Waitabu and Vidawa had only 253 and 79 respectively.

Zealand archaeologists came to examine the Bouma inland hill sites for the BNHP program and the old settlement remains of Nasau and Navuga were included in the survey. Such a proposal was later dissuaded for it was reiterated that each village should have its own “unique product” and not interfere with one another. This was when Sarah, the founding manager of the Waitabu Marine Park, came up with the idea of utilizing their marine environment and close proximity to Nukubalavu and Nukulekaleka (see figure 17), two picturesque and secluded white sandy beaches just outside of the village along the coast.⁷¹ The plan was to take tourists on traditional bamboo rafts (*bilibili*) from the village to snorkel at the shallow reef tops near these locations. After the village leaders gave permission for this plan, in 1997 through TRC, Helen Sykes, a marine biologist and reef check expert based in Waiyevo at the time was approached to assess the marine life condition and project feasibility in Waitabu. A devoted and energetic English lady who currently is still assisting the Waitabu Marine Park project through her tourism consultant NGO in Fiji called Resort Support, Helen shared with me her experience when she went to Waitabu for the first time:

So I went down in 97 just to look it over and I just swam around and I gave them a report and essentially I told them no this is a bad idea. The initial report I gave back to them was a negative. Because it was just like the fishing grounds outside the village and the marine protected area then, there was nothing! There was nothing left because they’ve been subsistence fishing; they’ve been walking on the top of the reef. There was no fish bigger than the butterfly fish. There were no invertebrates. I mean you could never have taken people out there (Helen Sykes, interview, 04/07/2010).

But the villagers, especially Sarah, were adamant about having this project, so Helen was invited again to do a longer survey but she still did not give her consent. After a total of three rejections,

⁷¹ In 2011 the then manager Eta revealed that it was actually a Catholic priest from Korovou, Fr. Makario Waqanivalu, who first suggested that Waitabu should develop a marine-based project. He was also involved as a coordinator in the initial stage of the Waitabu Marine Park.

during her last preliminary survey in March 1998 the village expressed a willingness to establish an MPA for the restoration of the marine ecosystem. This was based on the observation that “[t]his whole area is badly damaged, but most of the damage is due to over-fishing and reef walking, and is reversible” (Sykes 1998:48). Therefore, if an MPA was to be delineated in which all fishing, anchoring, reef-walking, and shell-collecting activities were forbidden, Helen told them,

In a year you should have enough fish coming back to make [snorkelers] happy.
In 3-5 years some of the coral will have grown back.
In 10 years you will have a really healthy reef again, and people will want to come and see it from all over the world (Sykes 1998:49).

Finally in April 1998, after a four-day full-scale biological survey in which five village volunteers also participated, the MPA was officially launched outside of the village. Initially the proposed area was only two-thirds of the current MPA but it was under the insistence of Helen that it extended further east to Sikeci Point which would include a greater diversity of habitat. The total length of the MPA is over 1 km and 100 m off the reef edge, which is manageable for a small community. The remainder of the fishing ground is also large enough for the community to maintain its subsistence fishing activities. After its establishment, the proclamation of the MPA had to go through the regional hierarchy because it is situated within the joint customary fishing ground Wainikeli-Bouma. Waitabu’s right to manage the inshore area was soon endorsed first at the *Vanua* meeting of Bouma, and then the *Tikina* meeting of Wainikeli, and finally registered (*vakamatanitutaki*) at the Cakaudrove Provincial Office in August 2005. No government officials were ever directly involved, which made it essentially a *vakavanua* (customary) matter. However, with growing incidents of poaching, it was obvious that the *vakavanua* agreement without legal basis could not protect the Marine Park. After an initial push

for the gazettement of the MPA, which the government was hesitant to support, another route was taken by the community and NGOs. In March 2012, a document of the Waitabu Marine Park Management Plan was officially submitted to the Fisheries Department, which recognized the Waitabu Project Committee as the decision-making body. The MPA was stated as a permanent closure but the Committee retains the right to make necessary changes. Moreover, it was emphasized that any illegal fishing activity would be reported to the Taveuni Police Station. This document was designed to give the Waitabu Marine Park legal power and flexibility to deal with management issues.

Before Waitabu, the only case of a CBMPA in Fiji was a village called Ucunivanua in the eastern coast of Viti Levu. Their project, established in 1997, was a response to the decline of clam (*kaikoso*) yields which were an important source of staple and cash income in the area. With the assistance from the University of the South Pacific, a 24-ha. MPA was established to revive the clam population. The project was so successful that it not only boosted an increased cash income to the community from the growing clam harvests, but also led to the formation of FLMMA (Veitayaki et al. 2003). However, the nature of Ucunivanua's MPA is different from Waitabu's. The former was originally designed to be a "temporary closure" for three years. Even though it was extended indefinitely due to the phenomenal result, it was reported that it had been opened for village functions, which is a common customary practice in Fiji (LMMA 2007:11). On the other hand, Waitabu's MPA was designed to be a long-term closure. And despite spreading rumors, Waitabu has never once opened their MPA, which made it currently the longest lasting CBMPA in Fiji for over 17 years. Moreover, Waitabu's MPA was set up to be a project that required long patience. Tourists did not come in until three years later in March 2001. The revived fish population that spilled over to the fishing ground was only for subsistence

consumption. Villagers also had decided not to sell the growing trochus shells and *bêche-de-mer* inside the MPA, which are known to be active agents of cleaning the reef environment. Therefore, the MPA of Waitabu was never about immediate economic return, nor was it initiated solely based on the value of “environmental conservation.” Rather, it reflected a strong belief in their *vanua* that “deserved” a development project and empowerment. In other words, it was about recapturing their self-worth as a once powerful *vanua*. Village elders often told me how much land Tui Nasau used to own and how their fishing ground used to extend all the way across Vurevure Bay to the Vunivasa Estates. This is even more evident in a narrative often half-jokingly told by Sarah which equated the three rejections by Helen to the biblical story of Peter denying Jesus three times (Helen Sykes, interview, 04/07/2010, also mentioned in Farrelly 2009:239). This is a significant allegory because in the Fijian cosmology what is effective (*mana*) is truthful (*dina*) and vice versa (Miyazaki 2004:49). If the power of their *vanua* is true, just like the teachings of Jesus Christ that are undeniable, then prosperity would eventually take place in their environment. Similarly, the success and effectiveness of the MPA would also demonstrate the truthfulness of the *vanua*.

5.1.2 Fishing Practices: Past and Present

But given that there were only small-scale subsistence fishing and minimal commercial fishing in the region, why did fish depletion and coral damage happen in the first place? In Helen’s preliminary reef check survey in March 1998, she identified that there was

70% algal overgrowth, mainly halimedes, scroll algae, mostly suggestive of over fishing of herbivorous fish rather than water pollution.

No evidence of CLOD (disease of reef algae) seen in area surveyed, reef cement healthy.

No evidence of coral bleaching diseases seen in area surveyed, other than the damage caused by physical contact with the reef (walking).

Much evidence of damage caused by walking and standing on reef in shallow areas; boulder corals with dead tops, a lot of broken staghorn coral. No large table tops seen at all (Sykes 1998:47).

The damage of corals was therefore concluded to have been done mostly by standing or walking on the reef tops, which also had greatly affected the fish population in the area. As Helen observed,

Fish life [is] very limited on shallow reef; mostly damsels and [sergeant] majors, a few chromis.

In deeper waters, Moorish Idol (singular), a couple of bannerfish, small schools of unicornfish, surgeonfish, butterflyfish. More variety off reef edge. A few tomato anemonefish, 3 small pipefish. Poor variety and number of fish, as would be expected from such a fished out area (ibid).

From the perspective of the villagers themselves, due to the relatively low population and the lack of means of transportation and refrigeration, the demand for fish in the village is low and is restricted to mostly subsistence consumption. In fact, in March 2010 the week after Cyclone Tomas passed through Taveuni which damaged the road to the town centers, the whole community was able to rely on subsistence fishing to get by before government food aid arrived. However, the trend of fish depletion becomes obvious when the demonstration and sharing of wealth are required. Elders remembered vividly how funeral feasts used to have plenty of fishes, but now they were scarcely featured. For example, in May 2010 in the funeral of Tui Lekutu, one of the most respected chiefs in the region, no fish was served at the concluding feast. In 2011 when I was preparing a feast in the village, I had to pay a fishing team at Qeleni in order to have the necessary amount of fish. The decrease was not only perceived in number, but also in

size. One elder told me that he once spearfished a marbled cod (*kerakera*) so big that he could barely carry by himself. Some trevallies (*saqa*) were so thick that a No.8 wire could not get through. Now prized fishes with such a size could hardly be found around Waitabu. This theme of lament regarding the decline from a long-passed “golden era” is significant. When I asked about the difference between fishing practices of the past and present, the act of “sharing” was highlighted which is a key value of *vakavanua*. One particular fishing practice being mentioned was the communal fish drive (*yavirau*). It was reported that this group fishing method required between 50 and 100 people, sometimes even a joint effort of the three villages Korovou, Vidawa and Waitabu. They would use a long rope made of tree vines attached with coconut leaves and formed a semi-circle with the opening facing the shore during high tide. The length could be as long as from Vatuloa and Nukuvotu (see figure 17) which is over 250 m. wide. As the tide ebbed, the people holding this “scare line” would slowly tighten the circle thereby driving the entrapped fishes towards the shore, with the women using hand nets waiting for them (cf. Hocart 1929:112). The catches would then be shared among the community members, including those that couldn’t participate. Some of the catches would also be presented to the chief. While there are concerns about the destruction to the marine ecosystem from stepping on the reefs and catching juvenile fishes (Fink 2012), it should be noted that *yavirau* is by no means performed frequently but only for special occasions, most notably before Christmas. Today in Bouma *yavirau* is never practiced. Last time it was seen was around the late 1980s. The fish catches from other more individualistic fishing trips were also frequently shared, with the chief receiving the biggest one or the “first net,” an act equivalent to *i-sevu*, the first fruits. When entering into others’ customary fish grounds, a formal request was always made and the catches would be shared to the original owners. This was the way how Vidawa fishermen used to enter into

Waitabu's fishing ground and fish at Nukubalavu. Finally, the use of derris plants (*duva*) as fish poison was also mentioned, which is now forbidden under the current Fisheries Act. While this fishing technique is still occasionally practiced in other parts of Fiji (Jones 2009:120-121), during fieldwork, aside from the neighboring island Qamea, I had never encountered or heard anyone using such a fishing method. Perceived as an unsustainable way of fishing due to its strong effect against small and juvenile fishes, here *duva* was reported to be used mainly to dangerous marine animals such as the eeltail catfish (*kaboa*) which bears sharp and poisonous spines.

On the other hand, the beginning of "over-fishing" in Waitabu was said to be around the mid-1980s with the advent of commercial fisheries in the village. Although the commercial exploitation of Fiji's marine resources began fairly early (i.e. the *bêche-de-mer* trade in the 1830s), it was never established at the community level as a viable economic option. Fijian fishing practices were generally "restricted and inconsistent, and the effort too flexible or sporadic and not committed to the maximization of production" (Veitayaki 1995:3). After WWII, it was observed that not only local fish trade and fish markets were limited, common commercial marine products like trochus shells or *bêche-de-mer* were far from being fully exploited.⁷² This situation would change after the late 1970s with the rising demand of trochus shells for the button industry and giant clams for the international aquarium trade (Nash 1989; Ram 1994). The destruction to the marine environment from the collection of these invertebrates was threefold. For one thing, standing and walking on reef tops during the process of collection had greatly damaged the coral life forms. Secondly, unsustainable collection had exhausted the

⁷² "Report on the Fisheries of Fiji 1947," CSO 108-20-1, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

population of these invertebrates which had been acting as filters of seawater that promoted coral growth. Without them, the reef health had greatly deteriorated (Hviding 1993:37). Finally, the deteriorated reef health had also resulted in the loss of sources of food and shelter for most herbivorous fish populations, which increased the rate of fish depletion in the area. These were what happened to Waitabu's reef environment which also explained why there was no giant clam to be seen during Helen's survey in April 1998. Other than shell-collecting, *Kuku Sepo's* son Marawa remembered that there was a seafood company based in Savusavu, Vanua Levu called "Waitui Products" that came in briefly around this time and paid villagers to fish. This was also when night-fishing with torches began to take place. They specifically targeted lobsters (*urau*) and he felt that it almost wiped out the entire population in the area. The act of sharing and presenting the catches also declined. People were able to sell fishes to the market with a starting price at 50 Fijian cents/1 kg in the 1980s. Elders saw this as the main reason for fish depletion, which was linked to the loss of *vanua* values. When asked about the main reason for fish depletion, Sake replied:

They [don't] respect the way the Fijians used to fish. We had a custom. When you go fishing you ask first. When you catch a fish you share. Now instead of sharing I go to the supermarket and sell it... I share it to the wrong place ... I blame that ... If I didn't plant the fish, I didn't clean the place where they live ... That means it's somebody [else]'s plantation. God made the sea, that's a lesson to us. We had plenty, now no (Aisake Tale, interview, 03/12/2010).

After this period of commercial fisheries through the 1980s and 1990s, the practice of selling marine products to the market had ceased in Waitabu because there were almost nothing left in the inshore fishing grounds. The village also was not equipped with a motor boat before the establishment of the Marine Park, which would have allowed them to take fishing trips beyond the fringing reefs for more catches. Today almost all transactions of marine products

took place within the village. One family who are considered the most skillful fishermen in the village often took their kayak and line-fished at the fringing reefs or Sikeci Point. They would come back with some prized fishes such as needlefish (*saku*) or reef shark (*qio*) and sell them to the other households for F\$10 a catch. Sometimes they would even fry them with onions and tomato sauce and sell them to other households for F\$5 a serving. In August 2009 a Lami-based Cantonese seafood company sent two of their people to live in Navakaoa, a village near Vunivasa. After their arrival, sales of trochus shells and *bêche-de-mer* from Waitabu began. A bag of trochus shells was reported to be F\$6/kg. Lollyfish (*loli*) were purchased at F\$10/kg. The more highly valued and commonly found black teatfish (*loaloa*) and white teatfish (*sucuwalu*) were purchased at F\$40/kg and F\$100/kg respectively. However, these economic options were only sporadically explored by several households. It wasn't until July 2012 that a plan of 5-year closure was formulated for the fishing ground in front of the village, from Qaranilakeba to Nukuvotu (see figure 17). The area for everyday fishing and reef gleaning was then shifted further south, as observed during my last field trip in December 2012. The purpose of such a temporary closure (called *tabu tara* in Fijian, which means “forbid, then take”) was to stock up the *bêche-de-mer* population and sell them after 5 years for the fund of building a community hall. This has recently become a popular marine resources management strategy to generate cash income for many coastal Fijian villages.

The fishing techniques today were said to be not so different from before, which include spearfishing (*kilipati*), mostly done by men, and line fishing (*siwa*) and reef gleaning (*vakacakau*) by women. The spearfishers usually operate alone. Even when there is a group it rarely exceeds three members. The best time for spearfishing is at night in the shallow reef in front of the village or at Nukulekaleka. They would take an empty five-gallon fuel tank with them to put the

catches in, which would float on the surface as they dove in. In February 2011 I went for a night spearfishing venture with my brother Pate in the fishing ground close to Vatuloa. It was easy to see that fishes were less mobile during this time, resting under coral caves. However, for a total of almost two hours we came back with only an adult spinefoot rabbitfish (*nuqa*), a humpback red snapper (*boa*), and a spotted reef crab (*qariqari*), which were just enough to cook a bowl of hot soup for our sick mother Sia. Not every man in the village fishes. Men over the age of 40 usually don't fish at all and instead focus on their plantations. Some younger people like Tiko, the current manager of the Marine Park and a competent snorkel guide, do not fish because, as he simply put, "no one has taught me."

Fishing activities by women on the other hand are much more prevalent, but also not practiced every day. They often do reef gleaning during low tide for a variety of shellfishes (*vivili*) including the edible spider shell (*yaga*) and top shell (*tovu*), the economically valuable trochus shell (*sici*), as well as sea urchin (*cawaki*). Line fishing usually takes place during high tide in the afternoon at the shore with hermit crabs (*uga*) or chopped octopus (*kuita*) as baits. The fishes caught were mostly small reef fishes like rockcod (*kawakawa*), emperorfish (*kabatia*), triggerfish (*sumutiti*), humpback red snapper, goby (*bali*), and sometimes moray eel (*loulou*). The week following Cyclone Tomas, with a growing number of people fishing for food relief, it was common to catch 10 plus fishes from a couple hours of line fishing. This had generally been viewed by the villagers as a significant change after the establishment of the MPA.

Aside from these individualistic fishing practices, there is also a women long-net fishing group which goes for long hours of fishing expeditions irregularly. Usually they would start early in the morning during high tide from Vatuloa and walk along the border of the MPA towards the fringing reef and come back at noon during low tide. The frequency of these fishing

expeditions increased as the holiday season approaches, a time when farming activities slack down. On December 23th, 2010 I accompanied them on a longer fishing trip for the Christmas feasts. The group consisted of 7 women, the oldest of which was over 60 years old, and my father Mika as the boat captain. We began at 9:45 in the morning and went to a fishing ground called Wailoa about 3 miles away, located between the northern part of Vurevure Bay and Qamea Island. After shifting from one location which did not yield satisfying results, we finally decided to anchor on top of a reef flat. The fisherwomen quickly got off the boat and jumped into the ocean, of which the level was about neck high. The fishing method was like a mini-*yavirau* (cf. Jones 2009:116). Two of them set up a 30-foot long fishing net, while others including myself spread out facing the net. I was told to wait for a whistle and then throw coral stones forward and swim towards the net. The scared fishes were driven by our movements and smashed into the fishing net. This action was repeated several times until noon. After a brief lunch of canned fish, gonads of a triggerfish, and some small giant clams (*cega*) picked from the reef, they went off again during low tide and did reef gleaning from which seaweeds (*lumi*) were collected. We went back to the village around 5:00 in the afternoon with a total catch of over 100 fishes which included goatfish (*ose cago*), unicornfish (*ta*), parrotfish, emperorfish, needlefish, triggerfish, and a sea turtle (*vonu*). The catches were immediately divided at the beach into different piles, with a woman who paid for the boat fuel taking the sole turtle back home. My share of 12 fishes brought back to my mother Sia was consumed at once for dinner.

Overall the fishing practices in Waitabu today have a low impact on the marine environment (Sykes and Morris 2009:24). The fish depletion was considered to be the result of a period of commercial fisheries that began in the 1980s which reflected a wider trend of erosion of traditional values. The establishment of the MPA therefore not only restored the fish stocks

which are now enough for subsistence fishing and disaster relief, but also the prosperity, or the potential for prosperity, of the *vanua*. This is evident in their decision to temporarily close their current fishing ground in front of the village and extend the MPA, in hopes of the future harvest could allow them to build a community hall. Obviously Waitabu villagers sought for more development in the village, but they are committed to achieving this while maintaining the integrity of their MPA and the peaceful state of their *vanua*.



Figure 19. Dividing the fish catches at the beach after a fishing expedition.

5.2 CONFLICTS AND COLLABORATIONS WITHIN THE PROJECT

In July 2008 when I arrived at the village for my second preliminary field trip I immediately noticed the University of Georgia Bulldogs gear being displayed around. It turned out that a summer study abroad course called “Reefs, Resources, and Rights: Conservation and Tourism in Fiji” led by UGA anthropologist Peter Brosius had brought a handful of students to Waitabu earlier in May, each of whom stayed with a local family for several days. I later learned that this connection was made through the agency Marine Ecology Consulting in Fiji which had been assisting the biological monitoring of the Waitabu Marine Park. After this precedent, “homestay” became all the rage in the village because its payment was directly given to the individual households. In return, the responsible households should be able to provide a private room for students, as well as a flushing toilet and covered showering place which are not a standard setting for every house in the village. For instance, my father Mika’s house, the place that I always stayed during fieldwork, did not have either facilities before, but in 2010 he managed to use corrugated metal plates to cover up the water pipe area hoping that it could be passed as a showering room so that students could come in. The meals also had their requirements. They should be nutritious and with fresh vegetables and fruits – nothing like what the villagers usually eat daily such as instant noodles and corn beef. My mother Sia joked to me that whenever foreigners were here, people began to fry eggs. “*‘ai palagi* love eggs,” she said. Moreover, the meals are not cooked by the families providing the room, but “outsourced” on a rotating basis to other households that do not have guests. The main point of this system is to have more households involved and distribute the income as equally as possible.

In March 2010, a week after I arrived for my first long-term fieldwork, a group of 20 UGA students came to visit for 4 days via a spring travel-study program, also led by Dr. Brosius. 12 of them stayed in Waitabu and 8 in Vidawa. They paid F\$60 for a night and F\$11 for a meal, as well as additional fees to visit the four projects in Bouma. Before their arrival I just had a discussion about the Catholic lent season (*gauna ni lede*) with Mika who told me that during this period of time there should be no noise even singing in the village. Even *yaqona* drinking should be kept at a minimum. These religious observances soon gave way to playing good host. There were nightly functions held for the students including singing, dancing, and certainly *yaqona* drinking. They were taken on bamboo rafts to snorkel, taught how to make traditional crafts, and brought to experience all four projects of the BNHP. The whole village of Waitabu including the chief Tui Nasau fully participated and put up a good show. This was evident from the tears in some of the students' eyes as they left the village, while villagers sang the Fijian farewell song "*Isa Lei*."⁷³

5.2.1 Concerns of Community and Leadership

The story above presented a familiar narrative of conservation projects often critiqued by anthropologists, that is, the creation of self-regulating local subjects and the manufacture of new landscapes through the commoditization of natural resources or other disciplining strategies (Büscher et al. 2012; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Meierotto 2014; West 2006:169). However, the relationship between the *vanua* and the project in Waitabu is much more complicated. If the

⁷³ When these students went back to UGA, upon learning Bouma was affected by Cyclone Tomas which came immediately after they left, they raised a relief fund around F\$1,600 and sent it to Waitabu and Vidawa in May 2010, which was used to contribute to the primary and secondary students' school fees for the starting school term.

community with its traditional leaders and values represents the *vanua* in its narrowest sense, and the managers of the Marine Park represent the project and the modern ideas of business management and tourism, then we will see that in Waitabu it is the *vanua* that is always attempting to discipline the project by keeping the managers in check and putting an ideal notion of the “community” at the forefront. This has created many moments of conflict and awkwardness, which are often masked by the success stories of the Marine Park and the smiling faces seen by tourists. But as my caveat “*vanua* in its narrowest sense” implies, if we put *vanua* in a broader framework, then we will also see that the *vanua* and the project are not necessarily in a confrontational relationship, but instead have the capacity for negotiation through ritual speeches and customary meetings. Their dynamic interactions give us a glimpse at the imagination of what an ideal conservation and development project looks like to the community.

To discuss the role of the managers and their relationship to the community, we should begin with the analysis of the financial situation of the Marine Park. After three years of patiently waiting since the establishment of the MPA, as well as the training of 6 village snorkel guides and accumulation of necessary equipment, in March 2001 the first wave of tourists were finally taken inside the MPA on a bamboo raft to snorkel for a fee of F\$50 per head. The booking and communication was assisted by Aquaventure, a dive shop at Matei run by a Dutch lady Tania de Hoon. In the first year the Waitabu Marine Park saw a total of 201 visitors and a gross income around F\$ 6,000 (Sykes 2002). However, there were also many other expenses that diminished the profit. From the 2003 expenditure of the Marine Park, the most costly items were transportation (bus/taxi fares for the park personnel to run errands) and *bure* (building the tourist gathering hall and Peace Corps volunteer’s house) which had been destroyed three times by cyclones. Park personnel also needed to get paid. In the 2003 system, the park fee F\$50 per head

was divided by the manager F\$5 (per head), snorkel guide \$10 (per trip), boat captain \$10 (per trip), and entertainment \$10 (per service), while the rest went into the bank. This means that if there's a group of 4 visitors that came at once, the manager's payment would rise to F\$20 while others stay the same. In 2009 a cruise ship⁷⁴ brought over 90 tourists to the Marine Park and the manager's payment skyrocketed on that day, which led to later accusations in the village, stating that the manager should not have taken that much money at once. This certainly reflects the fine line between having individual success and being greedy (*kocokoco*) in the communal framework of *vanua*, in which individualism is not valued, but could be negotiated (Belshaw 1964:124-125; Brison 2007:42-43; Ravuvu 1988:14).

Another issue was the distribution of revenue. From the very beginning it was decided that the income generated by the Marine Park would be deposited in the bank and used mainly for Waitabu students' school fees. As for wages, the boat captains, snorkel guides, and entertainers (tea ladies and band boys) are paid on a rotating basis to ensure that every household has the opportunity to earn cash income. However, not every household has a boat captain, snorkel guide, or performer in the family, and the rotation of tea service was not perceived to be fair enough, in which nepotism was alleged to be at play. Moreover, even though there were workshops held in the village to train women to make and sell handicrafts to tourists, this endeavor also did not take shape due to lack of enthusiasm. From the NGO workers' perspective, the villagers lacked marketing skills to promote their product and establish good communication with the tourism industry on the island, which had prohibited the number of visitors from

⁷⁴ This cruise ship, the Spirit of Oceanus, with a cruise line serving between Tahiti and Fiji, first docked at Vurevure Bay in January 2006 and then came back for the next three years. Its operation stopped entirely after 2010. Aside from the park fees paid by the tourists who came to experience the project, Waitabu also collected docking fees for a total of F\$800, for Vurevure Bay is considered the customary territory of their *vanua*.

expanding. For most of the villagers, aside from sporadic income and school fee contributions, they rarely experienced the economic benefit of the Marine Park, while cash cropping and subsistence farming remained the pillar of the household economy and the true work of the land (*cakacaka vakavanua*). This sentiment was coupled with the mismanagement and lack of transparency of the savings from the Marine Park – it was discovered that in May 2007 there was only F\$29 in the bank. This was during a time when the leadership of the Marine Park was in a state of limbo. The founding manager Sarah had unexpectedly passed away in the previous year and her son who took over the position was about to leave the village to pursue his own career. Although the succeeding managers have gradually fixed this crisis, there has always been skepticism and rumors of embezzlement towards the financial situation of the Marine Park.

Year	Number of Visitors	Income
2001	190	\$7,600
2002	92	\$3,680
2003	131	\$5,240
2004	132	\$5,380
2005	80	\$3,200
2006	166	\$6,525
2007	N/A	N/A
2008	368	\$14,163
2009	N/A	N/A
2010	249	\$9,180
Cash in the bank to date: \$9,429		
Expenses include: 1.School fees 2.Construction of Peace Corps <i>bure</i> , tourist <i>bure</i> , and the office 3.Tui Nasau's funeral \$1000 in February 2010 4.Fuel for boat 5.Wages for tea ladies, guides, <i>bilibili</i> drivers, band boys, boat captains, and manager		

Table 4. Number of visitors and income of the Waitabu Marine Park (Source: Arieta Divialagi).⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The data were accumulated in March 2011 when the project was producing a report for the Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama who was visiting Taveuni at the time. Note that some of the numbers were only estimations and did not match the Resort Support annual reports created by Helen Sykes.

It should be noted that funding from the New Zealand government was terminated after the May 2000 Coup in Fiji and since then the project essentially went without any financial backing. Its last donation of F\$ 3,000 nevertheless had allowed the purchase of Waitabu's first motor boat which served as a safety boat for diving. The reason the project could still carry on was said to be the commitment of Tania and Helen, both of whom had been working unpaid, as well as the strong will of the manager Sarah that anchored the cooperation of the community. With previous working experience in the tourism industry in Suva and great English-speaking ability, Sarah's leadership was well recognized by those who had worked with the BNHP program. Her husband is a Rotuman but died at an early age and she took his last name Fatiaki when presenting herself, which is a rare practice in Fiji. Most of her families were active participants in the project and reef check surveys: her brother Josh was the sole boat captain for a period of time; two of her sons, Tony and Steve, were snorkel guides and both had later taken over the manager position. For a while, it seemed as if the project was run by the Fatiaki family. This was coupled with the fact that her father was from Ovalau, therefore she was not considered truly "from Waitabu" (although her mother was, which made this accusation strange). These accusations had created some tensions in the village which led to the decision of stopping the ecotourism operation from August 2002 to March 2003 by the project committee, which consists of the senior male leaders in the village.

During fieldwork as I was given the opportunity to browse the historical project documents kept in a folder by the Marine Park managers, I found a report of the Waitabu Marine Park hand written by Sarah at the very beginning of the period of business closure in 2002. It was about the operation and difficulties faced by the project, as well as the details of how the

manager was paid. At the end she wrote in a way that resembled the traditional apology speech (*kere veivosoti*):

Before I finish I would like to ask for the forgiveness from the people of the land (*lewe ni vanua*) if I had caused any difficulty from my position as a manager. If the people of the land did not like what I did I would leave the position and let the business move forward for the greater good of the people of the land (Sarah, manuscript, 08/22/2002, my translation).

Eventually in 2005, she involuntarily stepped down as the manager. This was observed in a report written by a Marine Park worker:

Business this year [2005] was not what was [presumed] possible due to a managerial change during the peak tourism season. This resulted in a failure to organize the need resource for continued daily tours. This change in management was mostly due to traditional ties and customary rights and had little to do with business. As a result the new management was appointed by the chiefs without regard to necessary skills or experience to run the business. This leads to many complaints from tourist and resort owners. Over time the new management has resumed the tourism business but at lowered standard [than] before (anonymous, report, 2005).

Similar situation had happened to Ellie, the manager that I had been working closely with during fieldwork. Fun, charming, and speaking fluent English, Ellie grew up in Korovou and had a Form 7 education which was rare for girls in Bouma. Since becoming the manager she has always been the bridge between the community and foreign tourists, students, and researchers, as well as Helen's most trusted liaison in the village. Similar to Sarah, her father was from Kadavu. After working for the Tavoro Waterfalls project for a brief period of time, she married Larry, the lead guitarist of the band in Waitabu and moved into the village. After taking over the manager position in 2007 she essentially brought the project back on track but faced similar criticism as Sarah did, including that she is not "from Waitabu." In February 2011 after the 4-day reef check survey and village presentation ended, she took the opportunity to conduct a traditional speech of gratitude (*vosa ni vakavinavinaka*). Sitting next to Helen in front of the senior male leaders of

the village, she first thanked the reef check team for giving their time and excellent effort, and to Helen for coming down here this year to lead the whole process, and then she began to repeatedly thank those who had supported the survey and presented the result in front of the people of the land, which she stressed was not easy and must have caused some discomfort (*mosita*). As she continued to speak, her voice began to tremble to the point that one could hear her sobbing. In Fiji I had seen many ritual speeches, especially the speech of gratitude, in which the speaker often ended up wailing and could barely finish. This is a very important linguistic register that is intended to demonstrate the truthfulness (*dina*) of the speaker. But this is more than an individual act. As scholars had observed, in Fiji the idea of self is situated in the nexus of social relationships (Brison 2001; Williksen-Bakker 2004). Becker further argued that the “Fijian body is not primarily a vehicle for expression of personal identity or excellence. Rather, it provides a means of integrating the self into the community” (Becker 1995:128). The speech given by Ellie was therefore a public embodied performance that aimed to anchor herself in the *vanua*, amid the accusations she was facing. As Becker eloquently put it,

Even when socio-moral transgressions escape the watchful surveillance of the community, a variety of socio-cosmic mechanisms serve to elicit relevant information and ultimately render the body transparent to the collective gaze. In Fiji, the confession of moral transgressions is an important means of translocating this information from the personal to the collective domain, thus neutralizing its potential dangerous ramifications ... In essence, transformation of emotion or social conflict into shared language leaches out its danger, protecting the community from mishap and the individual from moral isolation (Becker 1995:91).

More significantly, Ellie’s speech was more than just about herself and the community. The larger framework is between her as the manager of the project and the whole community representing the *vanua*. Although the project was very much established by the *vanua* of Waitabu and has remained fully controlled by it, from the beginning it was the women, outsiders,

and young bachelors that are running the project – those who are lower in the hierarchy of the Fijian social cosmos that we call *vanua* in a narrow sense. Therefore, *vanua* needs time to accommodate these new social dimensions generated by the business management structure of modern ecotourism brought along with the conservation project. At the same time, the managers also need to constantly demonstrate their union with the *vanua* through public speeches, while balancing their roles in running a business operation and achieving personal success, which is no easy task and requires great sensitivity and social strategies.

The concerns of community and social relationship reflect the local imagination of a truly successful conservation project. For example, in a meeting between Helen and the senior male leaders (with Ellie as the translator) of Waitabu in February 2011, the latter questioned that when the UGA students came in the year before, why weren't some of them put in Wai settlement but instead in Vidawa, especially when some of the houses in Wai had already passed the inspection by the agency. They raised this question because Wai, although situated a mile away, is one of the three *Mataqali* in *Yavusa* Naisaqai and therefore, part of their immediate *vanua*. On the other hand to Helen and her agency, splitting the students between Waitabu and Vidawa which are adjacent to each other was the most logical solution. One of the elders then cautioned that if the Wai villagers are feeling left out, the MPA would be at risk. As explained by him during the meeting:

The social relationship (*veimaliwai*) in this *vanua* is the most important thing to me. Bad relationship would lead to poaching in the MPA. If the relationship is good, then the MPA would not be touched (meeting, 02/24/2011, my translation).

This is also the reason why when there was a quota of six local fish wardens to be trained by the government to stop poaching, it was decided by Waitabu that one of them should be from Wai. Moreover, the six final chosen fish wardens were not frequent fishermen that had more

opportunities to monitor the MPA, but senior male leaders in each *Mataqali*. To them, this is a matter more than just stopping poaching. It is about maintaining the balance and peaceful relationships in the *vanua*.

5.2.2 Spaces for Collaborations

From what I described above, it may seem that the *vanua* is a set of rigid social orders that is fundamentally at odds with the operation of the conservation and ecotourism project, which had created moments of conflicts and tensions inside and among the communities. However, if viewed from a broader perspective of *vanua* as a dynamic and open-ended environment, then we can see that it has the capacity to interact with different agents of change and form a dialogue with the introduced knowledge and values. Similarly, the Waitabu marine ecosystem is not simply a passive environment damaged by unsustainable fisheries and then to be disciplined by conservation interventions. Like the landscape of Bouma that involves and mediates the multi-origins of different migrant groups, this seascape is also linked to the social processes taken place in the community and could actively inform people about their actions and state of being. As several village elders had pointed out, the fish depletion is not just a biological process, but reflects a wider trend of loss of tradition and turbulence in social relationships. Their marginalized position that was created by the historical uneven development process also prompted them to look at the sea as a source to develop their *vanua* on which a revived identity is founded, which explains why they put so much emphasis on who is really “from Waitabu” when tensions occurred during the operation of the Marine Park. These are the elements

entangled in the marine environment that allowed unexpected collaborations regarding biological conservation to take shape.

After the baseline survey in Waitabu that determined the establishment of the MPA in April 1998, it was reported that initially other than one particular family, villagers had followed the simple guidelines of not walking on the reef flats and taking fishes inside the MPA (Sykes 1999). The subsequent annual biological surveys since 2002 had also exhibited encouraging signs of revival of the marine ecosystem. In each of these surveys, methods such as the Manta Tow technique, giant clam and trochus shell count and measurement, underwater fish visual census, and 20m x 5m reef check survey technique were utilized. In the 2008 report, a complete survey and review for the 10 year anniversary of the Waitabu Marine Park, almost every category that indicated the reef health and fish abundance had shown clear trends of improvement. There was also a noticeable difference between the data collected in the MPA and the fishing ground. Inside the MPA, hard coral cover was expanding while algal cover diminished (which indicated that more herbivorous fishes like the parrotfish or surgeonfish were grazing the algae). In some areas high levels of soft corals were also forming. The overall invertebrate population and individual size had grown significantly and become much larger than that of the fishing ground. To put it into perspective, in the baseline study of 1998, not a single giant clam was found. However, in the 2011 survey, 73 giant clams were spotted while the largest one had a width of 61.3 cm. As for the fish population, the MPA had demonstrated more diversity, including targeted food fishes like the Groupers, Snappers, Sweetlips, and Trevallies, which were less frequently seen in the fishing ground. The total number of fish species counted in the MPA had also reached as many as 126 in 2006 and the average number since 2002 is more than 100 which is the threshold of a “biodiversity hotspot.” This is to be

compared with the 74 fish species counted in 1998 in the area that was later to be the MPA. Benefiting from the spill-over effect, the fishing ground also saw its average number of fish species since 2002 increase to around 80 (Sykes and Reddy 2008:26).

What do all these study results mean to the Waitabu villagers? The fisherwomen had commented on the increasing fish stocks at the edge of the MPA. They were also interested in the growing trochus shell population inside the MPA which was another viable economic option. However, these subsistence or commercial benefits were only explored by individual households in various degrees. For a household that does not have active fishers, like the one of my parents Mika and Sia, the increase of different marine life forms do not directly concern their livelihood. On the other hand, the annual biological monitoring activity that generates these very results seemed to be more appealing to villagers. Taking place generally in the first two months of the year for four or more days, the survey is not just a research study initiated by foreign scientists, but more of a *vakavanua* event that brings the whole community together. This is a time that almost feels like festivity in the village. Not only would their old pal Helen come down to the village, sometimes she is accompanied with other environmental NGO workers as well as international student interns. Women would prepare food collectively for the survey team that consists of mostly local youths and the international volunteers, which is a typical procedure for a *cakacaka vakavanua* (work of the *vanua*). People from neighboring settlements including Wai and Vurevure would also come and participate. Despite the lack of funding, there would be workshops, training sessions, or education awareness programs. The whole event is concluded by the presentation of the survey results, done by the local youths themselves in front of the senior leaders and adult community members in the village. Sometimes it is followed by meetings with Helen with a more formal nature regarding the operation of the Marine Park and

important decisions would be made. This whole process is what makes the Waitabu Marine Park unique, which involves not only the full participation and decision-making of the community, but also the exchange of knowledge and information. As explained by Helen,

We've got the village youths who are trained to do their own monitoring and they take part in the monitoring with me every year. And they present their own results. And it [had] led to the real understanding and taking ownership of this project, perhaps in a way that isn't done so much in some of the other projects. I'm not criticizing the other projects *per se*, but I have friends working in NGOs who say that when they go to their projects they just take their team down. They do their monitoring, they pay the village to stay in the village, they take the results away and the village just feels like the project belongs to the NGO. Whereas Waitabu definitely feel that the project belongs to them. Because when we go down to do the monitoring, they have to give up a week to come and do it. They come out and support us with the boat. They pay the boat fuel. We don't pay to stay there. We stay in the camp ground and they cook for us ... We're monitoring their project for their benefit. And so I feel this actually contributed to [the notion] that they own this (Helen Sykes, interview, 04/07/2010).

The annual survey took place between February 21 and 24 during my fieldwork in 2011. Two student interns from the Netherlands and a Fijian student from the University of South Pacific in Suva working on his own research project had come earlier. They were accommodated by two families in the village for their sojourn. Helen came with a NGO colleague of hers and stayed at the campground at the beach as always. She soon announced the time schedule for the survey program which needed to be matched with the tide table. After a spatial survey called the "Manta Tow" technique that produced a general mapping of marine life forms inside the MPA and a reef check survey in the fishing ground in the first two days, I participated in the survey trip inside the MPA on the third. This year's team consisted of 17 people including Helen and her colleague, the three marine biology students, and myself. The locals included the manager Ellie, Maretina, Lati, and Mere as the only female members, as well as the seasoned surveyor Tiko and other male youths. Among them two were from Korovou, one from Viti Levu who was

here to spend his holiday with relatives, and one from Vuna who married into Waitabu not long ago. The only senior villager that put on a wet suit and swam with us a little bit was the leader of *Mataqali* Waisoki. Due to the high turnover rate of the reef check team each year, a training session was required for new members like me. Some of the first timers had also expressed a desire to be trained as snorkel guides in the future. I was paired with Maretina who had logged a lot of experience in reef checking. We were taught how to float above the reef flat with our fins without breaking the corals, how to document the formation of the seabed and identify the number and species of fishes swum by us in a 20m x 5m space, and how to clean up the Crown of Thorn shellfish (CoTs, *bula* in Fijian) which feeds on the coral reef. Although there were no workshops this year, a simple marine biology lecture was still provided by Helen while we were at the beach waiting for high tide at eight o'clock in the morning. In clear and steady English, she talked about basic food chain relationships in the marine environment, such as the triggerfish's feeding habit on sea cucumbers thus fewer triggerfishes means more sea cucumbers, or the trumpet shellfish (*davuki*) as the natural predator of the CoTs, which is widely used as ornaments or blow horns. She also used a lot of easy-to-grasp numbers to illustrate the mechanism of marine life forms. For example, we were told how the coral animals built the corals one centimeter a year, thus a big coral of 2 meters wide represented 200 years of work, how the parrotfish could create a ton of coral sands in a year; and how the giant clams could filter sea water "almost the size of the church in the village" in a year. These simple images and numbers certainly had made a great impression to the audience because in the following day I had heard them being explained in Fijian at the presentation. In turn, villagers, especially the spectating elders, would provide the Fijian names for the marine species mentioned during the

lecture, which was a great venue for the indigenous knowledge to be passed down to the next generation.

After working the whole morning inside the MPA, we returned around noon with data written on a small waterproof notepad. Following a strict schedule, Helen told the team members to gather after lunch break, sit down and accumulate the numbers, calculate the average number of fishes, average number of invertebrates, average size of the trochus shells and giant clams, and the different percentages of the making of the seabed inside the MPA and the fishing ground. After handing the figures back to Helen who would determine if they looked legitimate, in the final day the team gathered again and began to draw the data into graphs on large posters. They were then nailed on wooden boards to be presented later. At four o'clock in the afternoon without much delay, most of the adult villagers came and sat down under the communal gathering shed (*vakatunuloa*). A standard Catholic prayer was uttered by Benedito, one of the senior leaders in the village, which officially opened up the event. As the highest ranking person on site, the leader of *Mataqali* Waisoki soon took over and made a traditional gratitude speech thanking the work of the manager and the youths, and introduced the program of this evening. With Ellie as the translator, Helen began by giving a brief overview of the condition of the marine environment and the procedure of the reef check. The chosen presenters then took the stage one by one. It was interesting to note that first-time surveyors were encouraged to do the presentation, which included women, young bachelors, and outsiders – people who normally wouldn't be given a stage at communal meetings. Using their own language, they explained the graphs to the community, while Helen adding some comments here and there. Sometimes there were questions raised from the audience, such as “how many times do the trochus shell produce in a year?” The crowd would also animatedly express their approval when satisfying results were

presented to them. For example, it was shown that the average size of the trochus shells inside the MPA was 12cm, while that of the fishing ground was only 3cm. They were then told that the trochus shells inside the MPA were big enough to reproduce, which could have up to thousands of “babies.” The graph of the number of fishes presented a similar story, which showed that the MPA had significantly more butterflyfish and parrotfish. Helen then explained that because butterflyfish feeds around the hard corals, so “plenty hard corals, plenty *tivitivi* (butterflyfish).” The same goes to the parrotfish, which feeds by scratching the corals, thus producing sands. She continued,

Look at that beautiful beach Nukubalavu. Look at how many parrotfish [are] out here. Look at what is happening to your beach. So when the storm takes the sand away, the parrotfish makes the new sand. If you have plenty parrotfish and plenty corals, your beach stays big. If you have no parrotfish and no corals, your beach goes away (Helen Sykes, presentation, 02/24/2011).

The overall narrative was clear: The MPA is a “bank” for the future and if well protected and managed, abundant resources could be achieved. This image feeds well into the belief in the *vanua* as a powerful and everlasting entity, which is best expressed in the Fijian moniker for the FLMMA network, “*Kedra Sasalu Tawa Mudu Na Noda Kawa*” (endless marine products for our future generations). The term “*tawa mudu*” (endless) is a significant expression in the Christian context which is often used in prayers or services to denote the eternal life and endless blessing from God. Similarly, I had heard farmers in Waitabu use “*tawa mudu*” to describe the fertility of the land that nurtures their taro gardens, which is constantly cultivated by the work put in the land. The presentation of the survey results provided a similar sentiment and assurance that their *vanua* is prosperous, which is achieved through the collective work of the community including the survey activities. It is also interesting to note that the common translation for “natural resources” in Fijian is “*i-yau bula*” which literally means “valuables of life.” Like traditional

Fijian valuable items such as whale's tooth, barkcloth, and mats, the position of the natural resources is not just in the biological world, but also the social realm. The abundance therefore reflects the prosperity of the *vanua*, as well as the state of being of the people living in the *vanua*.



Figure 20. Presentation of the survey results.

5.3 NEGOTIATIONS OF IDENTITY

5.3.1 Rituals of the Environment

While it may seem that the operation of the Waitabu Marine Park is dominated by scientific discourses which utilize quantity and measurement to determine the success of the program, villagers themselves also have their own ways of interpreting biological signs to understand the

state of their environment. One of these signs is the annual appearance of the marine life forms, of which the most well-known one is the rise of the *balolo* sea worms (*Eunice viridis*). On November 6th 2012 I finally had the chance to witness this famous event in the Pacific. Around 7 o'clock in the morning, at the corner of Nukuvotu I found almost all the villagers there, men, women, and children, standing ankles deep bending over using pots, buckets, or pieces of cloth to scoop up these sea worms floating to the surface. They were then brought back to individual households and boiled with salt and onion into a bowl of soup. It was the day when the lunar cycle was entering the last quarter, which is when *balolo* worms make their annual mass spawning from the sea bottom, marking the beginning of the Fijian “*Vula i balolo levu*” (big *balolo* month). The “worms” that we saw were actually the tail segments called *epitoke*, developed for the purpose of reproduction. The bluish green ones belonged to female which contained eggs, while the brown ones belonged to male, containing sperms. They were released to the surface so that they could fertilize, as the head parts called *atoke* were still attached to the coral rubbles in the outer reef. Therefore, this event also signified the onset of the season of harvest and state of fertility. Traditionally the advent of *balolo* indicated the level of maturity of yams (*Dioscorea alata*, Fijian *uvi*) which were planted in August and to be harvested in March (Harwood 1950:5-6). Around the same time, many tree crops growing around the village such as breadfruit (*uto*), Malay apple (*kavika*), oceanic lychee (*dawa*), and cutnut (*vutu kana*) are ripe and ready to be picked. Land crabs (*lairo*), a great local delicacy, would also soon gather in abundance at night, making their migration to the sea as they begin their spawning season as well (which happened 10 days later on November 16th in Waitabu).



Figure 21. The harvest of *balolo*.



Figure 22. The *balolo* sea worms caught in a cloth.

While the rise of *balolo* signifies a general notion of fertility, the coming of the juvenile spinefoot rabbitfish (*Siganus spinus*; *siganus Vermiculatus*, Fijian *nuqa*) on the inshore reef flat has a more specific linkage to Waitabu's identity and is marked with clearer ritual protocols. The rabbitfish is the totemic fish of *Yavusa Naisaqai*. In Fijian custom, each tribe has its own series

of totems which usually include a fish, a bird, and a tree. Although this may have been a colonial invention during the land title investigation by the NLC beginning from the 1880s (Paul Geraghty, pers. comm., 2010) and the term “totem” itself in the Fijian cultural context is problematic (Hocart 1914), the idea of these totemic life forms is still significant in people’s daily practices. For example, Veitayaki reported that in Qoma people would not catch or consume their totemic fish (Veitayaki 2005[2000]:120). In Ucuivanua, the totemic *Anadara* ark clams are reserved for the regional high chief of Verata (Tawake, Vuki, and Aalbersberg 2007). During interviews regarding the history of the *vanua*, it is also common to hear the series of totems being recited. No more than 5 cm long, the juvenile rabbitfish grew up from larvae hatched in the open ocean several kilometers offshore and would migrate back to the inshore reef flats before their metamorphosis and eventually join the adult population. In Fiji this occurs around December which is traditionally called “*Vula i nuqa lailai*” (small rabbitfish month). For Waitabu villagers, this migration is more than just a biological cycle. There is a saying in Waitabu that if everything is alright in the community, the *nuqa* would appear. Therefore, the appearance of the juvenile rabbitfish is not a given, but something that needs to be achieved, particularly through the cultivation of social relationships, and if things were not done properly in the village, they would not come. Around mid-December when the first schools of juvenile rabbitfish emerged at the reef flat in the morning, there would be a ritual called *ta nuqa* (literally, fetching *nuqa*) performed at the beach to catch these tiny animals. According to custom, in the Bouma region only Waitabu is allowed to catch juvenile rabbitfish. This was confirmed by the villagers in Vidawa who also had juvenile rabbitfish swimming at their reef flat. In 2011 the *ta nuqa* took place on December 15th. Around 8 o’clock in the morning, a small group of six adult and senior women gathered at the beach, which was a huge contrast to the crowd that I witnessed

during the harvest of *balolo*. Unlike regular fishing trips, during *ta nuqa* women must wear the formal *sulu jaba* (a long dress with bright colorful designs). They waited patiently and observed the travel pattern of the schools of rabbitfish making their runs in the shallow reef. Around 9:20, two of them formed a group and walked into the water, spreading out a 5-foot long gillnet, placing it in the travel route of the rabbitfish. They were also waving short branches of taun tree leaves (*Pometia pinnata*, Fijian *dawa*) while one of them made the sharp sound of “*dere, dere ...*” to drive the fish towards the net. After smashing into the net, thousands of these shiny silvery rabbitfish were then scooped up and dumped into a 5-gallon bucket. This action continued on and off until eleven o’clock when two of these buckets were filled with rabbitfish. Afterwards the women took the catches and gathered in front of the house of the leader of *Mataqali* Waisoki and began to divide them for the households in the village. Each household would send someone with a small basin to retrieve their share for consumption. I was told that the rabbitfish could only be boiled into soup with shampoo ginger leaves (*Zingiber zerumbet*, Fijian *drove*). Other cooking methods such as frying (*tavuteke*) which is popular in Guam are forbidden.

As I took the share for our household back to my mother Sia, she told me that two buckets were considered a poor outcome for a *ta nuqa* event. Often criticizing wrongful conducts in the community, she said that there were still many things unsettled in the village, such as the currently vacant seat of Tui Nasau. She speculated that this was why the rabbitfish did not appear as much as before. She then told me about this *ta nuqa* event a long time ago before 2000:

Before, during the time of *ta nuqa* there should be no noise in the village. You could not mow the lawn, you could not sing or play, or else the *nuqa* will not come. The first catch should be taken to the village chief Tui Nasau’s house, and

then divided over there. All the *Mataqali* members would eat over there. Now this custom is no longer followed, and the first catch is taken to other people's house. *Nuqa* will not come if it is done in this way. There was one time on the day of *ta nuqa* when the [last] Tui Nasau was still alive. He wore a shirt and tie with the *sulu vakataga*⁷⁶ and came to the beach. When he put one of his feet in the ocean, all the *nuqa* swarmed over. We caught twenty-eight bags of *nuqa* that day, as well as others put in big and small pots. The amount of *nuqa* was so plenty that some even spilled over on the lawn. We were also able to share them with other villages in Bouma. I will never forget that day (Teresia Senimili, interview, 12/15/2010, my translation).

The most memorable *ta nuqa* event to most villagers was the one in 2004. Before then, the juvenile rabbitfish had not arrived for several years. In December 2004, however, an abundance of this tiny fish suddenly appeared in the foreshore. The ensuing harvest was so successful that today villagers still remember the scene vividly. I was told that the catches were able to fill 9 of those 50-kg flour bags, while others that could not be put in were splattered on a large tarpaulin placed on the lawn. The villagers then presented the "first net" to the regional chief of Bouma Vunisa and divided the rest among neighboring villages. The arrival of the juvenile rabbitfish was significant because the Waitabu Marine Park had just ended a prolonged business closure in the year before due to tensions regarding the management. This was also the first time that they came after the establishment of the MPA in 1998. Their arrival was therefore interpreted as the rightfulness of the conservation and ecotourism, which must be founded on a peaceful *vanua*. In January 2013 I had another conversation with Helen and she told me that she also remembered being told by the excited villagers about the 2004 arrival of the juvenile rabbitfish, who thought that the MPA was really working. She found it very interesting because the rabbitfish was not a strong indicator of the condition of the marine ecosystem compared with the more territorial reef fishes like the butterflyfish. Finally she half-jokingly said that maybe the villagers did not care

⁷⁶ Formal Fijian wrap-around garment worn by men.

about all the measurements of the size of the giant clams or the counting of the number of trochus shells, but really it's the arrival of the juvenile rabbitfish that mattered the most to them, which perhaps could be somehow incorporated into the reef check survey in the future.



Figure 23. The rabbitfish harvest ritual (*ta nuqa*). Note the formal dresses the fisherwomen were wearing and the glossy taun tree leaves they were holding.

5.3.2 Affirming Ownership and Identity

To me, the most important aspect of the *ta nuqa* ritual is not the indication of “everything is alright in the community” or the success of the MPA, but the confirmation of Waitabu’s ownership of their customary inshore territory. As mentioned earlier, in 1966 the Native Lands and Fisheries Commission came to Taveuni to record traditional fishing rights, and it was then determined that Wainikeli and Bouma (except for Lavena) share a joint fishing ground. However,

there are layers of customary relations embedded in the seascape that were not recorded into the official record book, but were acknowledged and generally respected by local communities in everyday life. For Waitabu villagers, their customary marine territory extended from Veitalacagi in the Vunivasa Estates to Vurevure Bay and all the way to Pulou, approaching Vidawa. This was where the original Forest people used to fish and where the true Nasau people established their *vanua*. Today, this territoriality however does not have any legal basis. On the other hand, the management of the MPA and the operation of the Waitabu Marine Park by the Waitabu villagers themselves had no doubt rekindled this sense of ownership that was otherwise non-visible in official documents. This was further empowered by the docking fees collected from the cruise ships anchored at Vurevure Bay to visit the ecotourism projects, the annual biological surveys done by the joint effort of the villagers, neighboring community members, and international volunteers, as well as the arrival of the juvenile rabbitfish and the distribution of the catches to surrounding communities.

The layers of customary territorial ownership could nevertheless be very messy and require processes of negotiation. In May 2007 a French-Canadian entrepreneur Claude and his wife Danielle came to lease the western half of the Vurevure Freehold called Sere ni Wai with an intention to start a pearl farming business called Civa Pearls Ltd. inside Vurevure Bay. The actual sites of the pearl farm are located at two separate locations: the pearling station in Wailoa reef which is 37.8 ha. and the nursery in the southern part of Vurevure Bay which is 12.8 ha. As the pearl farms were established on the seabed which is owned by the state, in theory they were leasing directly from the government only. However, these establishments would also interfere with the fishing activities of the surrounding communities who hold customary fishing rights in the area and therefore would need to be compensated. Given that Vurevure Bay is part of the

Wainikeli-Bouma joint fishing ground shared by many communities, the question then became who are entitled to be compensated? After a meeting with Tuei, the high chief of *Tikina* Wainikeli, and a subsequent visit with the District Officer of Cakaudrove in October 2007, Claude was told that Waitabu is the customary owner of Vurevure Bay and a 5-year contract was soon signed with Tui Nasau which promised an annual payment of F\$ 5,000. Later on, the *Mataqali* Lekutu of Vidawa came forward and laid a claim on the Wailoa reef as their customary territory, requesting to be compensated as well. The contract was then revised, under the consent of Tui Nasau, Tui Lekutu, Vunisa, and Tuei, that the annual payment would be shared between Waitabu and Vidawa. What is interesting about this arrangement is that, both Waitabu and Vidawa villagers were not the primary fishers in Vurevure Bay or Wailoa. They receive compensation not because of the actual fishing rights being lost, but the historical customary ownership that was acknowledged by native hierarchy. It should also be noted that this type of compensation used to be termed “payment of goodwill” which served a similar function as the *i-sevusevu* presented by foreigners to a chief when entering the community. What this payment did is therefore to reaffirm the customary ownership in the marine space that is today still legally vested in the hands of the government.

From the perspective of the government, it is easier for them to allow such autonomy and flexibility for the communities to deal with these ownership and coastal management issues themselves due to the lack of manpower and resources. Their role is to facilitate, find the right parties to be involved, and provide consultation in the processes of negotiation. This attitude is founded on a belief in the power of *vanua* that is able to self-regulate tensions and accommodate different forces of influence through customary meetings or rituals. When I interviewed Fiji’s Northern Divisional Fisheries officer Joji in 2012 about the situation of Fiji’s coastal

management, he told me that the government can provide training and management plans, but the most important thing is for the communities to “sit down together (*dabe vata*) and dialogue.” He pointed out that the killing of Waitabu’s *turaga ni koro* in 2005 was due to the lack of communication within the *vanua*. To him, the best way to resolve the issue of poaching is not to call the Fisheries Department (especially in the middle of the night), but to “sit down” and talk to the surrounding communities. It ultimately goes back to the relationship in the *vanua* which involves people and the environment, as Joji explained:

We have the *vula i nuqa levu*, *vula i nuqa lailai*. Some have this *balolo*. Some have the “fish of the year.” [It] depends on the *vanua*, how good the relationship is, and all the things [would] appear ... The fish of the year is not supposed to be sold eh? Some of them are selling it, [and] it disappeared. That happened to my village. They sold the *kai koso*, [and] it disappeared. Now it’s very far [away]. You have to get 20 liters of premix to go [on a boat] and get the *kai koso*. Before, you just light a fire, put your pot of cassava there, and go down to the beach. You fill a basket, you come back. Same time, still fresh. But now, they have to find fuel, [and go] far away (Joji Vakawaletabua, interview, 12/12/2012).

Sometimes, it is about finding the rightful owners in a labyrinth of relationships. For example:

This new highway...They’re making the bridge. They try to hit this post. They hit hit hit and went on springing, springing. How many times, how many days they’ve been trying [but in vain]. So they went to Tui Nasavusavu. Nothing happened. They went to Tui Naweni. They went to Tui Navatu. They went to Tui We’ani. And there was a *Mataqali* Nasinu. They just went there and serve the grog, [say] their apology, [and] it’s finished now. They managed to lay the bridge across. They were [able to] hammer this post down ... because all this land is owned by the *Mataqali*. So you have to do [the *i-sevusevu*] to the right person, and do the right thing (ibid).

The same goes to the management of MPAs. Currently there are 235 MPAs in Fiji, but only one (Ulunikoro Marine Reserve in Kadavu, established in 2002) is protected by the state law. Once an MPA is gazetted, it becomes a permanent MPA. The common philosophy is that communities should retain the right to reopen the MPA and harvest the marine resources should special circumstances arise, such as the funeral of a high chief. As a result, the government

would prefer not to have the MPAs written in the law in order to maintain such local flexibility. Here we can find an implicit linkage between MPAs and *vanua*. Although the implementation of MPA is a rather “modern” practice based on knowledge of environmental science and requires pilot biological surveys and careful designs regarding the size and method, in Fiji it is often understood as *tabu*. *Tabu* is a well-known Proto-Oceanic concept which contains the meanings of sacred and forbidden. In Fiji it is a traditional way of preserving natural resources, as well as demonstration of despotic chiefly power (Williams 1858:234-236). A *tabu* can be put on coasts, lands, rivers, and seas; animals, fish, fruit, and vegetables. During such period of time, no one should be allowed to get access to these things. It is sometimes initiated by a high chief, or in Lau by a hereditary position called *Vakavanua* (crop custodian) whose duty was to watch over the crops and make sure they are ready for the “first fruits” presentation. In places where chieftainship was highly developed, those who broke the *tabu* could be clubbed to death (Thompson 1949:264). It can also be lifted prematurely, however, under the request of a higher chiefly power. For example, in the mid-19th century it was documented that the *tabu* put on the coast by the local chief of Viwa Namosimalua was asked to be removed by the paramount chief Cakobau for the Salem bark Zotoff to harvest *bêche-de-mer* (Wallis 1851:256). In the contemporary context of environmental conservation, such a connotation still remains and thus the establishment and management of MPAs could be viewed as empowerment to the local *vanua*.

It is nevertheless dangerous to treat *vanua* as a self-regulating entity with its own cultural order and rigid value systems. Rather, as emphasized in this dissertation, it is an open-ended environment that could involve customary practices and modern knowledge. This is what Margaret Rodman called “breathing spaces” in post-Independence Vanuatu, by which she means

a kind of ambiguity that allowed “new ways of doing things to seem old, and old ways to seem new, without old and new coming into conflict and without the contradictions between them becoming abrasive” (Rodman 1995:67). The breathing spaces emerged when the newly independent Vanuatu abolished all freehold lands and returned them to its customary owners. The discourses of *kastom* became the foundation for rural land rearrangements and dispute settlements. More importantly, business and development were also given the opportunity to flourish by the endeavors of customary leaders. Rodman concluded that such breathing spaces in rural Vanuatu created flexible solutions before the national government and state law could respond. In the context of Fiji’s coastal management situation, *vanua* should also be treated as “breathing spaces” that provide a platform for collaboration. The *vakavanua* agreements and customary protocols may not be able to stop poaching or prevent natural resources exploitation, but the solution is not to rely on modern institutions of law or environmental protection. As exemplified by the case study of the Waitabu Marine Park, although it may not conform to the ideal blueprint of conservation and development, *vanua* has the capacity to accommodate values and practices of modern environmentalism, while maintaining the integrity of the community at the same time.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CASE STUDY II: MOBILITY AND RESILIENCE OF THE WAITABU FARMING LANDSCAPE

In January 2011 at a village meeting in Waitabu something special happened. As usual, I sat down at a corner on the long mat with the villagers under the temporary gathering shed (*vakatunuloa*), listening to reports by different village committees. When it was the turn for the agricultural branch (*taba ni teitei*) to report, suddenly printouts were being handed over to the crowd. Of all the village meetings that I had attended this was the first time that I received a printout. While this was not entirely unusual, having printouts meant that someone had to find a computer or laptop, which is very rare in the Bouma region, to type out the document, and take the pain to travel over an hour on the bus to the commercial center Naqara on the other side of the island and have it printed out. Sensing this must be an important document, I took a copy and paid close attention to what was being said. The title of the printout was “Week of the Village” (*Macawa Ni Koro*). It is basically the blueprint of a proposed collective working schedule for the village. A “Week of the Village” consists of four working days (*sigā ni cakacaka*) from Monday to Wednesday and Friday. Thursday is reserved for works regarding the *vanua* (*cakacaka ni vanua*), which was later explained to me as works for the region of Bouma such as the Bouma Primary School. I was then surprised to find a strict timetable for a working day, in which villagers would wake up and say their morning prayers at 6:00; clean up the village 6:30-7:30;

take a short rest and begin formal work 8:00-15:00; physical exercise 15:30-16:30; say their evening prayers at 17:00; socializing 17:30-21:30; and finally end the day at 21:30. The focus of the formal work is farming. Each farmer is required to plant 50 taro tops (*mata*) and make 3 kava plots (*puke kasa*) in a working day. The crops planted on Monday are for the village, Tuesday for the Church, Wednesday for the *vanua*, and Friday for the women's and men's organizations in the village. The final section was a detailed calculation of the profit to be earned by selling the kava plants. It was stated that there were 26 male farmers in the village. Within a "Week of the Village" which only needs to take place once a year, these farmers could collectively produce $26 \times 3 \times 4 = 312$ kava plots. Each kava plot would contain 12 kava plants. Therefore, in a year the village could produce $312 \times 12 = 3744$ kava plants. Generally it takes 3 years for a kava plant to be ready to be pulled. A whole kava plant with roots, stems, and leaves is called *vuna*, which could be sold for F\$10 for a three-year-old one,⁷⁷ and 3744 of them could therefore make F\$ 37,440. If this blueprint is to be followed for three straight years, then on the fifth year the village could make a total of $37,440 \times 3 = \text{F\$ } 112,320$ to build a community hall, plus a land with strong bodies of the youngsters (*dua na nodra vanua ni vakaukauwa yago na tabagone*), as the document concluded. This calculation did not include the taro crops that could be harvested and sold after seven to eight months for at least F\$1/kg.

At first glance, Waitabu farmers appeared to be disciplined and calculating planners fully engaged in the cash-cropping schemes and export-oriented economy that has incorporated the whole island. But there is more to this picture. This proposal of collective farming implies a strong belief in the power of *vanua* posed as the environment that provides everlasting fertility to

⁷⁷ A more matured *vuna* at five years old could be sold for F\$20. The advantage of purchasing *vuna* is that the buyer could sell the roots (*waka*) and lower stems (*lewena*) and cut the mid-stems (*kasa*) to replant them.

the crops and nurtures the development of the community. Even as they engage in the cash-cropping schemes of which the goal is to generate income for the community, concerns for the *vanua* that goes beyond their own village are clearly present (e.g. works for the Bouma region). The market therefore did not turn them into rational farming subjects aiming solely at maximizing production. Their idea of agricultural production is still very much grounded in the *vanua* that involves their identity, well-being, and togetherness of the community. Moreover, even though it seemed that the crops they now plant, mainly dryland taro of the *Tausala ni Samoa* variety (*Colocasia esculenta*, Fijian *dalo*) and kava (*Piper methysticum*, Fijian *yaqona*), are conditioned by the market at the expense of the traditional biodiversity of the environment, there are still other layers of less visible crops and plants for their daily usage and consumption. On the other hand, it is equally wrong to categorize the Waitabu farmers as simply situated in a system of communalism. They have much flexibility in their individual gardens to experiment in different farming methods, find their own buyers, bring in other farmers through kinship ties, and explore the balance of subsistence and commercial, as well as individual and collective farming.

In this chapter I argue that the power and flexibility of the Waitabu farming environment are founded on a “messy” landscape that has patches of gardens scattered from the village compound and its outskirts to the inland forest area. They could also be found at the road side, creek valley, and on the mountain. The reason for the presence of these fragmentary gardens is not solely due to the hilly topography, but more importantly a complex land tenure system that has created an open-ended capacity for mobility inside the landscape to happen. Not only has this messy landscape preserved a “hidden environmental diversity” that was accumulated through different historical processes, the repeated everyday actions of climbing, walking, and

planting along the trails leading into different farm sites have also allowed the farmers to develop an aesthetic appreciation of the environment and connections to their forefathers who had also worked and left their marks in the landscape along the way. This is therefore a landscape that is alive and mobile, refusing to be disciplined or categorized (Bender 2002:106). It provides the Waitabu farmers a platform to engage in individual farming ventures while maintaining their autochthonous identity that holds the community together.

6.1 MOBILITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT

6.1.1 Globalization and Farming

Taveuni Island is known for its fertile volcanic soil with high levels of nutrients derived from rapidly decomposed basaltic materials (Twyford and Wright 1965:402). With high volume of annual rainfall providing moisture to the soil, the island is perfect for the growth of long term crops such as coconut trees, which had been taken advantage of by the European planters from the 1860s and earned the moniker “the Garden Island.” However, this fertility is not uniformly distributed on the island and certainly would not last forever. The northeastern part of Taveuni where the entire Bouma region is situated is the geologically oldest area of the island, composed of deeply eroded Pleistocene trachyte, whereas the most recent eruptions took place into the Holocene in the younger southern part (Brookfield 1978a:5). The soils in the north therefore have a marked ferralitic character of which the fertility could be more quickly exhausted as agricultural activities continued due to their origin from older parent materials (Denis 1978:19).

This is coupled with the hilly topography and high volume of rainfall which would often lead to the wash-off of soil organic matter.

Capitalistic agricultural ventures on Taveuni initiated by foreign planters from the late 19th century has been discussed in detail in chapter 4. The large plantations and estates established by these pioneers had greatly altered the landscapes and social relationships on the island. They had also laid down the foundations of commercial farming for the indigenous Fijian villagers and the later arrived Indo-Fijian settlers, including infrastructures such as ports, roads, means of production and transportation, as well as networks of buyers and middlemen. The post-independence economy of Taveuni was initially centered on the continuous but declining value of copra. Starting from the 1970s, kava had also become an important second economic option for the local farmers in response to the growing demands from the expanding urban and suburban Fijian population, particularly in and around the capital Suva. Around the same time, the National Marketing Authority (NMA) established in 1971 also began to purchase taro in bundles to sell to these urbanites, but its economic performance remained low due to low purchase prices by NMA, long distance to the Suva market, short shelf life, and high freight costs (Chandra 1979:79). Other less significant cash crops included cassava and yams, of which the market was restricted only within the island (Brookfield 1978a:7). As copra price continued to drop and the kava trade eventually became operated internationally in the 1980s (Mangal 1988:61), a turning point happened to the taro industry in Fiji in 1993. In that year, the taro leaf blight fungus (*Phytophthora colocasiae*) invaded Samoa, the then leading taro exporting country in the Pacific, and almost completely destroyed its production. In the following year, Fiji quickly took over the taro export market, chiefly that of New Zealand and Australia, and the planting area saw an immediate 50% increase (Fleming and Blowes 2003:12; Onwueme 1999:21). With the looming

threat of the taro beetle (*Papuana uniondis*) on the main islands, the commercial taro production became centered in Taveuni where the pest was never reported. Today, Fiji is the second leading taro export country in the world only behind China, and nearly 70% of its taro export production originated from Taveuni, which had amounted to over 8,000 tons in the peak years of 2006 and 2007 (McGregor et al. 2011a:13).

This is also a period of time (since the 1980s) that scholars identified as “the second wave of globalization” in the Pacific (Connell 2007; Firth 2000; Murray 2001). While the first wave was intrinsically linked to the late 19th-century mercantile expansion of colonial power and resource exploitation, the second one was developed with the emergence of independent Pacific Island Countries and their growing reliance on overseas aid. Major aid donors initiated regional free trade agreements such as the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) signed in 1980 and paved the way for the flow of goods and services. This was followed by the imposition of neoliberal structural adjustments and market-driven developments by lending agencies like World Bank, IMF, and the Asian Development Bank to create more trade- and investment-friendly environment on these new island nations. Fiji was the first country in the Pacific to undertake such a reform after the military coups of 1987 and major government funds were soon given to the development of competitive export sectors, particularly the garment industry, and niche products such as kava and ginger (Connell 2007:6; Murray 2001:139). However, similar to the neoliberal experiments taken place earlier in Latin America, many signs of harm were later revealed under the economic benefits generated by these projects. Data has shown that between 1975 and 1991, the key period of free trade development in Fiji, level of poverty grew significantly despite rapid economic development (Connell 2010:118). The garment industry essentially created by the SPARTECA was over-

relying on regional trade agreement markets and was exploiting low-wage and low-skill labors, especially women, working in poor conditions (Storey 2006). The sugar industry, the long-time pillar of Fiji's economy, was also hurting due to the free trade agreement with the European Union that annihilated earlier price protection mechanism for Fiji and is now forced to compete with other producers with a less efficient production system (Connell 2007:5; Firth 2007:118). As for the growing kava export industry, it was stated that it had perpetuated the peripheral position of outer islands like Kadavu which saw its native production system focus on the commercialization of one single crop and become reliant on import foodstuffs (Sofer 1985,2007).

Under the façade of the fertile Garden Island, Taveuni is currently facing similar issues. As one of the major kava producing regions in Fiji, Taveuni saw the demand skyrocketed in 1998 and signs of unsustainable farming began to appear. Not only were deforestation and the opening of new plantations in higher elevations reported (Merlin and Raynor 2004:281), the increase of mono-cropping, premature harvest of kava plants, and the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to a crop that traditionally did not cost much soil fertility were also widespread. More importantly, this had made the island economy vulnerable and as the low quality of Taveuni's kava was sensed by the buyers, the sale soon declined in the following year and the farmers suffered greatly (Murray 2001:368-369). The commercialization of dryland taro had produced similar outcomes. As early as in the 1970s the use of chemical herbicides on taro plantations had been noticed (Haynes 1976:16). The growing demand on production and export performance after the taro export boom in 1994 had turned farmers' focus on two particular varieties, the *Tausala ni Samoa* and Samoa hybrid, which were preferred by the market due to longer shelf life and shorter time to reach maturity. This was nevertheless done at the expense of other traditionally cultivated taro varieties in Fiji and had created a genetically identical

environment highly vulnerable to disease attacks (Masibalavu et al. 2002). The fertility of land is also rapidly eroded. In southern Taveuni, the most intensive taro production area on the island, it is common to find taro being cultivated on the same piece of land for up to 15 years without crop rotation or long fallow period (McGregor et al. 2011a:13). This has directly led to the recent high reject rates of small or deformed taro harvests on the island. Moreover, due to the expanding commercial taro plantations, Taveuni now has the highest rate of deforestation in Fiji (Rohit Lal, interview, 06/25/2010). These environmental issues are currently addressed by the local Agriculture Department and a local NGO called Tei Tei Taveuni which has been providing workshops of sustainable farming for local farmers.

6.1.2 Land Tenure

While the environmental issues due to modern market-driven farming practices mostly took place on freehold and leased lands in Taveuni, the indigenous landscapes were not immune to these changes. In their studies in Taveuni in the mid-1970s, a research team led by Brookfield (1976) had provided a sketch of an independent farmer in Bouma which gives us a glimpse of what the farming environment in the region was like during that time. They discovered that even though coconut and cocoa were promoted by the government, the farming blocks within reach of the main road had already been planted with taro and kava, which were stimulated by the opening of a regular market at the neighboring Laucala Island Estates. Dissatisfied with the extremely low copra yield due to the wet and cloudy weather in the region, the Bouma farmer instead focused on taro cash-cropping which had amounted up to 20,000 corms in his garden. He would carry his harvest to the landing at Dala, where it was bought at a better price than that of

the NMA. When this market closed in 1976 due to oversupply, he would hire a taxi or travel by bus to the small local markets at Waiyevo or Somosomo at the other side of the island (Brookfield 1976:16-17). Today, household livelihood in Waitabu is now also relying on kava and taro sales. As I was frequently told by Waitabu farmers, “we have two sources of income: the long term is *yagona*, and the short term is *dalo*.” These two crops were dominating the farm sites scattered on the landscape of Waitabu. The intensity, however, could not be compared with that of the commercial farming areas on the island. The goal of a consistent and successful farmer in Waitabu is to plant 3,600 taro tops and 600 kava plants in a year, which according to the agricultural officer Rohit is not a huge burden to the soil fertility, whereas the fully commercial farmers are planting more than 50,000 taro tops and over 10,000 kava plants annually. The small scale of these farm sites is not only due to the hilly topography, but also the nature of Waitabu’s land tenure which is actually far from an orderly and homogeneous system and has produced many fragmentary farm sites.

The land tenure system in Waitabu is similar to the marine tenure system described in chapter 5. At the official level where ownerships are registered with the NLC, the land tenure of *Yavusa* Naisaqai is communal, divided among the three *Mataqali* as basic land-owning units, with Waisoki owning the majority 507 acres, Veiniu (Wai settlement) 176 acres, and Vunivesi 148 acres. There is also another officially recognized class of land called *i-kovukovu* (literally “reserved”) which was historically granted to an individual family or in most cases given to a woman as dowry which is passed to her descendants. There are four *i-kovukovu* customarily affiliated with *Yavusa* Naisaqai amounted to a total of 62 acres, of which 28 acres were now used by the Vurevure settlement and 14 acres belonged to a family living in Korovou. On the other hand, there are numerous named places within these territories not recorded in the book but

generally respected by the community members. During fieldwork I had collected 26 such place names around Waitabu, most of which were developed by founding figures only one or two generations ago, and are now owned by their direct descendants, both male and female, as their personal gardens (*i-kanakana*). Some families used to have houses in these places and lived there rather than inside the village. For example, farmer A1 (see Appendix B) and his siblings grew up in the house built by their father in Namatiu, a farm site in the bushes. Their identity with the place was so strong that in the Fijian electoral roll of Waitabu in 1977 his parents are the only two persons registered with an additional place name Namatiu behind their names. They eventually moved back into the village in 1978 and he remembered that initially they were not welcomed, as if they did not belong to Waitabu. Currently in Waitabu there's only one farmer living in such an arrangement on his plantation outside the village and thus did not actively participate in the group farming project mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. There was also a couple temporarily staying in the house of the male's brother's farm site. I was told that the main reason they could not stay inside the village was because that they were unmarried.

The ownership of these places appears to be very diverse and does not always follow the official *Mataqali* territories, which is nevertheless still an important factor for land distribution.⁷⁸ In some places, like Namatiu, ownership is vested in an extended family headed by a founding figure and divided among several nuclear households (*matavuvale*). In some other places, like Nasolo located in the Vurevure Creek valley, land ownership is closely guarded by the *i-Tokatoka*. There are also places within areas that are entirely controlled by the *Mataqali*. In these places, while *Mataqali* ownership is recognized, usufructs tend to be more flexible and farmers

⁷⁸ 72.5% of the farmers of Waitabu maintained their farm sites within their official *Mataqali* territories. See Appendix B.

could be from different descent lines. However, land use is still carefully mediated. For example, in March 2010 when A1 who is affiliated with *Mataqali* Vunivesi was extending his house and needed building materials, he had to ask the permission from the *turaga ni mataqali* of Waisoki to use the *yaro* trees (*Premna protrusa*) in their territory. Finally, there are remote places like Vunivulavula where ownership is not specified and is open to anyone from Waitabu, particularly youngsters to set up their first farms. These arrangements and different degrees of flexibility more or less reflect the ranking of seniority. While favorable farm sites like Namatiu and Nasolo are secured in the hands of senior leaders and their families, lower status youngsters and floaters typically farm at the more distant places like Vunivulavula.

Due to the complexity of the land tenure system, it is not surprising to find the existence of disputes, even though not overtly expressed. Favored for its large area and close proximity to the village, the farm site Lomaniba is said to be in the possession of the extended family of the village chief Tui Nasau. The area was then borrowed by the village cooperative to raise cattle from the 1950s. In fact, the very name of “Lomaniba,” which literally means “inside the fence,” might be created during this period of time. After the operation ended, many village farmers from both *Mataqali* began to move in and establish their small plantations. Today it is a complex maze of gardens used by 14 farmers from 12 different households. In January 2011 at a *Mataqali* meeting for Vunivesi, I heard a discussion about the possibility of re-enclosing Lomaniba, proposed by the families of Tui Nasau, who felt that it is being encroached. This proposal was soon rejected due to the difficulty of execution, and the idea that this area is a loving gift (*loloma*) for everyone in the village was stressed by other members present at the meeting.

Throughout my fieldwork from 2010 to 2012, there were a total of 41 active adult male farmers from 31 different households (mostly nuclear families) having gardens in Waitabu with

diverse styles of land use. They are generally responsible for their individual cultivations but the nuclear household is usually the basic working unit. It should be noted that women also have their own plots to plant vegetables, fruits, or fabric crops. For example, the wife of H1 is famous for her pandanus palms (*Pandanus whitmeeanus*, Fijian *voivoi*) in her husband's garden for making mats, and a group of young unmarried women also had a small collective farm at the outskirts of the village, but the scale and intensity could not be compared with that of the starchy root crop gardens cultivated by the adult male farmers. Although not the primary users, women's ownership of the farm sites is also recognized. Four of the 41 farmers have established their usufruct rights through their wives. Also, of the 27 married women living in Waitabu, 3 are endogamous, 3 are uxorilocal, and 2 had moved back after their husbands passed away, which suggest that it is not uncommon for women to stay within their natal village and continue to utilize the resources. Moreover, 11 of the 41 farmers gain ownership to farm sites through their mothers' membership in the village.⁷⁹ If counting the existence of any female member when tracing ownership to a founding figure, then this number would jump to 17. In fact, the number of farmers in Waitabu that trace ownership strictly through patrilineal line is 18, which is only 43.9% of the total farmers working in the Waitabu landscape.

While scholars working in Fiji have long challenged the official ideology of *Mataqali* as an exogamous patrilineal land-owning unit (Deane 1921:3; Nayacakalou 1957; Quain 1948:182-183), the data above should be put in the context of Waitabu as a neo-traditional village re-

⁷⁹ While the right to use or seize the maternal uncle's, or more generally the mother's natal village's resources is widely documented in Fiji, which is called the *vasu* relationship, this privilege has a ritualistic connotation and is more often strategically executed or temporarily performed (Sahlins 2004:68; Williams 1858:34). In the land use situation in Waitabu, however, it is more towards a permanent choice in which the "sister's son" is completely viewed as a member of the *vanua*. This kind of arrangement was also discussed by Quain in his research in Vanua Levu (1948:182-183).

established from the late-19th century depopulation which needed recruitment to revive its population and labor force. The initial abundance of land for a small group of people in the early 20th century also maintained this flexibility of membership, allowing mobility in the landscape and did not disappear as population grew and the pressure for cash-cropping rose. Today, the Waitabu environment is still a very fluid space with people constantly entering and leaving through different channels and relationships. Of the 41 active farmers of Waitabu, 6 were actually from other villages. Except one of them being the descendant of a historical *i-kovukovu* owner, they had established usufruct through either affinal or an intimate *tavale* (maternal cross-cousin) relationship. Furthermore, only 56.1% of the farmers were registered in the official book of descendants (*Ai Vola Ni Kawa*) which delineates the land-ownership of a *Yavusa*. Most of those who are not registered are currently using the land through maternal ties. There is also a type of farmer that I termed “floaters” who are typically youngsters that do not always reside in the village but still have farm sites and cultivations. They are either students who have academic duties or free-spirited bachelors who move between their fathers’ or mothers’ villages or other places. Many movements are the result of decisions in different stages of life. For example, L1 moved back into Waitabu with his family in 2009 at the age of 40 because his work in Suva was “slacking” and through the help from his brother at the village, he immediately began planting at two farm sites, one in Vunivulavula and the other in Lomaniba. Contrarily, I2 who is in his 40s had been farming in Waitabu through his wife’s membership in the village and was regarded as one of the most diligent farmers. In January 2011 he pulled all of his mature taro crops and sold them at a price of F\$1/kg, which made a total of F\$ 831, the most for a Waitabu farmer I had ever seen. The money became the funding for his whole family to relocate to Suva and the gardens were taken over by his wife’s sister’s son I1. In another example, L4 studied at the Fiji

Institute of Technology in Suva and after graduation at the age of 23 he went back to the village in 2008 and began his first farm in Vunivulavula. After farming for 4 years and moving to other farm sites, he decided to pursue seminary studies and planned to leave the village in 2013. His elder brother L5 also demonstrated similar mobility. Beginning farming in Waitabu at an early age, he enrolled in the famous Tutu Young Farmers Course and left the village in 2008 when he was 24. He then got married, dropped out the program, and moved into his wife's village to farm. In 2012 he brought his whole family back to the village and resumed farming in his old farm sites.

As observed by Ward (1965:195-196), due to the nature of Fiji's customary land tenure, it is difficult for a farmer to develop a large consolidated holding. However, this instead gives him the flexibility to strategize the distribution of his crops in accordance to the soil fertility and distance to his home, all within the boundary of customary protocols. Therefore, it is much more advantageous to have his gardens fragmented. This flexibility was echoed by the research of Overton (1993) who argued that neo-traditional Fijian villages are now filled with different projects, movements, and linkages between communities and with the wider urban and international economies. They are thus fulfilling multiple roles as farms, suburbs, and retirement homes, providing functions of a social safety net, as well as a site to accumulate material and social wealth. As demonstrated by Waitabu's land tenure system, the diversity of ownership and usufruct in the landscape is able to accommodate this mobility, allowing different life situations to play out without interfering with one another.

6.1.3 Crops and Plants

In June 2010 I went to the Vunivasa Estates to interview the current land owner, a Danish couple running commercial agriculture business, about issues of land tenure. Vunivasa was considered part of *Yavusa* Naisaqai's customary territory but was alienated by Tui Cakau to foreign planters in the 1860s. Before I left, an elder of Waitabu told me that I should talk straight to them that "this land belongs to Waitabu!" (*Oqo e na vanua mai Waitabu*). It turned out that the Danish couple, Peter and Lilian, is not the owner of the land, but managers for a foreign agricultural export company Pacific Produce Ltd. which purchased the 3,000-acre area in the 1980s. Historically a copra plantation, Vunivasa now has a thriving pineapple and taro export business, as well as a cattle ranch. We ended up having a long conversation about farming in Taveuni, which is a topic they are most concerned about. They came to the island in the late 1980s when the island economy was just transitioning from copra-based to kava and taro. With the taro boom after 1994 they began to notice a trend of unsustainable farming which was causing soil degradation and deforestation and had recently affected the crop yield. This was why in June 2009 they co-founded the NGO "Tei Tei Taveuni" (*tei* means farming in Fijian) with a collection of concerned foreign, indigenous, Indo-Fijian farmers and began to promote smarter and organic ways of farming such as soil testing, composting, and planting *Mucuna* beans as manure crops. During our interview, Lilian, who had read Rev. Thomas Williams's documentation of traditional Fijian agriculture in the mid-19th century, shared her observation of today's farming practices in the village:

If you go back in history ... they had everything they needed in their garden. EVERYTHING! They had a plant they used for sugar ... They had tea. They used the lemon grass ... They had small plants that look like small cherry tomatoes.

They had every kind of fruit tree you can imagine. They had all different kinds of breadfruits, different kinds of taro. They had so many different things. And today the Fijian farmer ... they work three four hours a day ... and if you go to their garden they probably have cassava and *dalo*, and that's it. And nobody's planting new coconut tree. Nobody's planting food trees....and it's crazy because their health is deteriorating, because they are getting so fixed on one crop, mono-crop, all the time, everywhere. They could easily grow a lot of the stuff in their garden and they would need less money to buy things and so on ... they even buy soy bean oil. That's unbelievable (Lilian Ekbom, interview, 06/24/2010).

To some extent, her critique was warranted. Just by looking at the gardens in Waitabu, it appears that they were dominated by taro, kava, and some cassava. The increase of cash-cropping had led to not only a process called “agrodeforestation” in which diverse tree crops were given way to the monoculture of cash crops (Clarke and Thaman 1997:124-125), but also growing reliance on purchased food, even in the rural area, and increasing nutrition-related health situations (Mavoa and McCabe 2008; Taylor et al. 2013; Thaman 1988b:220). However, it should be pointed out that this process was not solely triggered by cash-cropping, but part of a continual and complex interaction of different socio-biological elements within the environment. In his research on the Maring-speaking people in the Ndwimba Basin of Papua New Guinea in the 1960s, human geographer William Clarke described a livelihood that was sustained by a wide variety of crops and plants created by casual shifting cultivation that turned grassland into gardens of starchy crops, aging gardens into orchards of tree crops, and fallow land into secondary forests. He nevertheless noticed an emerging trend of agricultural intensification for more food production in response to growing population stemmed from better medical facilities and the prohibition of warfare, which would ultimately lead to the reduction of natural diversity such as the monotony of sweet potatoes at the expense of yams and taro, or the diminishing of protein-rich tree leaves due to the clearing of forests (Clarke 1966; 1971:192). In Bougainville, Connell described how the taro gardens with their associated cosmological beliefs were attacked

by the taro blight fungus at the end of WWII. Afterwards the taro magic was rarely practiced and the root crop was replaced by a more practical sweet potato cultivation, which required less labor but yielded more and matured faster (Connell 1978). Similarly in Fiji, labor-intensive irrigated taro and yam cultivations were also declining, while the importance of cassava increased around the 1960s (Ward 1964:488-489; 1965:205).

For the farming landscape of Waitabu, it has long been opened to different processes of changes from the historical tribal migrations, late 19th-century depopulation, establishment of neighboring estates, colonial policies of cash-cropping, population boom after WWII, and the more recent post-independence cash-cropping schemes. All of these processes had left their marks in the landscape but did not completely alter or dominate the environment. This is because the farming landscape of Waitabu is so fragmented, as reflected in their land tenure system, that a wholesale transformation is almost impossible. The processes of agrodeforestation and reduction of biodiversity certainly have taken place in Waitabu, but they are only one aspect of a multi-layered landscape. Overton (1989) had described different models of farming embedded in the landscapes of the Rewa Delta in Viti Levu. The first one was the pre-colonial model where old ring-ditch fortification and giant swamp taro (*Cyrtosperma chamissonis*, Fijian *via kana*) complexes served as defensive and security sites against warfare and natural disaster. The second one was the colonial model where indigenous depopulation had taken place and root crops that required less labor input such as the introduced cassava and tannia taro (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*, Fijian *dalo ni tana*) had replaced giant taro cultivation, while new crops like pineapples, chilies, rice, mangoes, and citrus, etc. were added into the local diet. Finally, the third one, the post-colonial model in the 1980s, saw the widening of urban food markets and the increasing demand for surplus root crop, tree crop, and vegetable crop production. More

interestingly was the observation by Overton that the recent “[a]gricultural modernization, such as it has occurred, has not been at the expense of overall crop diversity” (Overton 1989:65). An important reason for this, as Overton argued, is the traditional “wild” foods available in their customary land which had been added by the recently introduced crops that had gone wild (p. 69). This area became a “food bank” that has preserved the diversity for irregular or emergency consumption.

Similarly, the farming landscape of Waitabu also demonstrates such a “hidden diversity” that is resilient and tenacious. I use the term “hidden” because it is easy to neglect the existence of it when much attention is given to the more visible and larger cash-cropping gardens. The cash crops represent, however, only one layer of the farming landscape of Waitabu, while the diversity of crops and plants accumulated through different historical processes is still flourishing at different corners. Inside the village compound (*koro*), each household has its own small garden with a wealth of herbs and crops. Generally this is the realm of women who are masters at applying them into different usage. The ones that I had documented during fieldwork include the medicinal latherleaf (*Colubrina asiatica*, Fijian *vusolevu*) for treating flu-like symptoms by inhaling the vapors produced by adding a hot rock to a mixture of the leaves and water; the basil-like *Limnophila rugosa* (Fijian *tamole*) is used to treat coughs and stomachache; both the Chinese creeper “minute-a-mile” (*Mikania micrantha*, Fijian *bosucu*) and the poison bulb (*Crinum Asiaticum*, Fijian *viavia*) are said to be remedies for stopping bleeding and soothing sharp pain from open wounds. While purchased black tea bags were popular, the lemon grass (*Cymbopogon coloratus*, Fijian *coboi*) is still frequently used to boil a pot of morning tea. Common food additives used in Fijian cooking could be obtained from the perennial pepper plants (*Capsicum frutescens*, Fijian *roket*) and lime trees (*Citrus aurantifolia*, Fijian *moli*),

which were both recently introduced. There are also breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*, Fijian *uto*) and papaya (Fijian *weleti*) trees commonly planted around the house, giving villagers immediate access to food crops. Finally it is worth noting that houses are surrounded by ornamental plants like the green ti plant (*Cordyline terminalis*, Fijian *qaiqai*), colorful garden croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*, Fijian *sacasaca*), Fijian Christmas tree (*Decaspermum vitiensis*, Fijian *nuqanuqa*), and palm trees like the *clinostigma exorrhizum* (Fijian *palema*) which are believed to be able to ward off evil spirits and widely used in Catholic rituals. Due to the proximity to houses, the ownership of these plants and crops is clear and borrowings were very frequent.

At the edge of the village compound but not yet into the bush there is an outskirt zone (*saurusa*) which follows a swampy creek that forms the border of the village. It is common to dump garbage and food wastes in this area, as well as to raise pigs that feed on these leftovers. There are also some sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*, Fijian *kumala*) planted by the forefathers, the presence of which on the island was documented by the missionaries in the early 19th century (Heath 1988:206; Williams 1858:61). They appear to have no specific ownership and are rarely harvested. The leaves are sporadically eaten by picking the young ones at the vine tips. Other tree crops that are found in this area and shared by all the villagers include the Tahitian vi apple (*Spondias dulcis*, Fijian *wi*), Malay apple (*Syzygium malaccense*, Fijian *kavika*), oceanic lychee (*Pometia pinnata*, Fijian *dawa*), and the famous Tahitian chestnut (*Inocarpus fagiferus*, Fijian *ivi*), all of which are harvested in January. Elders without much mobility would plant their taro or cassava over there for only subsistence usage. Various families would also have their edible hibiscus leaves (*Abelmoschus manihot*, Fijian *bele*), one of the most common Fijian greens, as well as banana (*jaina*) and plantain (*vudi*), planted in this zone. Other notable plants include the

indigenous bamboo (*Schizostachyum glaucifolium*, Fijian *bitu*) widely used for building rafts and the temporary gathering shed.

Finally, the territory entirely outside the village is generally referred to as the forest (*veikau*), which is the area where all the family or personal farms (*i-teitei*) are located. In fact, when someone says that he is going to *veikau*, he is synonymously saying that he is going farming, which is another evidence of the blurred line between gardens and forest (Tsing 2004:189). This is the realm of males, where they construct their manhood and feed their families by cultivating the starchy root crops and kava. This is also where their ancestors came down from, and where the old village sites were established. In the pre-colonial times, irrigated taro terraces were utilized in Taveuni (Williams 1858:61). According to studies elsewhere in Fiji, these taro gardens were typically constructed adjacent to the fortified villages in times of hostility (Field 1998; Kuhlken 1999). In Navuga, the closest archaeological site of inland hill fort to Waitabu, several nearby terracing remains were discovered, but their usage had not been determined (Frost 1974:19-20). However, given the long track record of warfare in Taveuni, they could very likely have been used as agricultural-defensive complexes found elsewhere in Fiji. Yam (*Dioscorea alata*, Fijian *uvi*) is an equally significant root crop in the pre-colonial times, planted in mounds with well-drained soil. At a ceremonial offering at Somosomo in 1844, Williams had documented around 10,000 yams being presented (Feb 24th 1844 Williams in Henderson 1931b:239). In 1840 Lyth had even noted 50,000 yams being distributed at a feast in Somosomo (Heath 1988:216). Other minor crops that were documented being consumed at the time included giant taro (*Alocasia macrorrhiza*, Fijian *via*), wild yam (*Dioscorea nummularia*, Fijian *tivoli*), sweet yam (*Dioscorea esculenta*, Fijian *kawai*), Samoan yam (*Dioscorea bulbifera*, Fijian *kaile*), sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*, Fijian *dovu*), sweet potato, hibiscus leaves,

plantains, and tree crops like breadfruit and Tahitian chestnut, most of which could still be found in the Waitabu landscape today growing wild or being cultivated. The mid-19th century missionaries had also introduced a wide range of fruits and vegetables, including English cabbage, watermelon, cucumber, pumpkin, beans, and peas (p.209), all of which have been sustained and promoted by the colonial government.

As the settlement moved down to the coast after the 1875 measles outbreak, these old gardens and farm sites were abandoned but some of them were reused and replanted by today's farmers, most notably the cutnut trees (*Barringtonia asiatica*, Fijian *vutu kana*) and taro planted on Nasau, an old village site on the hill near Waitabu. While the old crops remained in the landscape, new ways of management began to take over. Cattle were raised on the flat valleys inside the forest. Coconut trees were more intensively planted in the coastal area as the first significant cash crop. Irrigated taro was replaced by the less labor-intensive dryland taro cultivation, which was often intercropped with kava. Horne had documented that at least 18 different varieties of taro were planted in Fiji in the 1870s and this diversity was actively maintained by the farmers (Horne 1881:78). A later research study had shown that as many as 72 distinct types of taro cultivars were collected in Fiji, including the hybrid and later introduced ones (Sivan 1984:55). Although this diversity could no longer be seen in the current Fijian taro gardens as farmers focus on the two market-demanded varieties of taro, *tausala* and Samoa hybrid, it is wrong to say that these gardens have been homogeneously conditioned. Back in the 1930s *tausala* was not highly regarded (Parham and Raiqiso 1939) and the Samoa hybrid was not developed until 1984. According to elder farmers in the village, the most popular taro planted around the 1960s was not *Colocasia*, but the later introduced tannia taro (*dalo ni tana*) which are now growing wild in Waitabu and not actively harvested. Today a small amount of

taro diversity is still actively preserved in the gardens. During fieldwork I had identified 10 varieties of taro commonly found in a garden. Aside from *tausala* and Samoa hybrid which together consist of almost 80%-90% of the cultivars, other varieties include the purple *dalo ni Moala*, white *dalo ni Toga*, and yellow *dalo ni Samoa*. They are preserved mainly because of the continuous importance of traditional feasts, for which *tausala* and other hybrid varieties are never presented. The prestigious taro pudding *vakalolo* also prefers the use of traditional varieties such as the yellowish *dalo ni Samoa* for its taste and texture. While youngsters tend to devote 100% to *tausala* and hybrid, elder farmers would always keep a corner for these traditional varieties to fulfill customary responsibilities. It should be noted that young leaves (*waci*) of the harvested taro crops are also frequently cooked and eaten.

New crops are also continually introduced into the landscape through different channels. In 1957 a commercial cocoa planting scheme was brought into Bouma by the government (Brookfield 1976:15). Even though it failed eventually due to low price, wrong chosen variety, and the humid climate (p.8), the cocoas trees could still be found in the midst of the bush gardens and the fruits have become “farming snacks”⁸⁰ for the farmers. Although cassava was introduced to Fiji in the mid-19th century, it did not become popular in Waitabu until after the 1960s. Other later introduced crops include ginger, tomato, eggplant, and pineapple. In 2010 after the agricultural disaster brought by Cyclone Tomas, government provided long bean and corn seeds to the village for additional food security. The Catholic Marist Training Center at Tutu had also sold Chinese cabbage plots for villagers to grow. All of these had been adopted freely and on-and-off by Waitabu farmers either as small-scale secondary cash crops or

⁸⁰ For distant gardens that require half-a-day of work, farmers often bring canned fish as a simple meal for lunch. On the other hand, farmers working in closer gardens would often grab whatever is in the bush for snacking, which includes cutting the green coconuts for the juice and meat, as well as chewing on wild sugarcane.

subsistence crops. The wilderness also remains an important source of food for the Waitabu households. A particularly noteworthy one is the edible fern (*Diplazium esculentum*, Fijian *ota*) dwelling in the wet corners of the bush. In a realm dominated by male activities, finding these edible ferns in the forest is often a female's endeavor. After collecting them back home, it is common to see a group of women sitting on the kitchen floor picking and organizing the fern leaves for cooking.

As concluded by Pollock, with the increasing attention given to root crops in the Pacific Islands, it is even more important to have a lively forest territory that provides multiple subsistence and cash-cropping options. She further argued that the bush plots, fallow, secondary growth, and exploitable forests are all part of a total environment and should thus be managed as one unified system (Pollock 1986:107). As the case of Waitabu demonstrates, this total environment should also include the village compound and the often neglected outskirts area where different crops and plants could also be found. Therefore, while the processes of agroforestation are indeed taking place in Fiji, the diversity within this total environment is able to develop resilience against wholesale transformation, or at least to slow it down. As I will discuss in the next section, this is by no means a self-regulating system, but instead requires careful planning and the embodied practices of experiencing the landscape to maintain.

6.2 LAND OF PRODUCTIVITY AND SENSITIVITY

6.2.1 Cash-cropping

As I have shown above, despite the growing pressure from cash-cropping, the farming environment of Waitabu is still able to preserve some degree of diversity which was accumulated through different historical processes. The complex land tenure system and landscape also helped absorb these changes. However, this is by no means a rosy picture of “native affluence.” Villagers need cash to pay taxes, purchase modern goods and basic food materials like sugar, flour, and rice, while the community as a whole needs cash to build its infrastructure. On the other hand, the low farming technology and small-scale gardens in Waitabu, coupled with constraints of low prices and distance, could not efficiently turn the wealth of crops and plants in the landscape into a consistently profitable venture. Relying on the traditional communal system certainly was not the answer, which was already breaking down after the independence with growing inequality happening within the villages (Brookfield 1977:136). Instead, the government was experimenting on giving more capacity to individual opportunities. Earlier from the late 1950s, Taveuni had gone through a series of land subdivision schemes that produced individual blocks allocated to independent farmers (*galala*) working and dwelling on them on 30-year leases, one of which was implemented in the Bouma region. The goal was to boost agricultural production freed from communal obligations, particularly that of copra and cocoa. The project nevertheless failed and many such blocks were abandoned, mainly due to the lack of a central planning organization and other infrastructural constraints (Brookfield 1976:6-7).

In today's Waitabu, farming is basically an individual enterprise. Despite various customary obligations such as the village working day, farmers actually have ample time to be dedicated to their gardens, typically at least six hours a day depending on their planting schedules. Youngsters when reaching the age of 18, or even slightly before, generally have their own plots to plant cash crops and could begin to earn their own income even when they are still living with their parents. For those who have decided to stay in the village rather than pursuing higher education or wage labor opportunities elsewhere, cash-cropping is almost the only path to success. Like the opening story of this chapter, levelheaded young farmers also have their own five-year plan to ultimately harvest the mature kava plants, live by the intermediary sales of taro, and save enough money to build their own house and start a family. This is also the blueprint preached by the Tutu Young Farmers Course which is aiming at helping young farmers to establish themselves in the rural environment. For them, the farms and gardens are the future that can be seen, touched, and calculated. This echoed what Bender said "*Landscape is time materialized*. Or, better, *Landscape is time materializing*: landscapes, like time, never stand still" (Bender 2002:S103). It is not just the past that is embedded in the landscape, but also the unfolding future, which is reflected in the ways of propagating root crops.

As mentioned earlier, taro of the *tausala* and Samoan hybrid varieties and kava of the *qila* (green) and *yalu* (black) varieties are the crops zeroed in by today's Waitabu farmers because of their higher financial rewards. The planting procedure appears to be very practical. For taro, first they need to have as many taro tops (*mata*) as they could. Most of these are gathered from other family members' gardens after a harvest during which taro tops are cut from the corms, or from the suckers lying in their old gardens, separated from the mother corms that had been pulled. These suckers would also grow small corms called *vage* that were commonly

consumed by the older generation. In Taveuni, the Samoan hybrid is known for producing up to 10 suckers, while *tausala* has three or four. Therefore, theoretically the reproduction of taro is everlasting and multiplying. For ambitious farmers who want to expand large taro plantations, they could purchase taro tops from large villages like Welagi or Vuna for 20 Fijian cents a stalk. The Agriculture Department is also keen on providing taro tops to villages to stimulate production after Cyclone Tomas. For example, in December 2010, 15,000 taro tops were sent to Waitabu and quickly divided and planted by the farmers.

Once the source of taro tops is secured, the next step is to find a piece of land and clear it out. In Waitabu, all the current farm sites are founded on grasslands or secondary forests where previous cultivation of coconut trees and taro could still be seen. The most decisive factor of selection is the status of seniority and kinship affiliation. Youngsters tend to settle on distant farm sites located on steep slopes (*baba*), while senior farmers have more secured tenure on alluvial flats (*buca*) closer to the village. Farmer O, a young married villager, told me that the biggest problem he felt about farming is “not enough land.” He has two taro gardens in Delana and near Dreli, and a kava garden in Qeleloa. Like him, young farmers tend to have several different farm sites. While O has a rather secured ownership through his paternal grandfather, most of the young farmers with several different farm sites are members staying in Waitabu through less secured maternal ties. Farmer J2, for instance, who is living in his mother’s sister’s household, is famous and often mocked for having six different farm sites. All of these farm sites are no more than 1 acre large.

Traditionally both clearing by tools and by burning were reported (Williams 1858:63). Nowadays almost all the clearing work is carried out by spraying herbicides like paraquat, with the occasional use of machete. The next steps are digging holes and planting taro tops which

require burdensome manual labor. The technology used today is exactly the same as described by 19th century observers (Horne 1881:81; Seemann 1862:303; Williams 1858:63-64), involving the use of digging sticks (*i-toko*) or narrow spades (*i-sivi*). The holes dug are about 8-inch deep and 2-feet apart. As a hole is formed, the stick serves as a lever to open it further up, and then the taro top is thrust inside with the leaf stalks sticking above the ground. At the second week when it's almost raining, NPK fertilizers are usually spread in the holes, and at the fifth week when the first leaves sprouted, urea is added to boost their growth. I have also seen a Waitabu farmer, B1, utilizing a more traditional method by putting seaweed as fertilizer. Other farmers like M2 have adopted the method of planting mucuna beans introduced by Tei Tei Taveuni, which could capture nitrogen from the air and produce organic fertilizer to the soil. Most people nonetheless still prefer NPK which is supplied often by the Agricultural Department and once after Cyclone Tomas by the Chinese government. After the application of fertilizers, the only care put into the taro garden is constant weeding, which is again done by spraying herbicides, until the crops are 8 months old and ready to be pulled.

Elders recalled that in the 1960s no more than 600 taro crops were kept in the garden in a year. Now only at a given planting session, around 100-200 taro tops can be planted, and throughout the year it is common to have at least 3,000 taro crops in the garden for consistent cash-cropping farmers. Most of these farmers have their own year-round planting schedule, but they would always plant some for particular usage. As farmer A1 told me, "We should always plant for a purpose. If we are only planting for food, we are not looking at the future." When I visited his garden, he pointed at a block of taro to me and said "this is for my son's school fees for the coming term." Similarly, when I went to K1's farm, he also circled a block of taro and said that it was planted in advance for his brother's wedding. The irregular social functions such

as funerals also demand the presentation of taro in bundles from each household. As a result, heads of household always keep a corner of non-export taro varieties like *dalo ni Moala* for these customary occasions. In other words, future events are materialized in the taro garden which serves as the safety net for both the expected and unexpected. If the landscape is a storage place for biodiversity, then the taro garden is literally a bank for future withdrawal. This attitude is based on the confidence in the land fertility, as well as the available opportunities and flexibility of selling taro on the island. While small groups of farmers sometimes sell their taro together by calling a middleman to drive over and do the weighing and selling on site, they would often catch the bus and take their harvest directly to the export buyers at Waiyevo and Somosomo, or sell them locally at the market in Naqara or to the nearby Matagi Island Resort. When selling to the export middlemen, taro corms are cut from their leaf stalks and packed inside a bag for a price that varies between F\$1 and 2/kg for *tausala* and 20 cents cheaper for hybrid. A mature and accepted corm generally weights slightly more than 1 kg. Rejected ones are then brought back home for consumption. On the other hand, when selling at the local market or to the resort, six to eight taro corms with leaf stalks are tied into a bundle and sold for F\$6 or 10 each, which is not too much a fall-off from selling to the middleman when the taro price is low.

The cash-cropping of kava also presents a similar image of this practicality and prosperity. The planting material is the young branches (*kasa*) cut from a harvested kava plant, leaving one or two nodes on them. It is said that a mature kava plant can produce around 30 new plants through these branches. There are two common ways of planting them. The first is to put them in a nursery in the village with moist soil and covered under palm leaves. After three or four weeks when the first leaves are sprouted, they are then transplanted to the bush gardens.

The second is to plant them directly in the bush gardens, typically intercropped with taro so that the taro leaves can provide shades. Three or four branches are usually buried together inside a small plot about one foot in diameter to form a large kava plant. The plot is created by using a digging fork (*mataiva*) to loosen the soil and the branches are placed inside horizontally. Nowadays a productive farmer in Waitabu can have around 600 kava plots in their gardens.

Unlike taro, fertilizers are seldom used on kava and due to the frequent intercropping with taro, they do not require additional clearing of land. It takes 3 to 5 years for a kava plant to mature into a desirable size, but it can stay in the ground up to 10 years. Weeding is very important because they are fond of sunlight as they grow. When pulled, the roots (*waka*) and base stems (*lewena*) are washed, chopped, and laid on the corrugated metal plates to be dried out by the sun. A 3-year old kava plant could produce around 3kg of such dried materials which could be sold for F\$ 15/kg to the export middlemen in Taveuni, or pounded into powders, put in a small paper bag with 4 teaspoons, and sold for F\$ 1/bag to the local consumers. The price is much higher elsewhere in Fiji. For example, in Nadi the price is 40 F\$/kg and villagers would often ask whoever is leaving for the main island to sell their kava for them. Due to its high rewards and low labor demand, many village elders who are still engaged in cash-cropping commented that kava planting is more suitable for their age. Moreover, unlike taro that is always required to be presented in social functions, kava plants are less frequently enlisted in customary occasions for each household and are more often seen in cash transactions within the village, particularly in the form of “dollar bags” prepared for informal gatherings. Fund-raising events called “drinking cash” (*gunu sede*) which are one of the few opportunities a household could make a large amount of cash in a short time also relies on the use of prepared kava.

6.2.2 Group Farming

With the prosperous picture of cash-cropping in Waitabu and the individual flexibility given to the farming and selling processes, why didn't Waitabu become a collection of independent farmers each working on his land, maximizing their own profits? One quick answer is that these farmers are never truly independent but still tied with customary obligations. However, this does not fully explain the large amount of time and freedom in decision-making that the farmers are able to have for their gardens. Another important factor is labor power. Whether it is taro or kava cultivation, the processes of clearing, planting, weeding, and harvesting rely on 100% manual labor and could be burdensome for a single farmer. Very few more established senior farmers like H1 and Q would hire youngsters to do their work. A1 had also paid the village rugby team to dig taro holes for him. In general, aside from their sons as helping hands, each farmer is responsible for his own garden. Coupled with the constraint of the hilly topography and mosaic land tenure system, it is difficult to establish large scale plantations to maximize their production.

During fieldwork I observed that individualistic cash-cropping is only half of the picture, which is often complemented by the practice of organized group farming. Group farming and individual farming activities are not entirely separated domains, but instead very much entangled with each other. There are two common methods of group farming in Waitabu. The first one is what the opening story of this chapter depicted, all the village farmers planting for a common benefit of the community. Traditionally this is a customary service mobilized by the chief (Sahlins 1962:342), but today, as demonstrated in Waitabu, it is initiated by the more recently-developed and practical village organizations such as the agriculture committee. This type of group farming method has been practiced in Waitabu for a while. It requires the use of a piece of

common plot on which all the farmers would plant the cash crops designated for a particular goal. A successful example is the building of the first church in the village 20 years ago. The common plot was located in Nasolo on which kava were planted. After the selling of the harvest, the profits were able to purchase building materials and hire carpenters to do the construction. In November 2012 at a village meeting, there was a discussion about the ways of executing the group farming project for building the community hall, which was a follow-up of the plan proposed in 2011. A few elders maintained that planting together on a big common plot (*teitei vata/levu*) was the traditional way of doing it and should be maintained, while others argued that each farmer planting the collective cash crops in their own gardens (*teitei duadua*) is more flexible and easier. Finally with a show of hands, the latter plan won with 11 against 3 votes. However, comments such as “let us all move together” (*meda toso vata*) were frequently uttered to stress the togetherness of this project.

The other way of group farming in Waitabu is the non-kinship based “rotational work party” (*balebale*). Throughout the literature of Fijian societies, this organization is only referenced by Sahlins in his research in Moala, which was documented as *balibali*:

Instead, the village is annually divided into gardening “sections” (*seksioni*). Three of these, each composed of about 15 men, are made up at the beginning of the yam season during a village meeting ... The section is a rotational work party (*balibali*), doing each member’s garden in turn. The section leaders decide the order of rotation, giving some attention to rank. The man whose garden is being cleared provides a meal for his section, and at night the group will usually [retreat] to his house for kava (Sahlins 1962:350).

In Waitabu, *balebale* is much more flexible and informal, which is an efficient way of dealing with a wide array of situations. Any two farmers could form a *balebale* anytime to work together on each other’s farm alternately. It could also be a form of “social service.” For example, due to the many responsibilities a *turaga ni koro* (village elected headman) should take, a *balebale*

would form to help him at his garden for a day. Elders who are too weak to farm would also receive help from a *balebale*, which is called “work of compassion” (*cakacaka ni loloma*). In May 2010 when the church offering from each parish (*solu ni parisi*) is about to be collected,⁸¹ every five households in Waitabu were grouped into a *balebale* to facilitate one another to raise funds by planting cash crops in their individual gardens. Unlike what Sahlins described, there were no meals or other rewards provided by a member when his garden was being worked on. The execution was straight-forward. After saying the “prayer for work” (*masu ni cakacaka*), they began to dig holes for planting taro tops which continued only about 2 hours in the morning. The agricultural committee in the village also frequently mobilized *balebale* to boost its members’ cash crops and meet the proposed planting schedule.

In his review of cooperation and group farming organizations in Fiji and Southeast Asia, Clammer (1979) warned the danger of treating these practices as homogeneous units or assuming that they would fit the “communal ethos” of the rural societies, which may actually reinforce pre-existing socioeconomic divisions or mask the diversity and flexibility within. In his earlier work he had already challenged that the dogma of communalism enshrined by the British colonial government for the Fijian societies, particularly regarding how land is owned and labor is organized, is empirically false (Clammer 1973). Here he mentioned the example of *gotong-rojong* which is a customary practice of communal work commonly found in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. While this practice has been widely politicized into a vague ideological notion of village cooperation in the nation-building discourses, studies have shown that “*gotong-rojong* practices are actually activities of mutual-aid rather than systematic

⁸¹ The church offering is collected three times a year to the Holy Cross Church in Wairiki. In 2010, Waitabu had contributed F\$ 1,815 to the church.

cooperation or group farming, that the concept is actually a blanket term for a large number of different types of activities which are categorized and named differently in the local systems of terminology (for example, death and funeral activities, public works, feast-time activities, agricultural activities, etc.)” (Clammer 1979:115). The situation of farming activities in Waitabu also illustrates the dialectical relationship between communalism and collectivity at one end and individualism and diversity at the other. On the one hand, evidence has shown that Waitabu farmers are not entirely bound by the official communal land tenure system or customary obligations, but instead have much agency to operate their individual farming ventures. On the other hand, they are not completely independent farmers but are often assisted by group farming projects that require the mobilization of the whole community. Then again, as Clammer’s studies pointed out, the term “group farming” itself is problematic and too often idealized to stress notions of communal cohesion and rootedness. Indeed the group farming practices in Waitabu are geared towards a common goal of the community just as the opening story of this chapter depicted, but they are only one aspect of the whole story. These practices are not only spontaneous and voluntary, rather than rigid and systematic, but also utilized to promote productivity for individual gardens or assist disadvantaged individuals. The two ends of the spectrum of communalism and individualism are therefore very much entangled, especially in Fijian societies where the former was championed by colonial governance and the latter was later seen as a remedy by experts to approach the lack of progress in rural communities.

6.2.3 Experiencing the Landscape

We have discussed much about crops, labor, and production – the material relations of Waitabu’s environment, but how do the farmers feel or experience their gardens, the place that they walk to and work on almost every day, the place that provides livelihood to their village and families, the place that their forefathers had also set foot on? Although it may seem that the farming landscape in Waitabu has been disenchanted and rendered into a site of calculable production and technical procedures, the sentient aspect of the environment still persists and is what keeps the diverse ways of land management together. Much has been said about the indigenous concepts of connection and holism within the environment, but how are these concepts maintained in the age of globalization in which nothing is truly isolated and unaltered while numerous categories and relationships are at risk? As stressed by Toren (1995), *vanua* is not a “frozen, timeless, mythical domain” but historical and dynamic with inherently conflicting qualities that require constant settling. On the other hand, as it has been and is capable of being transformed by introduced ideas and forces, the everyday “embodied sensuous experience” such as “seeing, hearing, touching, and smelling the land” provides a tenacious source of identity that continuously binds the people with the land (Toren 1995:164). These minute daily actions are important because they are quick solutions to settle the tensions within the *vanua*, to maintain the temporary togetherness of the dynamic environment without the performance of elaborate and formal rituals. Similarly in the case of farming in Waitabu, the bodily motions of climbing and walking along the trails between fragmentary farm sites and within the patchwork landscape have created an aesthetic appreciation of a holistic environment enlaced with emotions, identity, and time.

I first became attuned to the sentient aspect of the farming landscape from a conversation I had with farmer A2 when we were walking back from the farm site to the village in December 2012. A2 was technically not a farmer but one of the few youngsters in the village who were still pursuing secondary education and would help out the family gardens in between school terms. On our way back we were talking about the Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama who seized power through a military takeover in December 2006 and had later been elected to the same position from the first general election in more than eight years in Fiji in September 2014. After Cyclone Tomas hit Taveuni in March 2010 the village had been receiving a fair amount of agricultural subsidies like fertilizers, taro tops, and other crop seeds. A2 told me that he understood why Bainimarama was very invested in these aids to rural farming because “he is afraid of the curse of the *vanua*.” The idea that there would be punishments if the customary protocols of the *vanua* are violated (*cala vakavanua*) is still a prevalent belief in today’s Fiji, which would usually take the form of injury, illness, or barrenness (Pulea 1986:68). The agency at work could be the generic “power of the *vanua*” (*mana*) or more specific evil spirits (*tevororo*) or ancestral figures (*qase liu*). As devout Christians, the existence of these spiritual agencies embedded in the landscape to them is another aspect of tension within the *vanua* that needs to be reconciled. For example, A1 offered his perspective on this matter:

One day my father brought a stone from the old house foundations (*yavu ma‘awa*) at Nasau back to his house in Namatiu to use and could not fall asleep on that night. The following day he immediately returned the stone. Even when they are just stones, you still need to ask them from the ancestors. There are many forbidden things around the old village site. You could not throw wastes. You could not make noise (*vakasausa*), or else there would be punishments. When we converted to Catholicism, we understood that God created everything and gave them to the people. The power of the ancestors was weakened (*malumalumu*), but we still have to respect them (A1, interview, 10/31/2012, my translation).

Fear is a significant emotion infused in the Fijian landscape, which was also the driving factor that constructed the fortified villages and isolated agriculture-settlement complexes in pre-Cession Fiji (Kuhlken 1999:284). However, here the idea of spiritual punishments should be put in a wider framework of linkages to the past which are usually manifested in physical objects and landmarks. The reason why Nasau is sacred is therefore not because it is secluded or untouched, but rather due to the many ancestral remains such as the old house foundations that could still be seen and felt when frequented by human activities. To reach Nasau which is on the top of a small hill very close to the village, first you need to walk pass a small cassava garden at the bottom planted by current farmers. Then you would make a steep climb through waist-high wild grasses that had covered a burial site where previous holders of Tui Nasau and other elders were laid to rest.⁸² At the top is a secondary forest of sturdy flowering trees such as *vesi* (*Intsia bijuga*), *vunimocemoce* (*Albizia saman*), and fruit trees like the cutnut and taun trees. Abandoned taro gardens could also be found under the tree shades. The old stone house foundations were covered by wild ferns and vines. Small pieces of kava plots maintained by current farmers are located not too far away on the slopes. This is a tapestry of old and new activities, wild and cultivated vegetation, resulted from human design and grooming through different historical stages. This is also an invisible space that is situated in-between the primary rainforests in the higher mountains that have received much attention from both colonial and current conservationists and logging companies, and the more obvious and thriving cash-cropping taro plantations and coconut groves closer to the coast. To the Waitabu villagers, however, this ambiguous area is very much meaningful to them, which has generated an “aesthetics of

⁸² There is another common burial site located at a corner inside the village. It seems that the burial site on Nasau is reserved for the chief and respected elders from *Mataqali* Vunivesi.

diversity” commonly found in Pacific agricultural landscapes beyond the mere utility of land-use management (Clarke 1994:26). What it does is to elicit not just fear, but other emotions such as love or desire, and make the past as well as the future visible for appreciation.

The movement of walking is essential to this kind of aesthetic appreciation of space and time emplaced in the landscape. As Rosaldo concluded about the Ilongot sense of history and social order based on the movements of their marriage pattern, “The cultural conception of shifting directions as one walks along a path is at once a pattern, reflecting past experiences, and a charter, guiding future projects” (Rosaldo 1980:59). In his theorization of walking, Ingold argued that landscape is not a palimpsest inscribed by cultural imprints over and over again, but rather *emerges* “as condensations or crystallizations of activity within a relational field” (Ingold 2004:333), which is accumulated through the everyday movements within the landscape, particularly walking. The act of walking is therefore very intimate. It is the direct embodied interaction with the *vanua* at large which involves both human and non-human agencies. In this process, *vanua* becomes “alive” and is able to literally talk back and act on people. On the flip side to this coin, people are not simply bounded by the *vanua*, but are also able to create their own marks and paths. I could not fully appreciate this until one day I was walking on the creek valley of Nasolo, again with A2. As we were heading to another farm site, there appeared a wild red-breasted musk-parrot (*Prosopeia tabuensis*, Fijian *koki*) flying through the trees above our heads. A2 then told me that these parrots know them very well and would even sometimes greet them. He suddenly yelled “*koki!*” with a voice that resonated in the forest, and sure enough, the parrot responded with a sharp “*ka!*” as it flew out of our sights. This scene immediately reminded me of the story of the Cree hunter and the caribou told by Ingold, in which the hunter interpreted the act of “freezing” by the reindeer when they spotted each other as the latter

“offering itself up,” even though there are biological reasons behind this momentary stoppage (Ingold 2000:13). As Ingold later explained, the hunter’s interpretation should be placed in the wider framework of a sentient environment where both life forms are intermingled and the feelings conveyed at the moment of encounter needed to be given a form (p.25).

There are always things unfolding during the journey of movement inside a landscape and it is the act of walking that evokes them, allows them to be seen, touched, and felt. I had walked numerous times with A1, my primary teacher of the Waitabu farming landscape. We walked on muddy trails to his farm sites and carried bundles of taro back to the village, tied by the barks of candlenut tree (*Aleurites moluccanus*, Fijian *vau*) stripped along the way. We weaved our ways through bushes where there was no passage, cut down regrowing weeds with machetes, and waded shallow creeks. Every time I would clumsily try my best to catch up with his steady steps sometimes even barefoot. As we navigated through his farming territory, he would at times point at a plantain tree, coconut tree, hibiscus plant, or a bunch of wild taro tops to me and said that his father had planted them. The most memorable experience was five days after Cyclone Tomas passed by Taveuni when the food supply was running low and the Polynesian flying foxes (*Pteropus tonganus*, Fijian *beka*) were being hunted down and eaten, I accompanied A1 into the forest to find the wild yams picked up and replanted by his father more than 30 years ago. As we took the trail down to Namatiu, he quickly made a detour and spotted a tree under which the curling and spiky vines of the wild yams emerged. Using a digging fork, he dug a hole about a couple of feet deep and soon located the rhizome lying underground. This not only is a further demonstration of how landscape could serve as storage of crop diversity, but also illustrates how the acts of walking, seeing, and digging formed a linkage to the past within the landscape. Sometimes these acts could also take place beyond one’s own customary territory.

It is very common to walk pass through other people's cultivations due to the "messy" arrangements of the gardens. They are always publicly displayed and thus testaments of the farmers' diligence. I am always amazed at how any Waitabu farmer could pinpoint which garden belongs to whom in a maze like Lomaniba where more than ten gardens are crammed together without marked boundaries. It turned out that Waitabu garden boundaries are organic and non-continuous and could be manifested in just one single tree or plant. The everyday practice of walking, or more specifically "passing by" as singled out by the French philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984:97), is thereby a necessary and unavoidable social act to familiarize oneself with a fluid space as such.

In his seminal piece "Walking in the City," de Certeau (1984) talked about an urban space that is being rationally planned, coded, and disenchanted into a techno-structure of concrete and stable properties, just as the sweeping effects of neoliberal agriculture are disciplining farmers, creating orderly and homogeneous farms and crops. Walking, on the other hand, as well as the spontaneous acts of crossing and leaping, brings the urbanscape to life. Here de Certeau discussed two pedestrian practices: *synecdoche* and *asyndeton*. While the former makes the landscape denser by amplifying the detail and miniaturizing the whole, the latter selects and fragments it, cutting through continuity and creating shortcuts. Through these practices, a space is transformed into both "enlarged singularities and separate islands" (De Certeau 1984:102). This double image of the landscape could be found in the gardens of the Biangai people in Papua New Guinea. Over there affiliations to traditional yam gardens are understood in the concept *solonarik* meaning the "stem" or "trunk" of a tree with branches extending in multiple directions, thereby producing kinship groups with associated landscapes and paths which are part of a larger communal network of persons, spaces, and things. More

recently when marijuana became a viable yet illegal economic option for the younger generation, its cultivation is imagined through the *kasi wik mek* (new road or path) that cuts across the landscape, leading to scattered, hidden plots (Halvaksz 2007). Similarly in Waitabu, on the one hand the *vanua* is affectingly felt through the embodied experiences of walking, seeing, and tasting within the farming landscape, and manifested in the persistent practices of group farming. On the other hand, this totality is not in conflict with the individual and calculative pursuit of cash-cropping which is grounded in a flexible local land tenure system. Both domains are not entirely separated from each other and are supported by the constant movements taking place within the landscape.

6.3 LANDSCAPE AND RESILIENCE

“[S]econdary forest is always a *social* place” argued Anna Tsing in her studies of the central Meratus Mountains regarding a space of abandoned agriculture and weedy bush that was neglected by conservationists and developers, but highly diverse and dynamic. She continued that “to know it is to know the history of its flora and fauna in relation to socially situated human biographies ... people are attached to it because they once made a swidden there and because they have continued to maintain their relationship with the regrowing forest vegetation” (Tsing 2004:190). The intellectual starting point of Tsing’s focus on the secondary forest as well as other ambiguous zones is to recapture the conceptual and physical “gaps” in the human-environment that have been rendered invisible or deemed illegitimate and valueless by dominant discourses. They are far from pristine and orderly managed, and are weedy, patchwork-like,

constantly “disturbed” by random human activities. On the other hand, to the Meratus people who have also been labeled as backward “hillbillies,” the hilly and weedy territory has as much rich social histories and biodiversity as the well-protected forest reserves. The main argument from Tsing nonetheless is not just to reveal this neglected space, but to show how powerful demarcations and stable categories are crippled when traveling into these awkward zones. In other words, they refused to be disciplined: The people had evaded government authorities, the spread of Islam, and the might of military violence; the land had also evaded conservation and development interventions, as well as massive resource extractions. This does not mean that they were left isolated by the outside world. On the contrary, the Meratus people were long involved in the market economy and trade network that extended beyond their mountains. More importantly, through the interaction with downstream traders that demanded various forest products, they became more aware of the rainforest biodiversity and developed flexible ways of responding to the changing conditions of the market (pp.183-184).

The farming landscape of Waitabu is situated in such a gap. Located at the coast with a renowned Waitabu Marine Park conservation and ecotourism project assisted by many scientists, NGO workers, and international aids, it is easy to forget the Waitabu villagers’ social and historical ties to the forest and mountain. And while the more “pristine” rainforests on the upper mountain have been receiving much attention from the environmental NGOs such as NatureFiji, the farm sites scattered at the road side, on the hill, in the creek valley have been largely treated as simply backdrops of rural social life. However, through a walk into this “messy landscape” with a Waitabu farmer, the complexity of land tenure and bio-social histories are revealed by the paths, objects, plants, and animals dwelling and moving within. There are even gaps with a gap: As the market-favorite taro varieties and kava began to dominate the gardens, in the village

swampy outskirts, at the corners around the village compound, or deep inside the very gardens covered by taro mono-crops, a wealth of crops and plants could still be found and are actively maintained and utilized. Like many farming landscapes in the Pacific, this biodiversity was increased, rather than diminished, by human action, and was further enriched by contacts with foreign agencies (Kennedy and Clarke 2007:87).

All of this “messiness” is held together by a sense of the total *vanua* involving both human and non-human life forms that is experienced by the constant embodied acts of walking inside the landscape, seeing the field, and tasting the crops. This is why despite the autonomy given to the individual cash-cropping ventures in Waitabu, group farming projects aimed to benefit the whole community and assist the disadvantaged are still practiced. This is not simply the triumph of communalism that has been championed by colonial native policies and cautioned by rural development experts, but rather a flexible response to the global capitalist economy. A similar situation could be found in Kadavu where local farmers continue to build and maintain irrigated taro terraces which require the time and labor mobilized by the whole community, despite the prevalence of the more efficient dryland taro methods. As Kuhlken (2007) observed, while practical advantages such as the ability to withstand drought and cyclone damage as well as higher taro yields certainly are important, other factors including the maintenance of communal labor organizations, preferred taste, and the social and ceremonial role of wet taro, are equally significant incentives. Although Waitabu may not have the elaborate and visible irrigated taro terraces constructed in their farming landscape, their aspirations of balancing individual and communal prosperities through their existing resources are equally a testament to their resilience.

7.0 CONCLUSION: HOW CAN ENTANGLED THINKING BENEFIT THE UNDERSTANDING OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS?

The ecological thought permits no distance. Thinking interdependence involves dissolving the barrier between over here and over there and more fundamentally, the metaphysical illusion of rigid narrow boundaries between inside and outside (Morton 2010:39).

7.1 RETHINKING VANUA AND DEVELOPMENT

There is a common sentiment from Western NGO workers, on-site facilitators, and volunteers regarding development in rural Fijian communities, that is, on the one hand acknowledging the significance of tradition and customary protocols which are manifested in the concept of *vanua*, and on the other hand still seeing it as partial obstacle, if not complete, to the economic betterment of individual villagers and thereby dragging the whole community behind. *Vanua*, as it has been highly politicized in the post-independence politics of Fiji, is no esoteric entity to outsiders. When organizing development projects in a community, most foreign workers already have a general grasp of the local kinship-political structure that is headed by a chief and comprised of several *mataqali*. They recognize it as an important channel through which developmental goals are discussed, labor is mobilized, and projects are carried out. The results could be phenomenal. I have talked with a marine biologist who had worked extensively in the

Pacific, consulting local communities about marine conservation. He told me that a colleague of his working in Fiji was very impressed with how fast a Marine Protected Area (MPA) could be created after a meeting with the chief. Not surprisingly, Fiji currently leads all the Pacific Island Nations in the number of MPAs established.

The ritualistic and practical aspects of *vanua* are also well-known. Foreign workers and researchers generally understand the importance of conducting the *i-sevusevu* ritual when entering the community, and would gladly follow the customary protocols such as wearing the traditional garment *sulu vakatoga*, participating in kava-drinking sessions, and attending traditional meetings and churches. They are also aware that the people are bounded by the same protocols and obligations, such as the social hierarchy led by senior male leaders, give-and-takes in a wide network of kinship relationships, often in the form of requesting (*kerekere*), expressing gratitude (*vakavinavinaka*) and apologies (*veivosoti*), and a sense of communalism demonstrated by mutual sharing, caring, and loving. However, this is where they begin to observe how individuals, particularly youngsters and women, are “trapped” in the *vanua*. In chapter 5 I have discussed how the Marine Park project managers who are mostly female members of the village are constantly under the scrutiny of the community. In chapter 6 we can see that young farmers are usually marginalized by having to farm in distant farm sites and given smaller areas to work on. Gradually it was observed that people became uninterested in the project because they could not have significant financial rewards from it, and even when they did, they were pushed down by the communal system. Witnessing the highs and lows of the Waitabu Marine Park project, marine biologist and conservation worker Helen Sykes shared her thoughts on the matter of rural development in Fiji with me:

And this is not just a Waitabu problem. This is a Fiji problem. This is why the ethnic Fijians in the rural areas don't get ahead financially ... The rural Fijians don't work like this. They live in the day, the "what you have today is what you have, and tomorrow will take care of itself." And if you don't, tomorrow you will have a *solu* [fundraising event] and everybody will put money in and you will get out, somehow. And this is the Fiji social system that works against individuals getting ahead. I think this is a massive problem for Fiji and for the enrichment of Fijians as a whole at this level because the minute somebody starts to get ahead, either, the rest of the community say oh well they are embezzling or something else is going on, or, every relative they have in the world comes out and *kerekere* [request] everything off. I actually have staffs resigned because they were the only person in their family with a paying job, and they were tired of paying every cousin's shoes, school books, fees ... and they were going back to farming. This makes it very hard to get rural projects working, and I don't know what the answer to that question is (Helen Sykes, interview, 04/07/2010).

Some development agencies, however, already have the answer to the question that Helen posed. In December 2012 I went to interview Fr. Michael McVerry, the principal of the Marist Training Center at Tutu and the director of the famed Young Farmers Course which had helped over two hundred youngsters establish themselves financially and start their own households between 1983 and 2011. As explained by him, the applicants, who are mostly Catholics from Taveuni but also from neighboring islets and parts of Vanua Levu, need to plant 1,000 kava plants in their own gardens before they could apply to be enrolled. Out of these applicants of which the number often amount to around three or four hundred, they would select up to fifty to join the 4-year program. Afterwards a consent form would be signed by the *turaga ni mataqali* of their villages to formally release them from communal duties, after which they would plant another 1,000 kava and taro crops at Tutu and be able to move freely between there and the village to maintain their gardens. He further explained:

But this place here [Tutu] is like an oasis for them. That whole concept of the *vanua* does not exist here. So they are psychologically free from that heavy thing which is [making] them depend on other people and other forces in their minds ... So it's not so much about teaching. In fact, we don't teach about fertilizers, or herbicides. The agricultural department comes in [for that]. We are about the

people thing and the cultural freedom, and the human development. It's all about the human development whereby they can manage themselves ... Good people make good farmers. So we're about creating good people. At the technical side we actually leave [it] for the agricultural department. We're not teaching so much as setting up a structure to help people become what we call autonomous. Not independent. Independence is not good value. Dependence is not good [either]. Interdependence is what we mean by autonomy, where we are "auto" from within ourselves and we are free to follow our own dreams and to work out our own destiny (Fr. Michael McVerry, interview, 12/30/2012).

As demonstrated above, Fr. McVerry's rural development philosophy, which has a well-documented track record of successful cases (McGregor et al. 2011b), holds that in order to achieve individual goals, Fijian youngsters need to be freed from the communal bondage which not only involves the institutions of land tenure system and various customary obligations, but also the mentality of being dependent and stagnant. Note that Tutu is not aiming to break down the communal system, as the young farmers would eventually return to their villages after the 4-year program, and the consent of village elders are also very much valued. Nevertheless it is also clear that *vanua* is being viewed as an initial impediment to economic progress and individual productivity.

This tension between individualism and communalism has long been discussed by researchers like O. H. K. Spate (1959) working in Fiji in the 1950s, whose opinion was similar to that of Fr. McVerry described above, i.e. individual autonomy and freedom are keys to rural development in a society that is characterized (and hampered) by its communal ethos. Ultimately, the negotiation between individuality and community is a question of the dynamic positioning of personhood in different societies (cf. a thorough review of the concepts of "self," "person," and "individual" in different theoretical frameworks by Strathern and Stewart 2000:55-63). For example, while recognizing that the dichotomy between the so-called independent and individuated "Western selves" and the conflated "non-Western selves" may not be adequate,

Becker (1995) argued in her research on body shapes and body weight in Fiji that the Fijian bodily experience is clearly different from the Western idea that the self is anchored to a body which is thus a project of the self. Rather, as seen elsewhere in Pacific Island societies, the Fijian self is embedded within a social matrix of relationships and therefore the body is not confined to individual experiences, but a site of wider social processes such as caring and feasting which make the body a “collective enterprise rather than a personal pursuit” (p.5). On the other hand, Brison (2007) pointed out that the ideology of the Fijian society as founded on the togetherness of the community, or the sacred order of *vanua*, is a way for indigenous Fijians to actively contrast themselves with the more “individualistic” Westerners and Indo-Fijians. Under this sociocentric ideology, she demonstrated that there are actually creative strategies for individual Fijians, notably women, to reimagine and reconstruct a sense of self in discourses of tradition, modernity, and Christianity.

Theorizations of the dynamic relationship between individuality and society are much more salient in the ethnographic studies of Papua New Guinea, particularly the Highland societies, where the interplay of traditional competitive ritual exchanges, the leadership of “big-men,” the introduction of cash-cropping, missionization, and colonialism, and the later development of state and democracy, has presented a complex picture of continuity and change. In the 1960s, Ben Finney’s study (1968) on Gorokan business leaders emphasized that the implications of individual achievement of the “big-men” position allowed the development of entrepreneurship to flourish in the Highlands. What was more interesting was the later advancement of these entrepreneurs in the political domain which was distinct from the new African nation-states where political leaders were mostly Western educated elites. In other words, the pragmatism and individualism involved in the private commercial sector which

stemmed from traditional exchange practices had prepared these Highlanders for modern institutions like capitalism and democracy. Beginning from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, scholars had swung to another end of the spectrum and became interested in the “Melanesian personhood” that is opposed to the Western bounded complete individual (Strathern 1988, Wagner 1991). Here the Melanesian persons are fundamentally based on relationality and are composites of the actions and substances of the whole community. Therefore, the making of persons could change through time from the gifts and bodily substances that they receive, which could affect seemingly stable categories like gender identity. The influence of Christianity was also examined. Joel Robbins (2004) argued that the intrinsic cultural logic of Christianity is individualism and as it was introduced to the Melanesian societies where the paramount value of their cultural system is relationality, moral contradictions emerged which prompted the local converts to abandon their tradition entirely to embrace a religion that is founded on individuality and modernity.

In their work on the indigenous responses to and conceptualizations of the political and economic crises brought by capitalism and democracy in the Mount Hagen area approaching the millennium, Strathern and Stewart (2000:63-68) introduced another form of personhood called “relational-individual” which has the capacity for elements of relationality and individuality to interact and coexist. They argued that “relational-individual” could be found everywhere in the world but the balance of which is played out differently in different cultural contexts and historical moments. For example, the notion of *noman* for the Hageners, which could be translated as “mind, intention, will, agency, social conscience, desire, or personality” (p.64), is very much relational as it is formulated through constant interactions with other persons, community, environment, and the ancestral/spiritual world. On the other hand, a strong *noman*

could also indicate a strong-willed individual, similar to the Western bounded individual, who would insist on certain actions they favored to take place, which may not be normative in the society. When the concept of “relational-individual” is put into practice, we can see that many engagements of the indigenous people with the modern world actually entail a complex interplay of individualism and collectivism, which may not follow any particular mode of thinking. For instance, when the Australian colonial government introduced coffee cash-cropping to the Hagen area, the agricultural officers set up these crops on collectively maintained plots, assuming that this would better fit the communal mindset of the Hageners. What happened was that the people abandoned these communal plots and instead established coffee trees on their own family land and named rows after individuals who would pick and sell the coffee beans. More interestingly, the monetary gain from cash-cropping would be either used for individual or family consumption, or contributions to the large-scale gift-exchanges organized by the big-men (Strathern and Stewart 2008:xxv). This is very similar to the Fijian farming situation described in chapter 6 where individual cash-cropping is facilitated by communal support, and vice versa.

What can these debates of personhood, individuality, and relationality inform us about development? For one thing, the “tradition” of Melanesian societies that is based on relationality, communal ethos, and gift-exchanges is by no means static and has the capacity to work with elements of modernity infused in the development projects. This is not the same as what Finney argued that the Highlands society was preadapted to the later introduced capitalistic practices. Rather, we should recognize that there are multiple pathways for the indigenous people to engage with modernity in different contexts of development projects and historical junctures, while the cultural domains of their “traditions” are constantly realigned, strengthened, or diminished. Elaborating the Tok Pisin pronunciation of development, “develop-man,” Sahlins

(2005) called attention to a type of development effort of the non-Western people as they encountered the capitalist world system, which allowed their own culture to be enriched at the same time. For example, he argued that the nineteenth century Fijian chiefdoms were empowered not because of the firearms and foreign trade goods brought into their realms, but the circulation of whale's tooth valuables (*tabua*) intensified by the missionaries, which has strong significance of the reproduction of the society in the Fijian cosmology. He further concluded that changes within "tradition" have always been happening, encompassing goods and relations of different origins. Moreover, this change is often proceeded on the own terms of the culture. Therefore, "Tradition in modern times does not mean stability so much as a distinctive way of changing" (Sahlins 2005:36).

Similarly, *vanua* should not be essentialized as a caricature of Fijian culture, and treated as simply a means to a developmental end or a pre-established pathway to an entirely different direction from what the development workers envisioned. In this dissertation I first go back to the intellectual roots of *vanua* which are located in the reflexes of **banua* and **panua* commonly found in many Austronesian languages and the societies in which these languages are spoken. From numerous ethnographic studies we are able to see how they appear as parts of the natural world, or in the forms of communal territory, political, religious, or resource management unit, house structure, land with deep emotional and aesthetic meanings, or even the native people themselves. More importantly, it is evident that they are fluid as space, flexible as sociality, and has been dealing with many different historical agencies as the Austronesian-speaking people traveled into Island Southeast Asia, Near Oceania, and ultimately Remote Oceania. These agencies include the existing societies in the territory, later waves of migrants, neighboring civilizations, or the more recent Western traders and colonizers. In these processes

of encounters, boundaries are set and reset, identities are made and remade, and conflicts take place and are settled. Each *vanua* in Fiji therefore has its own unique path of becoming, and there can be no “one-size-fit-all” programs when introducing development projects into the communities.

To grasp the whole picture of this dynamic entity, I propose to view it as an open-ended environment where ideas, things, human and non-human life forms are constantly going in and out. The significance of this framework is that it allows *vanua* to be seen and touched, to be exposed and acted on, just as the physical environment that can be shaped and reshaped. Moreover, as messy as this picture seems, the importance of treating *vanua* as environment is that the processes of these encounters and movements would leave visible clues or “bread crumbs” which are manifested as place names, landmarks, plants and crops in the landscape, open to be perceived or reinterpreted. For example, in chapter 3 I have demonstrated how the identities of Waitabu and the Bouma region are formed through multiple origins which have left their marks in the landscape, and are further shaped by movements of indigenous population on the island, depopulation caused by disease and warfare, and the later colonial codification. The significance of this understanding is that even a place as small, as “simplistic” as Waitabu, has a dynamic past within itself and with other surrounding communities. As a result, villagers have put additional weight on the debate of who is really “from Waitabu” and have been sensitive about issues of ownership and social relationships with neighboring communities and settlements. This does not mean that its *vanua* is inflexible and closely guarded. On the contrary, it reflects the process of a community with a turbulent history attempting to rebuild its identity and recapture its self-worth. The operation of the Marine Park conservation project and issues of poaching could therefore be mediated through this framework by addressing the concerns of the

community, which may not appear in surveys or questionnaires with a direct focus on the development project.

Similarly, in chapter 4 I present the case of Taveuni as the “Garden Island” which is constructed by complex historical processes that involve the growing paramountcy of the Cakaudrove chiefdom, land alienation after a historical armed confrontation with the Tongans, and the establishment of large plantations by foreign planters as the island was gradually incorporated into the global capitalist economy. The impact to the environment was tremendous, as new crops were introduced, old crops were intensified, and new spatial relations were formed. After the Cession of the Fiji Islands, British colonial conservationists and environmental policies transformed the image of the “Garden Island” from a land of resource productivity to a land of forest and nature reserves. With these diverse forces constantly at work in the island, Waitabu and the Bouma region were gradually marginalized, and the Bouma National Heritage Park was established in this historical context. The examination of this history allows us to see the concrete processes that shaped Waitabu’s *vanua* and how it is related to wider frameworks of indigenous politics and post-colonial governance which have great implications to the development projects carried out in this seemingly remote coastal community.

7.2 THE ENTANGLED THINKING

Now that we acknowledge that *vanua*, as well as other indigenous or traditional cultural entities, entails dynamic processes of making and becoming, which involve a vast array of elements traveling in and out of a holistic socio-biological environment, how can we comprehend this

multitude of historical agencies and their interactions and transformations? In this dissertation I use the framework of “entangled environment” as a theoretical solution to incorporate both the cosmological aspects of the environment as focused by the theoretical camp of “sentient ecology,” and the power struggles of resources within the environment focused by “political ecology.” To say that the environment is entangled is to recognize all the possibilities taking place in the environment from symbolic to material, and the interconnectedness or tensions resulting from their movements which need to be settled and perceived by rituals or other embodied actions. For example, in chapter 5 we can see how the customary idea of ownership was strengthened as the modern interventions of MPA based on scientific surveys was introduced to Waitabu, thereby empowering their indigenous identity that was marginalized through the colonial processes of uneven development on the island. But this sense of truthfulness (*dina*) of their identity is only legitimized after the observance of the rituals of *balolo* sea worms and rabbitfish harvests. Similarly in chapter 3 I have analyzed how the contemporary *i-sevusevu* ceremony is able to empower the regenerating Waitabu autochthonous identity. And finally in chapter 6, the seemingly mundane acts of walking within the farming landscape are crucial to the appreciation of a diverse environment remade by different colonial, commercial, and subsistence activities, on which a flexible involvement of both individual and communal farming ventures could be formed. These rituals of settling tension and insecurity, particularly the public speeches regarding marine conservation mentioned in chapter 5, are what White and Watson-Gegeo (1990) called “disentangling” practices in the Pacific Island societies, which aim at “straightening out” people’s entangled relationships and are crucial for the continuity of their societies.

Here it should be reiterated that “entanglement” is not synonymous to “chaos,” nor is it a state of static messiness. Entanglement is about the capacity for motions and possibilities, but their configurations are not random or infinite. In his influential piece “The Past as a Scarce Resource” Appadurai (1981) argued against the view that the past is a limitless and plastic symbolic resource. Drawing from his ethnographic materials regarding a Hindu temple in South India, in which the state and different worshipping communities were fighting for particular rights of control and participation, he observed that the past was an extremely important component of debate which consisted of the use of ancient sacred texts from both Tamil and Sanskrit traditions, as well as the dicta of British colonial administrators in the 18th and 19th centuries and the judgments of the Anglo-Indian judicial system in the late 19th and 20th centuries. However, he soon discovered that there was a normative framework that regulated the debatability of the past, which is “a code for societies to talk *about* themselves, and not only *within* themselves” (p.218). Therefore, even though the entangled history of India has provided a wide array of elements open for various potential interpretations, the debates of the worshipping communities regarding present temple politics were still orderly structured within a space that this normative framework permitted.

The “entangled environment” is also a resource for the indigenous people to draw from for their present situation, both symbolically and physically. It is a coping mechanism so to speak in the face of crises of marginalized communal identity and environmental degradation, as well as attempts of projects of modernity to separate this interconnectedness in order to better manage them as subjects. In chapter 3 we can see how various place names on the island are reinterpreted by the Bouma people to empower their collective identity. In chapter 6 the crops and plants embedded in the landscape of Waitabu could become a source of resilience against

the sweeping effects of neoliberal farming. However, similar to what Appadurai argued, the intuitive organization of the entangled elements in the environment still follows a set of culture-specific norms. In Fiji, the concerns of a holistic community, peacefulness among social relationships (*veimaliwai*), and truthfulness (*dina*) of legitimacy, have dominated the local thinking about the environment. According to Tomlinson, these are “metacultural reflections” expressed as commentaries on their current state of society, which often show dissatisfaction or lament of decline from a long-passed “golden age” (Tomlinson 2009:69-73). Through this thinking which I call the “entangled thinking,” Fijians are able to connect different signs, objects, and life forms in the environment and organize them in a meaningful manner that would reflect their key cultural concerns. In chapter 5 for example, the decrease of fish catches are perceived by local elders as the decline of tradition of sharing. In chapter 3, to Waitabu villagers, the sacred site and title of Nasau imply the paramountcy of their chiefdom in a glorified past. But today, the site is almost abandoned and considered inflicted with ancestral curses, which again inform them about the loss of tradition and power. They could, however, be re-empowered through other environmental rituals such as the rabbitfish harvest. The entangled thinking is therefore able to convey meanings of spatiality and temporality, and sees the environment as an entity that is inherently dynamic and interconnected.

How can the incorporation of this entangled thinking help us better understand development? In a review of the anthropology of development and modernity, Arce and Long called for new analytical approaches to address “the confrontation between Western trajectories of modernity and various localized counter-representations, -discourses, and -practices” (Arce and Long 2000:2). Certainly after Escobar revealed how forms of knowledge and techniques of power in the discourses of development could actually increase underdevelopment (Escobar

1995), anthropologists have brought forth ethnographic cases of creative indigenous responses that situate the people not as passive recipients or victims of development projects, but active mediators, facilitators, or even evaders of dominating ideologies. As described earlier, Sahlins used the notion of “develop-man” to talk about the indigenous appropriation of Western goods to advance and enrich their cosmological powers (Sahlins 2005). Paul Sillitoe on the other hand has long proposed the practical use of “indigenous knowledge” in grassroots participatory development processes (Sillitoe 1998). Other indigenous Pacific scholars focused on the intrinsic indigenous knowledge and value systems that could pave their own paths towards development while maintaining their cultural integrity (Nabobo-Baba et al. 2012, Thaman 2002, 2010). In this dissertation the thinking of entanglement, or more broadly the framework of “entangled environment” allows us to challenge well-delineated categories presupposed in the discourses and practices of development, such as “reefs,” “forests,” or “farming,” and see the diverse processes that produced these seemingly stable domains which are then understood and reenacted by ritualistic or embodied activities. Through this scope, the formation of identities, indigenous politics, colonial governance, as well as biological processes such as the movement of marine animals and the growth of crops and plants, are all relevant to the developmental subject matters which are imagined through Fijian cultural norms such as “community” or “legitimacy.” Therefore in Fiji, *vanua* is not an obstacle or toolkit for development. *Vanua* is the environment in which development finds purchase and takes shape in meaningful ways.

In refuting the common conception that sees Pacific Island farmers as “lazy,” Kennedy and Clarke (2007) argued that their labor input in the farms may seem casual and sporadic, “But it is this pattern of modest activity carried out by people circulating through the landscape that keeps the productive processes working and that is also an integral thread in the fabric of social

life. Just as the dichotomy of garden/forest is not applicable, neither is work something separate from social life and sense of community” (p.88). Their main point is that the activities deemed unproductive or “a waste of time” by outsiders are actually meaningful to the indigenous sense of environment in its totality, in which different domains are entangled to one another. The veteran anthropologist in the Pacific Cyril Belshaw (1964) has provided a similar story of his fieldwork in Fiji, also in attempt to eradicate the image of “lazy Fijians.” When he was staying in a village, he paid cash to a group of men to build a small kitchen for him. What ensued were the men taking their time, using poor materials, and eventually burning down the structure because of its inadequate size. The second time he used a different approach. He presented a whale’s tooth (*tabua*) in making his request and suggested a time that suited them better. The result was a larger building, better constructed, in shorter time (pp.120-121). What this story tells us is not that Fijians prefer traditional valuables to monetary compensation or material wealth. Nor does it imply that development is a door that could be unlocked by using the right key of traditional elements. Rather, Belshaw was telling us that labor in Fiji is not merely a means to an end, but a social domain tied to a broader social life. As Fijians encountered more and more ideas, values, and projects, this domain certainly would also be transformed, or perhaps further rooted in the customary categories.

We should therefore not belittle any of their efforts of dealing with this entangled world, however minute or irrelevant to development projects they might seem to be. One day I went farming with my father Mika and brother Pate on the steep slopes of their family farm site. As we were digging holes under the tropical sun, Mika suddenly uttered the words “*noda i-tavi* (our responsibility),” and then Pate immediately continued with “*mai vuravura* (on earth)!” This motto-like phrase has stuck with me ever since, because it rightfully conveys the meaning of

what development is to them: It is not a “project” but an earthly event carried out every day, viscerally concerned with them in every possible way.

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS GLOSSARY

BNHP Bouma National Heritage Park

CBMPA Community-Based Marine Protected Area

CBNRM Community-Based Natural Resource Management

FLMMA Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area network

ICDP Integrated Conservation and Development Projects

LMMA Locally Managed Marine Area network

MPA Marine Protected Area

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NLC Native Lands Commission (currently **TLFC**, iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission)

NLTB Native Lands Trust Board (currently **TLTB**, iTaukei Lands Trust Board)

NZAID New Zealand Agency for International Development

NZODA New Zealand Overseas Development Agency

PMP Proto-Malayo Polynesian

POc Proto-Oceanic

TRC Tourism Resource Consultants

APPENDIX B

STANDARD FIJIAN GLOSSARY

Ai Tukutuku Raraba the official statement of tribal history

balebale rotational work party, a non-standard Fijian term commonly used in Lau and Taveuni

bose meeting

bou kingpost of the house

cakacaka work

dalo taro (*Colocasia esculenta*)

dina truthfulness

galala independent farmer

kai people that are native of ...

i-kanakana garden or fishing ground that provides food

kerekere bagging, formal request

koro village

i-kovukovu reserved land commonly given to a woman as dowry and passed down to her descendants

Kuku grandfather

lekutu forest

lewe ni vanua people of the land

loloma mutual love, compassion, gift

lotu religion, more specifically Christianity

mana power, effectiveness

masi barkcloth

matanitu chiefdom, state, government

mataqali basic kin-group and land-owning unit that consists of several *i-tokatoka*

matavuvale nuclear household

Nana mother, aunt

i-qoliqoli customary fishing ground

Ratu general chiefly title for men when addressing their names

saqai ridgepole that supports the thatched roof

sau chiefly title for the executive chief, installer of the paramount chief, or in other places as war chief

i-sevu the first fruits ceremony

i-sevusevu the ceremony of entry into a community, using a bundle of kava as earnest

solu gift, contribution in money or goods

ta nuqa the rabbitfish harvest ritual

tabua whale's tooth valuable

tavale referred specifically to the maternal cross-cousin or brother/sister-in-law in Taveuni

tauvu places that have the same ancestral origin or ancestral marriage ties

i-taukei original owner

i-tokatoka kin-group and land-owning unit under *mataqali*

tabu sacred, forbidden

Tata father, paternal uncle

tawa mudu everlasting, endless

i-teitei farm

tikina district, an administrative unit that includes several *vanua*

Tui a common chiefly title usually followed by a place name

turaga generic term for chief

turaga ni koro the village elected headman

vakavanua the way according to the land (custom)

vanua region, an administrative unit that includes several *yavusa*, or conceptually the land, people, and custom – the total socio-biological environment

vasu sacred maternal nephew

veikau forest where bush gardens are located

Ai Vola Ni Kawa the official book of descendants documenting tribal membership

vulagi foreigner

yaqona kava (*Piper methysticum*)

yasana province, an administrative unit that includes several *tikina*

i-yau valuables

yavirau communal fish drive using a long “scare-line”

yavu house foundation

yavusa tribe, the most basic political-kinship organization that is headed by a chief, comprised of several *mataqali*, and usually resides in a single village

APPENDIX C

COMMON FISH NAMES IN WAITABU

Common English Name	Scientific Name	Fijian Name
Angelfish	<i>Pygoplites diacanthus</i>	<i>Sigeleti</i>
Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon</i> spp.	<i>Tivitivi ni Pusi/Tivitivi ni Ta</i>
Catfish, eeltail	<i>Euristhmus lepturus</i>	<i>Kaboa</i> (' <i>aboa</i>)
Eel, moray	<i>Muraenidae</i> spp.	<i>Loulou</i>
Emperorfish, orange-spotted	<i>Lethrinus erythracanthus</i>	<i>Belenidawa</i>
Emperorfish, thumbprint	<i>Lethrinus harak</i>	<i>Kabatia</i> (' <i>abatia</i>)
Emperorfish, yellowtailed	<i>Lethrinus atkinsoni</i>	<i>Ululoa</i>
Flathead, spiny	<i>Onigocia spinosa</i>	<i>Dolo</i>
Goatfish, Indian	<i>Parupeneus indicus</i>	<i>Cucu</i>
Goatfish, yellowstripe	<i>Mulloides flavolineatus</i>	<i>Ose cago</i>
Goby	<i>Gobiidae</i>	<i>Bali; Balibali</i>
Grouper, Leopard Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus leopardus</i>	<i>Donu</i>
Grouper, Marbled cod	<i>Epinephelus microdon</i>	<i>Kerakera</i> (' <i>era'era</i>)
Grouper, Rockcod	<i>Serranidae; Cephalopholis</i> spp.	<i>Kawakawa</i> (' <i>awa'awa</i>)
Grunter	<i>Terapontidae</i>	<i>Dreve; Drevedreve</i>
Mullet	<i>Mugilidae</i>	<i>Kanace</i> (' <i>anace</i>)
Mullet, diamondscale	<i>Liza vaigiensis</i>	<i>Kava</i> (' <i>ava</i>)
Needlefish	<i>Tylosurus crocodilus; Strongylura leiura</i>	<i>Saku</i> (<i>Sa'u</i>)
Parrotfish, bicolor	<i>Scarus rubroviolaceus</i>	<i>Ulavi</i>
Parrotfish, bullethead	<i>Chlorurus sordidus</i>	<i>Bobo ni Karakarawa</i>
Parrotfish, green humphead	<i>Bolbometopon muricatus</i>	<i>Kalia</i> (' <i>alia</i>)
Rabbitfish, spinefoot	<i>Siganus Spinus; Siganus Vermiculatus</i>	<i>Nuqa; Nuqanuqa</i>
Shark, reef	<i>Carcharhinidae</i>	<i>Qio</i>
Snapper, humpback red	<i>Lutjanus gibbus</i>	<i>Boa</i>
Snapper, mangrove red	<i>Lutjanus argentimaculatus</i>	<i>Damu</i>
Squirrelfish, spiny	<i>Sargocentron spiniferum</i>	<i>Dra ni Veisau</i>
Surgeonfish, striped	<i>Acanthurus lineatus</i>	<i>Itasi</i>
Surgeonfish, yellowfin	<i>Acanthurus xanthopterus</i>	<i>Ikaloa</i>
Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus</i> sp.	<i>Sevaseva</i>
Trevally, giant	<i>Caranx ignobilis</i>	<i>Saqa</i>

Triggerfish	<i>Balistidae</i>	<i>Sumu</i> ⁸³
Triggerfish, orange-lined	<i>Balistapus undulatus</i>	<i>Sumutiti</i>
Unicornfish	<i>Naso sp.</i>	<i>Ta</i>
Wrasse	<i>Anampses spp.; Thalassoma spp.</i>	<i>Drevu</i>
Wrasse, humphead	<i>Cheilinus undulates</i>	<i>Draudrau</i>
Wrasse, tripletail	<i>Cheilinus chlorourus</i>	<i>Draunikura</i>

Table 5. Common fish names in Waitabu. Fijian fish names were collected primarily in Waitabu. Common English and scientific names were organized from Jones 2009:125-129; Morgan 1999; Pawley 1994:99-102; Thaman 1990:67-69; Veitayaki 1995:221-224.

⁸³ The common Fijian name for the triggerfish is *cumu* and the orange-lined triggerfish is *cumutiti*. In Waitabu I heard villagers say *sumu* and *sumutiti* instead, which interestingly is the same in Samoan.

APPENDIX D

PROFILE OF WAITABU FARMERS 2010-2012

Farmer	Affiliation	Household No.	Farm Site Founder's Relationship to Farmer	Registered	Farmed within <i>Mataqali</i> boundary	Notes
1. A1	N	1 (nuclear)	FF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
2. A2	N		MFF	N	Y	Floater (Student).
3. A3	N	2 (not in Waitabu)	FF	Y	Y	Had a household in Waitabu. Now residing outside due to work. Comes back to farm irregularly.
4. A4	N	3 (nuclear)	MFF	N	N	Consistent farmer. W from Waisoki.
5. B1	N	4 (nuclear)	FF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer. W from Vunivesi.
6. B2	N		MFF	N	Y	Floater.
7. C1	V	5 (nuclear)	MF(FF)	Y	Y	Elder farmer. Over 60 years old. Membership of Vunivesi established through M. F is from Nasolo.
8. C2	V		FMF(FFF)	Y	Y	Floater.
9. C3	V	6 (nuclear)	FMF(FFF)	Y	Y	Consistent farmer. Married in 2008.
10. D1	V	7 (nuclear)	MF	N	Y	Consistent farmer.
11. D2	V		FMF	N	Y	Consistent farmer. Began farming in 2010.
12. E1	V	8 (extended)	FMF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
13. E2	V	9 (nuclear)	FMF	Y	Y	Residing outside due to work. Comes

						back to farm irregularly. Married in 2012. Family in Waitabu.
14. F	V	10 (nuclear)	MFF	N	N	Floater. Residing with M who moved out in 2012.
15. G1	W	11 (nuclear)	F	Y	Y	Elder farmer. Over 60 years old.
16. G2	W	12 (nuclear)	F	Y	Y	Elder farmer. Residing on plantation.
17. H1	W	13 (nuclear)	F	Y	N	Consistent farmer.
18. H2	W	14 (nuclear)	F	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
19. H3	W*	15 (nuclear)	WF	N	N	Consistent farmer. Established membership through W.
20. I1	W	16 (nuclear)	MFM	N	Y	Consistent farmer.
21. I2	W*	17 (nuclear)	WFM	N	Y	Consistent farmer. Established membership through W. Left in 2011.
22. J1	W	18 (nuclear)	MF	N	Y	Consistent farmer.
23. J2	W		MF	N	N	Consistent farmer.
24. K1	W	19 (extended)	MMF	N	N	Consistent farmer. Moved in in 2009.
25. K2	W		MMF	N	Y	Consistent farmer. Left in 2010.
26. K3	W		MF	N	Y	Consistent farmer.
27. L1	W	20 (nuclear)	FF	Y	N	Consistent farmer. Moved in in 2009.
28. L2	W	21 (nuclear)	FF	Y	N	Elder farmer.
29. L3	W		FFF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer. Enrolled in the Tutu Young Farmers Course in 2011.
30. L4	W		FFF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer. Began farming in 2008 after graduating from FIT.
31. L5	W	22 (nuclear)	FFF	Y	N	Consistent farmer. Enrolled in the Tutu Young Farmers Course in 2008 but dropped out. Married in 2010.

						Moved in in 2012.
32. M1	W	23 (nuclear)	F(M); <i>i-kovukovu</i>	Y	Y	Elder farmer. Over 60 years old. Membership established through F. M from Vunivesi. M is also the owner of an <i>i-kovukovu</i> .
33. M2	W	24 (nuclear)	FF; <i>i-kovukovu</i>	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
34. M3	W	25 (nuclear)	FF; <i>i-kovukovu</i>	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
35. N1	W	26 (extended)	FF	Y	N	Consistent farmer. Moved in in 2009.
36. N2	W		FF	Y	N	Consistent farmer. Moved in in 2009.
37. O	W	27 (nuclear)	FF	Y	Y	Consistent farmer.
38. P	KV	28 (not in Waitabu)	<i>i-kovukovu</i>	N	N/A	Descendant of historical <i>i-kovukovu</i> owner.
39. Q	VV	29 (not in Waitabu)	WMF	N	Y	Established usufruct through W.
40. R	VD	30 (not in Waitabu)	WFF	N	Y	Established usufruct through W.
41. S	VV	31 (not in Waitabu)	<i>tavale</i> F	N	Y	Usufruct offered due to <i>tavale</i> (maternal cross-cousin) relationship.
Stats	Vunivesi: 14 (Nasolo:6) Waisoki: 23 Outsider: 4	Total: 31 Waitabu: 26 (3 extended)	Patrilineal: 18 (21, if counting C1-3), [43.9% (51.2%)] Affinal: 4	Registered: 23 [56.1%]	Within: 29[72.5%]	Consistent cash-cropping farmers of Waitabu: 26[63.4%]

Table 6. Profile of waitabu farmers. Data gathered between March 2010 and December 2012.

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